

## **SCRIPTURAL SILENCE: PERMISSION OR PROHIBITION?**

Perhaps the question asked above needs some clarification. We must be prepared to answer why we do things the way we do in matters religious (1 Pet.3:15). When confronted about specific religious practices, many will brush aside the challenge by stating, “Well, the Bible does not condemn it,” or, “The Bible does not say not to,” or something closely akin. The thinking behind such statements is that since the Bible is silent regarding a matter, man has the authority to deem a religious matter scriptural. Is this correct thinking? Does the silence of the Scriptures on a particular subject give man the authority to practice a particular thing in the name of religion? Let us seek the Bible answer.

For some reason, man understands that silence does not give him the authority to do as he wishes, except when it comes to religious matters. An example will relay what I mean. Consider a mother who sends her young son to the store with the instructions to buy milk and bread. The young man returns home with the milk and bread, as well as soft drinks, chips, cookies, candy, etc. The mother scolds her son for his failure to follow her instructions, to which the son replies, “But you didn’t say not to buy these other things. After all, I did get the milk and bread like you asked.” For those of you who have young children, you know such a statement is unacceptable. Why is it different when it comes to religious matters? If God had to tell Noah what kind of wood he was not to use in building the ark, we would still be reading Genesis!

The Bible is clear that the silence of the Scriptures does not authorize when the Bible has stated what must be done, the way it must be done, etc. Jesus Christ could not be a priest on earth (Heb.8:4) because he was of the tribe of Judah rather than the priestly tribe of Levi (Heb.7:14). God said that the priests were to come out of the tribe of Levi. He did not have to say that they would not come out of Judah, or Ephraim, or Gad, etc. Moses’ silence regarding the priesthood and the tribe of Judah forbade Christ from being a priest upon earth (read Heb.7:14 and 8:4 closely).

Many practices performed in the name of Christianity are based solely upon the idea that the silence of the Scriptures authorizes such practices. The New Testament clearly states that we are to worship God by singing (Eph.5:19; Col.3:16), not by playing musical instruments. The first century church partook of the Lord’s Supper upon the first day of the week (Acts 20:7), not Monday, or Saturday, or Thursday. When God say to do something a certain way, it rules out doing it any other

way! Where God has spoken regarding a matter, the silence of the Scriptures does not authorize doing it another way! In such a case, the silence of the Scriptures forbids!

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