

First Principles Of The Oracles Of God

Lesson 8

“The Secret Things Belong To God...” (Deut. 29:29) Respecting The Silence Of The Scripture

Even after learning how to define and establish New Testament authority, one final lesson must still be examined to gain the complete picture. It is imperative that we have a good understanding regarding the silence of the Scripture. The student of the Bible will soon recognize that God did not specifically address every conceivable idea that may ever materialize. Therefore, we must be as diligent in dealing with these situations as we are in areas where God has expressly stated His will. It is one thing to get someone to agree that a command of God is authoritative. It is quite another to get that same someone to agree that what God *didn't* say is as authoritative as what He did say.

The most common question asked whenever God has not spoken or authorized a particular thing is “*Why can't we...?*” What is the obvious motivation behind such a question?

- ◆ the apparent desire for a broad liberty to do as many things religiously as possible.
- ◆ the obvious rationale: if permitted to do those things not mentioned in the Bible, then not only can we do the “few” things God has mentioned, but we can also do the “thousands” of things that are not mentioned.

This issue is really decided with 2 extreme answers.

- ◆ God's silence is *permissive*
We are permitted to do any unmentioned thing as long as it is not specifically prohibited somewhere else in the Scripture.
- ◆ God's silence is *prohibitive*
This conforms to the *Law of Exclusion* (pg. 30). We are not permitted to do any unmentioned thing. This approach reasons that if God had wanted us to do something, He would have authorized it by any one of the 3 methods reviewed on pages 34-37.

When studying the topic of authority, probably no other aspect deals with respecting God more than this one. Respect is shown for God when we comply with what He has told us in His word, especially when we do it the way He has said. But respect for God is truly displayed when we show deference for Him and His will by not intruding into the areas where He has *not* spoken.

Disagreements over God's silence is not a new debate. It even pre-dates all the discussions brethren had last century over institutionalism and the work of the local church. This fundamental idea was part of the Great Protestant Reformation in the latter part of the 15th and early part of the 16th centuries.

- ◆ **Martin Luther (1483 – 1546)** German Reformer => founder of Lutheran Church
In his opposition to Catholicism, Luther taught that the Bible was to be accepted as the only rule of faith and practice. However, he taught that “what is not contrary to Scripture is for Scripture, and Scripture for it.” [*Luther's own words*]
 - simply stated, anything may be accepted as long as it isn't strictly prohibited in Scripture

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- ◆ **Ulrich Zwingli (1484 – 1531)** Swiss Reformer => founder of (Dutch) Reformed Church
In his opposition to Roman Catholicism, Zwingli was greatly influenced by some of Luther's writings. He began preaching expository sermons from the Bible (unheard of in his day). He taught that whatever is not expressly commanded in the Scripture must be rejected.

Zwingli respected God's silence; Luther did not.
Unfortunately, the view of Luther became and remains the predominant attitude in Protestantism.

In this respect, we are in no different a position than those to whom these men appealed centuries ago. What will we do with the silence of the Scripture? Is it permissive or prohibitive?

Key verse on God's silence ➤ **Deut. 29:29**

What does this verse teach? _____

Principles Of God's Silence From The Old Testament

- ◆ *Israel at the Red Sea (Ex. 14:10-14)*
 - What did Israel have to learn to do? (vv. 13-14) _____
 - What had they already done? (vv. 11-12) _____
 - What were they eventually told to do? (v. 15) _____
 - What is the main lesson we learn here? (v. 16) _____
- ◆ *Israel during the Passover (Num. 9:1-14)*
 - What was Israel told to do? (vv. 2-3) _____
 - What did some men ask? (vv. 6-7) _____
 - What was Moses' reply? (v. 8) _____
 - How was this issue resolved? (vv. 10-12) _____

Examples Of Disregarding God's Silence From The Old Testament

- ◆ *Saul and his offering (1 Sam. 13:8-14)*
 - What was the king's reasoning? (vv. 8, 11-12) _____
 - How did Samuel respond? (v. 13) _____
 - What does this teach us? _____
- ◆ *David and the Temple (2 Sam. 7:1-7)*
 - What were David's plans? (v. 2) _____
 - Who else concurred with David? (v. 3) _____

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- What was God's response? (vv. 4-7) _____
 - Did God have a plan for His dwelling place? (vv. 8-13) _____
 - What practical lessons for today do we learn from this episode? _____
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Statements Regarding God's Silence From The New Testament

- ◆ **1 Pet. 4:11**
 - The battle cry during the days of the Restoration Movement
 - What exactly does this verse mean? _____
- ◆ **Heb. 1:5**
 - Who is being described in Heb. 1:1 - 2:4? _____
 - What is His relative position? (Heb. 1:2-4) _____
 - What is taught about God's silence in v. 5? _____
- ◆ **Heb. 7:11-14**
 - What is the theme of Heb. 5:1-10; 7:1-28? _____
 - What is the writer's point in Heb. 7:11-13? _____
 - What is taught about God's silence in v. 14? _____
- ◆ **Acts 15:24**
 - What was the issue described in this chapter? (v. 1) _____
 - What is taught about God's silence in v. 24? _____

One Final Word Of Caution

We must be careful not to confuse the silence of the Scripture with our earlier study on general and specific authority. We should not consider silence in a specific matter to be a lack of authority for a general command

- ◆ The Scripture is silent about song books, but not silent about what? _____
- ◆ The Scripture is silent about church buildings, but not silent about what? _____
- ◆ The Scripture is silent about gospel meetings, but not silent about what? _____

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Conclusion

We must come to the conclusion that God's silence is absolutely authoritative, and that it is prohibitive, not permissive. We are the creatures; He is the Creator. We have no right to "invade His silence," for such is the sin of presumption.

We conclude this lesson by noting the following New Testament passages. Read them and list how they address our respect for the silence of the Scripture.

- ◆ Rom. 12:3; 1 Cor. 4:6

- ◆ 2 Jn. 9

- ◆ Col. 3:17