

Respecting The Silence Of The Scriptures

Fundamental to any real study of the Bible is an understanding of *how* the Lord permits or restricts any particular act. For centuries argument has raged over the silence of the scriptures, and whether or not that silence is either permissive or restrictive. If the former, then anything that is not explicitly forbidden is allowable. If the latter be true, then the one who pleases God is the one who does only that for which he has Divine authority. And too, does God care whether or not one does that which is authorized? In other words, can you pretty much do whatever you like religiously, as long as you are sincere, and still please God? The Bible is its own best commentary, and one aspect that goes to prove its inspiration is the fact that it anticipates and answers error. Study carefully these accounts from scripture which bear directly and powerfully on the matter of Divine authority and the conduct of man.

Nadab and Abihu

Sons of Aaron, Nadab and Abihu offered an unauthorized religious act to God. Note the Bible account:

"And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took each of them his censer, and put fire therein, and laid incense thereon, and offered strange fire before Jehovah, which he had not commanded them. {2} And there came forth fire from before Jehovah, and devoured them, and they died before Jehovah." (Lev 10:1-2 ASV)

Lest one is left wondering about the term, "strange fire," the Divine record goes on to elaborate that this fire was that which God "had not commanded them." Is it possible that God of Heaven demands that our acts of worship be according to His commands? Are we to understand that authority for religious acts makes a difference to God? Our religious world says, "No, God does not care how you worship or what religious name you wear." Nadab and Abihu paid for their unauthorized act with their lives. Here is a Divine commentary on man's presumptuous acts that go outside of God's will and beyond what is authorized. Does God

care about authority for religious doctrine and practice? Nadab and Abihu's account unequivocally says, "Yes!"

Uzzah

If ever there was a man with good intentions, it was Uzzah. Not a name frequently mentioned in Holy verse, Uzzah was accompanying the ark of the covenant as it was being transferred from Kirjath-jearim to Jerusalem according to King David's instructions. We pick up then with the Bible account:

"And David arose, and went with all the people that were with him, from Baale-judah, to bring up from thence the ark of God, which is called by the Name, even the name of Jehovah of hosts that sitteth *above* the cherubim. {3} And they set the ark of God upon a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab that was in the hill: and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drove the new cart. {4} And they brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was in the hill, with the ark of God: and Ahio went before the ark. {5} And David and all the house of Israel played before Jehovah with all manner of *instruments made of fir-wood*, and with harps, and with psalteries, and with timbrels, and with castanets, and with cymbals. {6} And when they came to the threshing-floor of Nacon, Uzzah put forth *his hand* to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen stumbled. {7} And the anger of Jehovah was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God." (2 Sam 6:2-7 ASV)

Specific instructions concerning transportation of the ark were set forth in God's law

(Num. 4). No place in scripture was there anything that might remotely be construed as qualifying Uzzah to touch the ark. But at the same time, we freely admit that no where in God's word do we find an explicit prohibition reading, "Uzzah, you shall not touch or steady the ark." You might think Uzzah's crime to be petty, or even of no consequence. God's anger was "kindled against Uzzah," and smitten of the Lord, Uzzah pays for his sin by death. Modern theologians would look at Uzzah's actions and saying, "No big deal." Some would no doubt ask, "where does God forbid Uzzah to touch the ark?" What man thinks is insignificant may very well be important in the sight of our almighty God. The account of Uzzah teaches us that indeed, that which is unauthorized is prohibited.

Do All In The Name Of The Lord

Paul commanded, “And whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed, (do) all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him” (Col. 3:17). What does it mean to “do all in the name of the Lord Jesus?” Permit a definition here. Concerning the “name of the Lord,” Thayer (Greek scholar and lexicographer) writes,

“the name is used for everything which the name covers, everything the thought or feeling of which is aroused in the mind by mentioning, hearing, remembering, the name, that is, for one's rank, authority, interests, pleasure, command, excellences, deeds etc.”

To do “all in the name of the Lord Jesus” then means that we do those things by His authority. We do things by authority of Christ when that authority is set forth in His will—the New Testament.

As pertains to religious acts, the question is not, “Where is it prohibited?” but rather, “Where is the authority for this belief or practice?” One may search the scriptures high and low and still will never find authority for instrumental music in the worship of the church. Nowhere is there Bible authority for church fund-raisers such as bake sales, the utilization of incense or snake-handling as acts of worship, praying through dead “saints,” or answering to a pope. One may think drama to be the “cat’s meow” but dramatic groups are not authorized in the worship of the New Testament church. Same goes for humming in place of, or in addition to, singing in worship. And we still ask for Bible authority for “baptizing” infants as well as partaking of the Lord’s Supper on days other than the first day of the week but proponents of these sinful practices are as silent as the proverbial oyster.

One youth minister defended the instrument of music in Christian worship as

permissible because David introduced instruments into Old Testament worship. Remember, dear friends (and this is another subject), that what David did or did not do under a former dispensation and law is no authority for us who live under, and are amenable to, the New Covenant of Jesus Christ. Go back to David to justify your worship and you'd better protect the little calf in the pasture from animal sacrifice!

Might a person utilize cornbread and cola on the Lord's table in communion? My youth minister friend answered that such was never permitted by God and so would be sinful. He could see very well that cornbread and cola are unauthorized components of the Lord's Supper and thus sinful, but he became the poster-child for inconsistency when it came to applying these same principles to Christian worship.

Respecting the silence of the scriptures means that we recognize and honor the principle of having Divine authority for all that we do in Christian work and worship. Go beyond the scriptures and find yourself in the company of Nadab, Abihu, Uzzah, and others that have incurred God's wrath.