

“When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.” (Matt 26:30)

“...and sing unto thy name.” (Romans 15:9)

Do these verses *expressly forbid* the use of musical instruments? No! But it does say to “sing.” It doesn’t say *not* to play an instrument.. So what do *you* think? We’ve looked at a lot of Scriptures that clearly indicated that God’s silence on *various* subjects *prohibited* whatever was in question. Does God have to *expressly forbid* instruments for us to understand that it’s not for use in the assembly of the saints — or is His silence sufficient? Remember Uzzah, Noah, Nadab and Abihu, the people of Judah and Moses that we read about in the previous issue. Remember the discussion of Jesus’ equality with the angels, priests from the tribe of Levi, Paul’s comments about going beyond what is written and will-worship. In all of *those* cases, did God’s silence permit or prohibit? Would it be any different concerning the use of instruments in the assembly when we worship God? Hebrews 13:8 states that “*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.*” Do you think that God has changed His mind concerning His silence regarding practices that are questionable?

We’ve seen argument after argument concerning the use of the Greek word “*psallo*” and whether or not its use can include the plucking of a stringed instrument. That argument can get *very* technical and quite honestly our opinion is that it’s a *huge* stretch to interpret it that way — but there *are* those who do. But even if one *insists* that is the case, it seems that the *silence* of the Scriptures regarding the use of instruments would *easily* over ride such a disputable conclusion.

There are many issues being faced by the New Testament Church today that hinge on the issue of whether or not God’s silence *permits* or *prohibits*. One more that comes to mind is that of free will giving. Many congregations today are holding various kinds of fund raisers for purposes ranging from building funds to mission trips. Garage sales, car washes, bake sales, etc. are becoming more and more common. The reasoning behind these activities is that the Scriptures don’t *expressly forbid* such things even though free will offerings are the *only* method of giving mentioned in the Scriptures. Doesn’t silence also speak loudly here?

So what do you think? Are the examples we’ve studied in these last two issues sufficient evidence to convince you that the Scriptures are *not* silent about God’s silence? Mankind has a tendency to worship worship itself and seek an “experience” that makes him “feel good.” But no matter how it makes *man* “feel,” if it’s *not* what God commands, it isn’t pleasing to Him. Many worshippers today want a show — entertainment — excitement. But that’s what *they* want — not what God has instructed. One writer stated “*if it were not for the grace of God, most “churches” today would be consumed as Nadab and Abihu were*” for the “unauthorized fire” being offered.

“Diligence” is a privately funded publication of:
Dennis and Sherri Owens — Cincinnati, Ohio
diligence@gorfsystems.com — <http://www.gorfsystems.com/diligence/>



DILIGENCE

“We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure.” — Hebrews 6:11

A ministry of Dennis and Sherri Owens

Volume 5

July 1, 2006

Issue 10

Part Two — Silence of the Scriptures — Permit or Prohibit?

Galatians 3:24 and 25 (along with many other verses) clearly tells us that we are no longer under the Law but that the Law was the “tutor” (NASB & NKJV) that lead us to Christ. So we can learn much about God by having a grasp of how He dealt with His people during the Old Testament times. For that purpose, most of the Scriptures referenced in the previous issue of *Diligence* were from the Old Testament. Since that issue provides the foundation for our comments in this issue, if you failed to read that article we recommend that you do so by visiting the web address listed at the bottom of page 4 before continuing with this article.

If you recall from that previous issue, we saw numerous examples in the Old Testament where God punished those who took it upon themselves to do as they wished when He had not *expressly forbidden* a certain action or practice. Now, let’s look into the New Testament to see whether or not God softened his stance on this subject as the Christian Age began. Again, in some instances we will only list book, chapter and verse since space will not always permit including the Scripture in its entirety. So please get your Bible and have it handy.

In Hebrews 1:1-6, the writer himself uses God’s silence to make the case that Jesus is superior to the angels. He points out to the reader that unless God expressly states that it *is* so — one should assume it is *not* so. He writes:

“*For to which of the angels did God ever say, ‘You are my Son;...’*”

This verse seems to imply that common sense alone indicates that if God never said “*You are my Son*” to any angelic being then how could anyone possibly think it could be so. His implication is that God didn’t *have* to say that they *weren’t* equal to Jesus — His *lack* of saying that they *were*, was sufficient. It seems however that someone in *that* time was also using the reasoning that what is not *expressly forbidden*, is *allowed*, and was saying; “well, since God never said that the angels *aren’t* equal to Jesus — I’m free to believe they *are*.” What do *you* think? Was it necessary for God to state that the angels were *not* equal to Jesus or should His silence on that subject have prohibited one from believing such a thing?

In the Old Testament we read that Jacob had 12 sons who became the twelve tribes of Israel. Of those 12 tribes, those of the tribe of Levi were designated to be the priests. Jesus however was of the tribe of Judah. So in Hebrews 7:11-14 we read,

“*If perfection could have been attained through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the law was given to the people), why was there*

still need for another priest to come — one in the order of Melchizedek, not in the order of Aaron? For when there is a change of the priesthood, there must also be a change of the law. He of whom these things are said belonged to a different tribe, and no one from that tribe has ever served at the altar. For it is clear that our Lord descended from Judah, and in regard to that tribe Moses said nothing about priests.”

In addition to these verses Hebrews 8:4 states “*If He (Jesus) were on earth, He would not be a priest,...*” This makes it *very* clear that under the Law of Moses, Jesus *could not* function as a priest on this earth. Why? Because He was a descendent of the tribe of Judah (not the tribe of Levi). Now, this is especially important to our study about the silence of the Scriptures since the Scriptures do not specifically state that a priest *could not* be of *another* tribe. It is never *expressly forbidden* for members of the *other* tribes to serve as priests — it only states that priests were of the tribe of Levi. These verses above however, clearly say that *because* Moses “*said nothing*” (or was silent) about priests being allowed to come from the tribe of Judah, Jesus *could not* serve as a priest on this earth. Concerning *this* example, we need not even ask, what you think? For the Scriptures clearly say that since Moses was silent about priests from tribes other than Levi, it was prohibited!

Now, briefly, a couple more instances concerning silence. The Apostle Paul wrote in I Corinthians 4:6 “*Do not go beyond what is written.*” This is another way of saying not to use the reasoning that anything not *expressly forbidden* is allowed. For we could then presume that we are free to add *anything* we wish that might improve or enhance our worship to God. But wait. Before accepting that line of reasoning let us realize that carried to its furthest extreme, there *are* those who would claim that “shooting up” with drugs prior to worshiping God enhances that worship so it would therefore be an acceptable practice since it’s not *expressly forbidden*. Ridiculous you say? Well — once we decide to allow *anything* that is not expressly forbidden, who is to say where *some* individuals would stop?

Along that same line of thinking, we might refer to Colossians 2:22 and 23. In those verses Paul condemns what the King James Version translates as “will-worship.” Other translations refer to it as “self-imposed worship” or “self-made religion;” Paul says it is worship “*based on human commands and teachings*” (NIV). Thayer defines the Greek word used as “worship which one devises and prescribes for himself.” Another scholar defines it as “worship that is not prescribed by God — only by man.” So in following with our previous thought, those who do not accept God’s silence as prohibitive, would be free to indulge in whatever “will-worship” that suited their fancy — *whatever* that included. Paul condemns such worship.

This now brings us back to the first paragraph of Part One of this series on *Silence of the Scriptures*. Remember that we had attended a “worship service” that included dancers, guitars, piano, etc. If you have read both of these issues carefully, you can see now that the reasoning behind allowing such activities is pretty clear. Once the

principle is adopted that permits anything not *expressly forbidden* to become acceptable — anything goes. *Anything!* Anything from dancers in worship to department chairs, to cantatas, to dramas for worship, to choirs, to rosary beads, to rock bands so worship can be more “exciting,” to — wait a minute. Rock bands? That’s instrumental music. Let’s use that one for an example to discuss in just a bit more detail.

The Old Testament is absolutely *filled* with the use of instruments. Instruments were an important part of the ritual of worship in those days. There’s not enough room here to even *begin* to list the various places that mention how instruments were used in the practice of the Mosaic worship rituals and in the temple. Musical instruments were obviously part of the Old Law. Now we also know that there were approximately some 400 years that passed between the end of the Old Testament and the coming of Christ. We also know that the Jews were still very devoted to the practice of their faith at the time Jesus came onto the scene. We *know* that because the New Testament writers refer to the fact that the apostles went to the synagogues to preach since there would be large numbers of people gathered there at certain times for prayer. We also know that is the case because of the account of the story of Jesus turning over the tables of the money changers in the temple who were selling animals to sacrifice. So in view of this (and *many* other proofs), we have no reason to believe that those Jewish people were not *still using* all of those various musical instruments that had been so frequently mentioned in the Old Testament as an integral part of their worship. So — why then, is there *never any mention at all* of any of those instruments *ever* being used in relation to *any* gathering of the saints that we read about in the New Testament? We know they *had* them. It’s also probably safe to assume that they were still being used regularly in the synagogues. In fact, Matthew 6:2 specifically says to *not* use an instrument when giving alms like the hypocrites do in the synagogue. Yet, there is no mention of their use in *any way at all* as part of the early Church. Don’t you think then that the sound of silence in *this* case is deafening and would say that using instruments in worship ended when the Old Law ended? Don’t you think that if the apostles were in the habit of using or allowing them to be part of the gathering of the saints, we’d read *something* about it — somewhere? But we don’t! (Not to mention the fact that history itself indicates that instruments were *first* used in *Christian* worship around 600 B.C.)

Look at these verses —

“*I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.*” (I Cor. 14:15)

“*...in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.*” (Heb. 2:12)

“*...let him sing psalms.*” (John 5:13)

“*And they sing the song of Moses...*” (Rev. 15:3)

“*...Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God.*” (Acts 16:25)

“*...singing and making melody in your heart.*” (Eph. 5:19)

“*...singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.*” (Col. 3:16) continued on page 4