

WHAT ABOUT CHURCH BUILDINGS?

(by George Battey)

Colossians 3:17 (NKJV)

17 And **whatever** you do *in word or deed*, do **all** in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

Notice:

“whatever you do” – “*everything or anything*” (American Heritage)

“do all” – every single thing

Nothing in the context limits this to church activities.

This means exactly what it says: ***Every single thing*** we do (private life / church life) must be “*in the name of the Lord Jesus*”

“in word” – things we say or teach

“in deed” – things we do or practice

“in the name of the Lord Jesus” – i.e. by the authority of Jesus. (cf. Acts 4:7, 10, 12)

To have authority from Jesus means:

- *Either Jesus Himself*
- *Or one of His official representatives (apostles) must authorize it.*

WRITTEN AUTHORIZATION

Furthermore, this authorization must be in written form.

“Get it in writing,” the lawyer always says. This is true in regard to spiritual matters also.

No one may say:

- **“I feel the Lord is leading me to do a certain thing.”**
- **“Jesus told me to do a certain thing.”**

No. The authorization from Jesus or His apostles must be in written form – in the NT scriptures.

John 16:13 (NKJV)

*13 [Jesus said to His apostles] when He, **the Spirit of truth**, has come, **He will guide you into all truth**; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.*

- *According to this, the Spirit was going to reveal “all truth” to the apostles.*
- *The apostles were going to write down all which the Spirit revealed (2 Pet 1:3).*
- *This revelation was preserved (1 Pet 1:24).*
- *Therefore revelation ceased (1 Cor 13:10).*

Paul confirmed all truth was revealed and written down in scripture form:

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NKJV)

*16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,
17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for **every** good work.*

Notice three important words demonstrating all of God's will has been revealed in written form in the scriptures:

- "Complete"
- "Thoroughly"
- "Every"

SUMMARY:

What do we have so far:

- 1) We must have authority from Jesus or His official representatives (apostles) for every single thing we do.
- 2) This authorization must come in written form (i.e. scripture).
- 3) If there is no written authorization, a thing cannot be taught or practiced.

In other words: *There must be a scripture for every single thing we teach and practice – whether in the assemblies of the church or outside the assemblies of the church.* There must be Bible authority for every single thing we do in our private lives as well as our religious lives. Not one thing may be done without authorization from either Jesus Himself or one of His official representatives (apostles – 2 Cor 5:20).

(Let this soak in.)

SILENCE

Because we must have scripture for everything we do, the silence of the scriptures becomes significant.

Scripture silence is called "*legislative silence.*"

Listen carefully:

Legislative silence – *when the law is purposefully silent about an action and that silence is viewed as expressing the intent of the lawmaker.*

SILENCE FORBIDS

In both the OT and NT we are consistently taught that **legislative silence forbids**.

Let me give only a single example here:

Hebrews 1:5 (NKJV)

5 For to which of the angels did He ever say:

"You are My Son,

Today I have begotten You"?

And again:

"I will be to Him a Father,

And He shall be to Me a Son"?

This passage is making an argument based on silence.

Scripture was silent about an angel being the Son of God. Therefore, we are ***forbidden to teach*** a doctrine which says Jesus was an angel.

WHAT IS SILENCE?

If legislative silence forbids, it becomes necessary to define silence.

Silence – *the absence of both explicit and implicit teaching.*

Everything in the Bible is taught in one of two ways:

- *Explicitly*
- *Implicitly*

- 1) **Explicit** – “*fully and clearly expressed; leaving nothing implied*” (American Heritage, electronic version)

- 2) **Implicit** – “*implied or understood though not directly expressed*” (American Heritage, electronic version)

NOTE: *Implication is not silence.*

When God implied keeping the Sabbath Day holy every week (Ex 20:8), ***He was not being silent about weekly Sabbath observance.***

When God implied a resurrection (Mt 22:32), ***He was not being silent about the resurrection.***

THE SYNAGOGUE

Let's notice an interesting question dealing with the synagogue.

Matthew 4:23 (NKJV)

23 And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people.

Here's the argument some make regarding the synagogue:

- *The OT scriptures were silent about synagogues.*
- *Yet, Jesus Himself approved of using synagogues.*
- *Therefore, this demonstrates Bible silence is permissive.*

Q: Was the OT truly silent about synagogues?

To answer this question, let's first look at the word synagogue.

Synagogue (συναγωγή) – means *a gathering of people, an assembly* and then *the place where the assembly occurred* – the building.

Q: Did the OT authorize assembling people together in a building for the activities in which Jesus and others engaged?

R: Yes it did. All we have to do is find an OT passage or combination of passages which authorizes the kinds of actions that were performed in a synagogue.

- *We could look for passages which have to do with assembling or public teaching.*
- *To find such passages, we might take a concordance and begin looking up words like: **gather, assemble, law, teach, covenant, etc.***

Here one such passage:

Deuteronomy 31:11-13 (NKJV)

*11 when all Israel comes to appear before the LORD your God in the place which He chooses, you shall **read this law before all Israel in their hearing.***

*12 **Gather the people together, men and women and little ones, and the stranger who is within your gates, that they may hear and that they may learn to fear the LORD your God and carefully observe all the words of this law,***

13 and that their children, who have not known it, may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God as long as you live in the land which you cross the Jordan to possess.”

In this passage explicit authority is given for assembling and implicit authority for a building.

The implicit authority is seen by the fact that the command to gather people together to hear the word of God requires some place.

NOTE: It is absolutely impossible to gather people together and teach like this passage requires without some place to do the gathering and teaching.

- *Someone's house is a place.*
- *Outside under a tree is a place.*
- *Being where there is light is a place.*
- *Being where there is not a blizzard is some place.*
- *A building, like a synagogue, is some place.*

NOTE: When the OT scriptures authorized a place *by implicit teaching*, the scriptures were not being silent about that place.

Therefore, the OT was not silent about synagogues. Synagogues were authorized *implicitly*.

- *The synagogue is not an example of silence.*
- *The synagogue does not prove Bible silence is permissive.*

CHURCH BUILDINGS

In the same way, some believe the scriptures are silent about *church buildings* – yet, we all think it's okay to use church buildings.

Q: Is the NT truly silent about church buildings?

To answer this question, let's first look at the word for assembling people together.

Hebrews 10:25 (NKJV)

*25 not forsaking **the assembling** of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.*

“the assembling” (ἐπισυναγωγή) – this word has “synagogue” as its root. It means to “synagogue the people” or assemble the people together.

Acts 20:7 (NKJV)

7 Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples **came together** to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight.

“came together” (συνάγω) – this is the verb form from which synagogue derives.

Both of these passages explicitly authorize brethren to assemble people together and they implicitly authorize a place.

Just as the OT implicitly authorized a synagogue, the NT implicitly authorizes a church building.

NOTE: Church buildings are authorized by *implicit permission*.

SUMMARY: So synagogues and church buildings are not examples of Bible silence because the Bible implicitly teaches both.

Silence means the absence of all teaching. Silence means:

- *There is no Bible passage which **explicitly** teaches some thing.*
- *There is no Bible passage which **implicitly** teaches it.*

Remember: *Implication is not silence.*

QUESTIONS

Understanding the doctrine of “*silence forbids,*” we’re now ready to answer several questions:

1) *Why does the church of Christ not use instruments?*

Because the NT is silent and silence forbids.

We are not to add to the word and in order to use instruments, we would have to add something that's not there.

If you asked me for authorization to sing – I would point you to Eph 5:19.

But where would I go for authorization to use instruments?

NOTE: Here is where people want to go to the OT – to David and the Psalms. But we are not living under the OT.

Acts 2:42 (NKJV)
42 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

Christians did not follow Moses any longer. They followed the apostles' doctrine.

The OT was nailed to the cross (Col 2:14). We are to look to Jesus and His apostles for authorization today (Mt 17:5).

2) *Why does the church of Christ not:*

- *Baptize infants?*
- *Sprinkle people for baptism?*
- *Have Bible classes?*
- *Have individual communion wafers?*
- *Use fermented wine in communion?*
- *Use individual communion cups?*
- *Take the communion to sick people at home?*
- *Build and maintain gymnasiums?*
- *Build and maintain hospitals, nursing homes, orphan homes?*

- *Build and maintain schools and colleges?*
- *Have choirs?*
- *Have hand-clapping?*
- *Have religious dancing?*
- *Have religious drama performances?*

Because the NT is silent and silence forbids.

We are not to add to the word and in order to do any of these things, we would have to add something that's not there.

If you asked me for authorization to do what we do – I could give you authorization.

But where would I go for authorization to do all these other things?

CONCLUSION

Do we have NT authorization to have church buildings? Yes we do – we have implicit authority.

Does the NT authorize instruments of music? NO. There is neither explicit nor implicit authorization.

This is why we have buildings, but don't have instruments of music.