

Jesus and the Silence of God

Let's look at some pretty straightforward statements from Jesus and ask some very simple questions.

"Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise" (**John 5:19**, ESV).

Did Jesus do anything of His own accord? Did Jesus do something other than what He saw the Father doing?

"I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me" (**John 5:30**, ESV).

Could Jesus do anything on His own? Did Jesus judge based on what He heard or based on what He didn't hear?

"When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me" (**John 8:28**, ESV).

Does Jesus do anything on His own authority? Does Jesus speak beyond what the Father taught Him? ...in addition to what the Father taught Him? Does Jesus speak anything the Father has not actually taught Him?

"For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandments—what to say and what to speak" (**John 12:49**, ESV).

Does Jesus ever speak on His own authority? Does Jesus speak something the Father hasn't told Him to say and speak?

Considering all the above, what is Jesus's take on the silence of God? Does Jesus see the silence of God as permissive and authoritative? Or does He see speaking what God has not spoken as going beyond what God has authorized? Does Jesus claim He does whatever God has not prohibited? Or does Jesus say He only does what God has authorized?

Is scriptural silence authoritative or prohibitive? That is, are we allowed to do anything God has not specifically condemned or are we only allowed to do what God has actually authorized? Seems to me this argument should be settled by Jesus Himself.

Jesus refuses to do anything from His own authority. He only does what God has authorized. He doesn't go beyond what He sees and hears from the Father. He doesn't assume that if the Father didn't say anything to Him about it that it is okay. Jesus sees acting from silence as acting on His own authority. He refuses to do that because He did not come to do His own will, but the Father's.

With that in mind, how should we view the silence of Scripture? Is it permissive? Can we actually claim the Scripture authorizes something it never says anything about? Or when we pursue that course are we adding to the covenant stipulations of God and pursuing our own will rather than His?

Some think this discussion is straining at gnats, producing legalism. However, no matter what side of these questions your answers fall on, remember these questions are important. In **John 7:18**, Jesus says, "The one who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory; but the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and in him there is no falsehood" (ESV). Questions of Scriptural authority are not simply about developing rules, but about glorifying God. I suggest we glorify God the same way Jesus did, and only do what God has authorized.