

The Wednesday Word, August 12, 2015: Jesus and the Great Commandment

One of the primary reasons Christ came was to magnify and honour the Law of God. He loved God's Law with a passion and upheld it at every turnaround. When asked about the greatest commandment, He affirmed that it was to love God with all the heart and mind (Matthew 22:36-39; Luke 10:26-28). According to Jesus, God was to have first place in our affections and loyalty. Accordingly, there could be no competition, no challengers and no rivals when it came to following and loving God. But then, Jesus loses the plot ... or does He? He begins to teach that we should follow Him with the same kind of loyalty we ought to give to God. Listen to Him and consider if these are the words of a person who was merely a good teacher.

He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me" (Matthew 10:37).

"Whosoever of you that forsakes not all that he has cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:33).

According to Jesus, if we love our families more than we love Him we are not worthy of Him. Furthermore, if anything claims our affection and keeps us from following Him, we are not qualified to become His disciples.

This is strange, for remember it was prophesied in Isaiah 42:21 that Christ would magnify God's Law and make it honourable. It sounds like Jesus is doing the opposite. It seems that He's setting himself up as a rival to God for He's demanding the first place in the lives of his listeners. A morally upright man wouldn't do this. He would encourage people to love and follow God first and foremost! Jesus, however, by demanding His brand of loyalty, is blocking the way for people to obey the great commandment. He's challenging, for Himself, to have the same kind of loyalty and love that only God should have.

Then He has the audacity to say,

"If you love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15).

But what about God's commandment to love Him with all? Christ is now commanding that we keep His law as a sign of love. This surely is strange! After all, Christ said,

"Think not that I have come to destroy the law or the prophets; I have come not to destroy (them) but to fulfil (them) (Matthew 5:17).

How can Christ claim that He is there to fulfil God's Law, and yet, at the same time, show such apparent disregard for it? If He loved the Law, then he would desire to establish it and not take people away from it!

Furthermore, He says,

"He that hath my commandments, and keeps them, he it is that loves me: and he that loves me shall be loved of my Father (John 14:22).

What? Can this be right? We know that Jesus believed that the great commandment was to 'love God with all', but now He says that we should love Him above all else. But we can't do both. Jesus, by this teaching, has placed us in an impossible position. Is Jesus teaching us to have a divided loyalty?

Not at all! God, according to Jesus, approves of this double- mindedness, for, He says, if we love Him, the Father will love us (John 14:21)! Has the Father changed? Is the great commandment, 'Love God with all' still in force? It certainly looks as if Jesus has overthrown it and usurped the position that God should hold. Can these be the actions of a godly, religious teacher? Could a good moral man set himself up to rival God for the love He receives from mankind? Of course not! Any mere man who taught like that should be rejected and denounced as an evil worker.

So, was Jesus a wicked worker? The only conclusion is that ---yes indeed He was ... that is, if he wasn't and isn't God. But rather than show He was evil, these passages actually demonstrate that He was God in human flesh. We should love God with all and that's why it's perfectly okay to love Jesus with everything. Our entire loyalty belongs to God so it's perfectly fine to be entirely loyal to Jesus. We are to have no other Gods before Yahweh, so when we put Christ Jesus first, we are on safe ground for He is Yahweh in human flesh appearing!

And that's the Gospel Truth!