

Front Page - March 2017

The Apparent Inconsistencies In The Life Of The Lord - Part 1

Readings

John 8:29

Introduction

I am almost seventy-three years of age, and as I discuss life with other saints of the same age group, there are two observations we all acknowledge. They are:

- a) The difficulty of being consistent in any aspect of life. The idealist will find they are not perfect in everything and make mistakes. The ideal spouse will have times when shortness or annoyance will be seen. We are all the same.
- b) The only thing we are consistent in is our “inconsistency.”
 - i) I was not always consistent in my role as a husband and father, in my work life as a baker and cake decorator, and most importantly, in my spiritual life and duties before God.
 1. Furthermore, there is little comfort in knowing Peter was not always consistent, so brave one minute, then denying the Lord when a girl shows up and questions him (Mk. 14:29; Matt. 26:69-70, 74).
 2. Neither was Elijah consistent, so brave and then so despondent (1 Kgs. 18:19-40; 19:4).
 3. When I consider groups of those who profess allegiance to God, I find Israel was not consistent, nor was Thyatira, Ephesus or Laodicea.
 4. In the awareness of my own inconsistency, I then ponder, “How can I approach the God who is always consistent in every work He does, in every pronouncement He makes, and every decision He makes?” The answer is, I need at the very least a Mediator, a man who is always consistent in everything He did, and that consistency was with God. The Lord was such a man, the only one who unerringly declared God and the Father unswervingly glorified God, unhesitatingly fulfilled the will of God, and unwaveringly declared the Father’s name. It was the dilemma of Job who said, “Oh that I knew where I might find him!” (Job 23:3).

To some, such a heading may seem almost blasphemy to speak of the inconsistencies of the Lord, and without the word “apparent”, such a title would be such. The fact is, while Christ was always consistent before God, He was not always consistent with how man interpreted, or added to the law. For instance, He seemingly broke the Sabbath (Jn. 5:18). To see the perfections of the Lord from another perspective, we must consider His apparent inconsistencies and seek to understand how perfect they were.

The “Apparent” Inconsistencies Of The Lord

1) His Movements

- a) One of those occasions of apparent inconsistency was when the Lord seemed to indicate He was not going up to Jerusalem and then went. It appeared to be an inconsistency in decision making and activity (Jn. 7:7, 10). This was a serious matter, for if He did not go he would have sinned in disobeying God; then when He did go up, that would have been considered an inconsistency! How is this reconciled?
 - i) The Lord did not say He was not going up to Jerusalem for the feast but said, “MY time is not yet come” (Jn. 7:6), and by the word “yet”, it indicated He was going up, but not yet. Consequently, there was no change in His decision making.
 - ii) Speaking reverently, the Lord had to go up for the feast because it was a command of God. “Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the LORD thy God in the place which he shall choose; in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles: and they shall not appear before the LORD empty” (Deut. 16:16).
 - iii) Why then did he not go up when the family suggested only to go later? To me, the answer lies in the truths that, had He gone up with the family, attention would have been drawn to

Himself, and He was going up incognito. That could not have happened had He gone with the family for, had He performed a miracle, they would have very possibly boasted that He was their brother and Messiah. The Lord would not permit that possibility for He will not accept the witness of the powers of darkness. Their suggestion was an activity of Satan and their unbelief. Then He goes up. He was not inconsistent, but moving, not according to the will of man, but God. Again, when He did go up it was in secret and the people at the feast did not know if He was at the feast or not (Jn. 7:10-13) and then pondered who this young man was who spoke such profound teachings (Jn. 7:14-46). The lesson is, the true servant of God moves at the direction of God not the urgings of the unsaved and unbelievers, even if they are His earthly relations, even his mother.

- b) In John 7:10 He went up in secret and then in chapter 12:12-18 He went up very publicly. This seems inconsistent. In John 7 His time for revelation as the “King of Israel” was not yet come, but when it is God's time for Him to be presented the King, then He will go up in the fulfillment of the scripture (Jn. 12:15; Zech. 9:9). He then must go up publicly.

2) His response to invitations or suggestions

- a) At the wedding at Cana of Galilee, Mary His mother tells Him they have no wine (Jn. 2:3). The statement is a strong invitation to do something, “Show how wonderful you are”. The response of the Lord is, “Mine hour, is not yet come” (Jn. 2:4), that is, the time for my activity is not yet. In contrast to this is the response of the Lord when two on the Road to Emmaus make a suggestion or invitation (Lk. 24:29). This time He accepts their invitation. Why the difference? Was this not inconsistency? When Mary gave the suggestion it was for a present egotistical material need. What a disgrace for the host had they run out of wine at the wedding. It would be the talk of the area and he and the family permanently disgraced. The Lord does not seek to build up personal ego or just perform a miracle to protect someones “good” name. He will provide wine and save the reputations, but only when it manifests His glory in substantiating evidence of who He is (Jn. 2:11).
- b) Concerning the two on the Emmaus Road, He will accept their constraining for there is no material gain, but a desire from them to spend more time with Him, and on His side, to present the evidence to confused hearts and minds that the news they had heard was true, He was risen from the dead.

3) Love and behavior at deaths

- a) Recently I was at the bedside of a brother who was dying. It was requested that I take the ladies home and then return. Sadly, in those few moments I was away, my friend died. It is an automatic reaction to be with a loved one at the moment of death or with those who sorrow as soon as possible. Therefore, it must have been a bewilderment when Lazarus was very ill and news was sent to the Lord, “He whom Thou lovest is sick” (Jn. 11:3). Instead of coming immediately, the Lord stays two more days where He was (Jn. 11:6). Why did He not go immediately? Where is the love for He does not come in our hour of need and the family about to be broken? Then the situation is intensified when He goes to Nain (Lk. 7:11) where a family, was broken? It just was not right, at least to our thoughts. Then there is the case of Jairus (Lk. 8:41), a ruler of the synagogue who comes and asks for help for His daughter, and the Lord goes immediately and raises her from the dead! This all is very perplexing and leads to questions of friendship and love! How can these situation be perfectly justified?
- i) Several truths come to mind such as, Lazarus had to die for the Lord cannot be there at the moment of death for no one ever can die in the presence and power of the Lord. Also, this death was to make real the wonderful truth that He is the “Resurrection and the life” (Jn. 11:25), and what comfort that has brought many a breaking heart.
- ii) Again, it was as He stood by the tomb it is recorded, “Jesus wept”. The questioning of his love was shattered so that the people said, “Behold how he loved him!” (Jn. 11:35-36).
- iii) A point often missed is the duration after death before the Lord raises to life the individual. Jairus’ daughter was before the funeral, the window’s son was during the funeral, and Lazarus

Front Page - March 2017

The Apparent Inconsistencies In The Life Of The Lord - Part 1

was after the funeral. What comfort this gives for when the Lord comes for us, there will be some who have just died, some en route to the burial, and some whose bodies have gone to dust. He will raise them all.

- b) A further beauty is made when we observe how He spoke in each situation.
 - i) To the little twelve year old girl He called (phoneo, an elevated tone of voice, authoritative) saying, "Maid, arise" (Lk. 8:54).
 - ii) To the young man he said (epo, spoke), "Young man, I say unto thee, Arise" (Lk. 7:14).
 - iii) To Lazarus He cried with a loud voice (kraugazo, megas> voice <phone), "Lazarus, come forth" (Jn. 11:43).
- c) Finally, His response at the raising of the dead one or immediately afterward.
 - i) He who knew the weakness of the human body and what it is to hunger said, "Give her to eat" and "Took her by the hand" (Lk. 8:54-55). How stupendous this is, the hand of deity takes the chilled hand of death, and not only is there no contamination, but the power of life is imparted.
 - ii) The young man's mother was a widow. Let's not forget that there was no welfare state, nor widow's pension, how would she survive? He knew what it was like to have a mother bereft of her husband for Joseph, from all appearances, had died and therefore knew her need. He touches the bier and tells the young man to "arise". Even though He had every right to him from that point on, he knew the mother's need and, "Delivered him to his mother" (Lk. 7:13-15).
 - iii) Concerning Lazarus, and in contrast to the little girl whose hand He took and the widow's son whose bier He touched, the Lord touched nothing. It was the people who were commanded to roll away the stone and to them he gives the command, "Loose him, and let him go" (Jn. 11:44). He knew what it was to have fulness of life but be constrained, and so the command is for his liberation.

To be continued at a later date . . .

. . . Rowan Jennings