

# *XIII*

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## *GREATER WORKS THAN THESE*

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father (John 14:12).

When Jesus was upon the earth He performed all sorts of physical miracles. He gave sight to the blind, healed the sick, raised the dead, multiplied the loaves and fish, and in many other ways manifested that which was supernatural in the presence of those around Him.

He promised that His followers who believed in Him would do these things also.

But He also promised that they would do “greater” things because He was going unto the Father.

I have a growing conviction that these “greater” things do not refer to physical miracles. Jesus fed 5,000 men and their families with only five loaves of bread and two small fish. How

can someone do a greater miracle than this? Do we have to feed 10,000 men with four loaves and one fish? I think not!

In order to understand these words I think we have to place physical things in their proper perspective.

### THE THINGS WHICH WE SEE ARE TEMPORAL

“. . . For the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal . . .” (II Cor. 4:18).

When Jesus multiplied the loaves and fish He was working with things that were only temporal. They picked up the fragments that were left over, but their value would be short-lived. How long will unrefrigerated fish remain edible? How long will bread be good to eat? The multitudes who ate and were satisfied would be hungry again in only a few short hours.

Jesus said to the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well, “. . . Who-soever drinketh of this water shall thirst again” (John 4:13). Water, which is so necessary to physical life, is temporal and transitory. Spilled upon the ground it will disappear in a few short minutes. Imbibed by a human being it will soon be absorbed into our system and thirst will again return.

Jesus sought to point us to spiritual treasures. He spoke of water which will cause us to never thirst again. He promised treasures which moth and rust cannot corrupt and which thieves cannot break through and steal. These promises obviously deal with the spiritual, and it is here that believers are privileged to do “greater” works because Jesus went to the Father.

The same truth is stated again in John 7:38-39.

He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Spirit was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified).

While Jesus was in His physical body He could only be one place at a time. When He was in Jerusalem He could not be

also at Capernaum, and vice versa. When He was spending time with Jairus' daughter He could not also be spending time with blind Bartimaeus.

For this reason He said,

It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you . . . (John 16:7).

The things which we see are temporal. Even the physical body of Jesus was temporal. When Jesus died and returned to the Father, He came back to earth in the "form" of a Spirit. As a Spirit He could be everywhere at the same time. He could be with all people who desired fellowship with Him, and He could be in all places simultaneously.

The greatest miracles are spiritual and not physical . . . for the things which we can see are only temporal.

## JOHN THE BAPTIST

The contemporaries of Jesus knew that, "John did no miracle . . ." (John 10:41). Yet, Jesus said of him, "Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist" (Matt. 11:11). Then He added immediately, "notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."

These thoughts are so profound that we must summon all of our spiritual energies in an attempt to understand them. The Scriptures mention stupendous miracles performed by the prophets. Moses was used by God to bring ten plagues upon Egypt. Each of these miracles was of such magnitude that it influenced an entire nation of people. By the power of God, he parted the Red Sea and fed several million people for forty years in the wilderness. Elijah defeated the priests of Baal, started and stopped a three year drought, and was taken bodily into heaven. Elisha parted the Jordan, raised the dead, blinded

the Syrian army, and possessed such power that years after his death a dead man was revived by merely touching his bones.

Yet, in the eyes of God not one of these prophets was greater than John, even though John worked no miracle. Surely God sees things from a different perspective than man.

In order for the child of God to do "greater" works than Jesus he does not have to raise the dead, or cleanse the leper, or heal the sick. John the Baptist did not do these things and yet he was not inferior to any prophet that had been born of woman.

Yet, the least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than John!

### HELEN KELLER

Helen Keller was born in Tuscumbia, Alabama. At the age of 19 months she suffered a terrible illness which left her blind, deaf, and dumb. This triple handicap made it virtually impossible for her to adequately appreciate much of the physical world around her. She could feel the warmth of the sun, but could not drink in the glorious beauty of a sunset. She could feel the bite of winter's snow, but could not see the beauty of a snow crowned mountain.

Her ability to "hear" was only by means of faint vibrations. When Enrico Caruso sang for her, she placed her fingers upon his lips. However inadequate was her perception of music, it was the best that she could do. She "heard" the music of Jascha Heifetz with her fingers resting lightly upon his violin, and when Feodor Chaliapin wanted her to hear his voice he placed his arm around her tightly and sang the "Volga Boat Song."

Her ability to speak has been called the greatest individual achievement in the history of education. Yet, she acknowledged that she had only partially conquered the hostile silence which imprisoned her. She said,

My voice is not a pleasant one, I am afraid, but I have clothed its broken wings in the unflinching hues of my dreams and my

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struggle for it has strengthened every fiber of my being and deepened my understanding of all human strivings and disappointed ambitions.

The normal human being has five senses. We can touch, hear, see, taste, and smell. Each of these abilities deals only with the physical. You cannot touch, hear, see, taste, or smell a spirit. We live in a universe which is literally filled with spiritual realities that we have almost no way of perceiving. Whatever faint vibrations which we feel can excite our interest and inspire our imagination, but cannot do justice to the beauty and power of those spiritual beings around us.

In this regard, consider again the prayer of Paul for the Ephesians. He wanted God to open the eyes of their understanding,

. . . that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe . . . (Eph. 1:18-19).

The realities are there, but we can never start to appreciate the "greater" works about which Jesus spoke until we see them.

## HEAVENLY PLACES

The expression "heavenly places" occurs five times in the book of Ephesians. The word "places" is in italics, which means that it is not in the original text. Some have, therefore, translated it as "heavenlies." Perhaps it refers to the invisible world of eternal spirits which one must be born again in order to see. At any rate, it is the very focal point of Christian warfare, for the Scriptures teach that we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness of this world, and against spiritual hosts in the heavenlies (Eph. 6:12).

At the time Paul wrote these inspired words he was in prison. From an earthly perspective he was a "loser" but he constantly

described himself as "more than a conqueror." At the very time he was chained as a prisoner to a Roman soldier he was simultaneously sitting with Christ in the heavenlies (Eph. 1:3). The Devil is described as the god of this world (II Cor. 4:4), but at the same time Christ reigns at the right hand of God in the heavenlies (Eph. 1:20). We came out of the waters of Christian baptism to face the trials and temptations of a lost world, but at the same time we were raised up to sit with Christ in the heavenlies (Eph. 2:6). We cannot see the spirit world with human eyes, but the spirit world can see us. They behold our every action. We are indeed compassed about with a great cloud of witnesses, and it is in the church that they see the manifold wisdom of God being made manifest (Eph. 3:10).

In the world we may have tribulation, but we reign as kings in the world of the spirits.

Be of good cheer. Christ has overcome the world!

### A GOOD REPORT THROUGH FAITH

The eleventh chapter of Hebrews is called the "faith chapter" of the Bible. In this chapter is a list of the heroes and heroines of the faith who through faith,

subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again . . . (Heb. 11:33-35).

The Scriptures then list another catalog of faithful witnesses who did not receive deliverance,

. . . and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: and others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in

sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth . . . (Heb. 11:35-38).

Before us we have what seems to be two groups of people. One had answers to their prayers and one who apparently did not. One group was delivered from the mouths of lions, and the other group was killed by lions. One group who turned to flight and armies of aliens, and another group who was chased about to seek refuge in dens and caves of the earth.

God, however, does not see these as two separate groups. He sees them as one. The Scriptures teach that, "THESE ALL, HAVING OBTAINED A GOOD REPORT THROUGH FAITH, RECEIVED NOT THE PROMISE . . ." (Heb. 11:39). Praise God! They were all faithful until death and received the crown of life!

### FAITHFUL, NOT SUCCESSFUL

Some of you who read these words have demonstrated an unswerving loyalty to Christ. You have been faithful "in season and out of season," but your Sunday school class has not grown, your church has not been blessed with a lot of additions, your efforts at personal evangelism seem to be futile.

Cheer up! You can still be more than conquerors through Him that loved us. God calls us to be faithful, not successful.

Even Jesus did not go to the cross as "successful" by the standards of this world. The fickle multitudes that shouted "Hosanna to the son of David," shouted "crucify him" just a few days later. Even His disciples forsook Him and fled.

Who, by human standards, would have considered Him a King? Yet, it was by the very act of His death that He overcame the wicked one.

The first one who profited by the experience of Calvary was the last one whom the world would have chosen. Pilate had