

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).

These words must be among the most amazing ever uttered by our Lord. They were addressed to a group of very ordinary people, gathered from very humble circumstances, and yet they were being told that believers in the Lord, like themselves, would perform greater miracles than those performed by Christ Himself! We need to remember, also, that those addressed had recently witnessed miracles unprecedented. They had seen Christ raise Lazarus from the dead, -a man who had been in the grave four days, but, at a word from Christ's lips, he had emerged from the tomb, still bound in grave- clothes (John 11: 44). Just prior to that, again, the Lord had given sight to a man who was born blind (John 9:1-7). They had actually seen Christ feed a multitude of 5000 people from only five loaves and two fishes (John 6:11-13). On that same day, Christ had walked on the sea to rescue His storm -tossed disciples (John 6:19), and there had even been times when Christ had positively rebuked the wind and the sea, and they had obeyed Him (Mark 4:39)!

Everywhere, people were saying, "We have seen strange things today" (Luke 5:26), and even the disciples had to ask, "What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!" (Matt.8: 27). These are but a few examples, but now, in John 14, Christ is telling them that they would do GREATER works than these! Strange word, indeed, and calling for some explanation. With the help of the Lord, we shall now share what has come to us regarding it.

Let us first say that we ourselves have never questioned that "working of miracles" was one of the GIFTS given by our Lord to His Church (1 Cor.12: 10), -or that miracles were performed, -but it is still a fact that 2000 years of Church history make no mention of miracles commensurate with those performed by our Lord. We must therefore look DEEPER for the true explanation, and this we shall now seek to do.

First, we need to realize that, in this whole section of John's Gospel, (chs.14-16); our Lord was approaching the matter of A GREAT AND GLORIOUS TRANSITION that was about to take place among His people. It was, indeed, the dawning of a new era, when "things physical " would give way to" things spiritual ". The physical works and wonders that they had seen had been great indeed, but now they could expect those SPIRITUAL COUNTERPARTS which would be far greater; -and that would be the area where their ministry, in due time, would centre. They would "perform" those GREATER WONDERS of the Spirit, and they would witness those MIGHTIER MARVELS of the inner man. In that sense, they would be accomplishing greater miracles than those that had been performed by Christ.

No doubt we would all agree that WHILST the raising of Lazarus from the dead was something immeasurably great, -the bringing of "dead souls" into "newness of Life", in Christ, is something even greater, -certainly in the light of a coming ETERNITY! What a privilege it is to see our fellow- men BORN AGAIN, as we give out God's glorious Gospel among them! And it is the same with the matter of giving sight to the blind; -great indeed, but still not to be compared with the opening of men's inward eyes through the giving out of God's Word! Paul, we remember, was sent to the Gentile world "TO OPEN THEIR EYES, and to turn them from darkness to

Light, and from the power of Satan unto God" (Acts 26:18). And did not the same Paul "feed" multitudes of inward "spirits" through the writing, and sending out, of his inspired Epistles? And, thank God, we also may have our part in the same miraculous ministry, as we pass on the loaves and fishes of God's Truth. Yes, even we are called to perform "GREATER WORKS"!

We feel we must now say a little about an especially important point, which the Lord carefully made when giving His original promise. The FULL statement actually occupies THREE verses (12-14), and we have to keep the WHOLE passage in view when looking into this subject. In verse 12 (where we have the mention of the "greater works"), the Lord concludes the promise with the important words, -"BECAUSE I go unto My Father", thereby indicating, (to start with), that those "works" would be related to His ascension; -they would, in fact, be the happy issue of that triumph. Then, in the two verses that follow, He takes us still further, and lets us know that it will be HE, The Ascended Lord, Who will be The Accomplishing Worker behind everything that will take place! His words are, "Ye shall ask, and I WILL DO". The full truth of the matter, then, is that it is still HE Who will be doing those greater works, -but working, now, from the GLORY through the instrumentality of His people! All will be Heaven -based, and it is in that way that His earlier works on earth will be surpassed by what HE will do FROM THE THRONE, - through people like us! They will be inner and spiritual wonders indeed.

A verse, which greatly helps us here, is Luke 12:50, where our Lord says, "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and HOW AM I STRAITENED till it be accomplished!" He was referring, of course, to the "BAPTISM" of His Cross, which was then drawing near, and He says that He was enduring a great "straitening" until it was all over. He was alluding to those very severe restrictions which He took upon Himself for the period of His sojourn on earth, and which it is so difficult for us to understand. Imagine it! -The Great Creator of this vast universe, held within the confines of the tiny land of Palestine! All power was His, and yet we find Him "Wearied with his journey", and having to rest on the well of Samaria! (John 4:6). Such was restriction indeed, but, in Luke 12, He was saying that the chains would soon be off, and He would be moving again everywhere in the full majesty of His power.

We must emphasize, of course, that the "limitations" we have mentioned were willingly accepted, and patiently endured, until the "baptism" was, indeed, accomplished. And we should also add that it was a merciful self-limitation", for, had He come and moved around in the full blaze of His Eternal Being, all would have been consumed before Him. But, thank God, the "baptism" is now accomplished, and our Risen and Ascended Lord is limited no more. As the enthroned Lord of All, HE is now knowing anew-glorious RELEASE, and, wonder of wonders; His believing people are the very instruments for the expression of that RELEASE! Now, He will perform those new, and inner, and greater wonders through us. Indeed, He will "DO MARVELS"! (See Exodus: 34:10). That, we say, is the FULLER secret behind the promise of John 14:12-14. It is linked with His ascension, and with His resultant union with His people.

"And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. "If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it". (John 14:13,14)

We shall now consider something, which, in some respects, must be the greatest marvel of all, certainly something, which carries the most solemn and practical challenges. We have in mind our Lord's references (in John 14:13,14) to the "ASKINGS" of His people; -"If ye ASK, I will do".

We need to see that, in adding those words, our Great Lord was again "limiting Himself"; -this time restricting what would be His great Ascension Powers to the prayers of His people. Evidently, He plans to do ONLY what His people ASK Him to do! This is gracious self-limitation indeed, and it bespeaks the measureless preciousness of His people to Him, and also shows His inseparable union with them! We repeat, -He plans to do, from the GLORY; only what His people will ask Him to do.

We believe that Christ has held Himself to this principle from the very beginning of the Church age. If we but knew the WHOLE story, we would see that there never has been an activity of our Ascended Lord, towards the consummation of His purpose, without there being, SOMEWHERE BEHIND IT, some praying person, or some group of praying persons. They may have prayed tremblingly in some obscure or hidden place, but it has been PRAYER IN THE NAME, and the Great Ascended Lord has been "freed to move", --mightily!

We ask, then, would we not all do well to pause quietly here and face up to some very serious questions, --such as: --

- What release of our Lord's ascension powers has been brought about through MY prayers?
- What have I dared to ask Him to do?
- Have I given to PRAYER the priority it should have?
- What, really is the "level" and "nature" of the praying at OUR church Prayer Meetings?
- What is the measure of the "vision" behind those prayers? Are they being linked to the FACT of our Lord's ascension?
- Is there any "echo", for instance, of prayers like that in Psalm 45; - "Gird

Thy sword upon Thy thigh, O MOST MIGHTY, with Thy glory and THY majesty...ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness" (Psa.45: 3,4). For our comfort and encouragement (and I most certainly include myself), let me say that we do not need to be "prayer-experts" of some kind; -for the promise of John 14 is for those who will simply "believe on Christ" (v.12). That is all that is needed!

O Lord. TEACH US TO PRAY.

O Lord, graciously do Thine own "GREATER WORKS".

Do them today, through whomsoever Thou chooseth,

We "ASK", -in Thine own Great Name! Amen. Hallelujah! WE BELIEVE!

Perhaps this is an appropriate time for me to "share around" the words of a song, which the Lord put into my heart just recently.

MAKE ME A MAN OF PRAYER

My Father Who in Heaven art

Make me a man of prayer

This longing overwhelms my heart

Make me a man of prayer.

O grant me my petition

Make me a man of prayer

'Tis all my life's ambition

Make me a man of prayer.

While Christ the Lord has power to save

Make me a man of prayer

And lift poor sinners from the grave

Make me a man of prayer.

While men still seek the world's acclaim

Make me a man of prayer

And see no beauty in Christ's Name

Make me a man of prayer.

While churches bear the marks of death

Make me a man of prayer

And lack the Spirit's vital breath

Make me a man of prayer.

While millions lie in awful need

Make me a man of prayer

And few the Master's call will heed

Make me a man of prayer.

While hellish legions hold the field

Make me a man of prayer

And few the Spirit's sword can wield

Make me a man of prayer.

While God's great purposes are sealed

Make me a man of prayer

And Christ the Son is unrevealed

Make me a man of prayer.

Till comes the Bride in spotless white

Make me a man of prayer

All precious in the Savior's sight

Make me a man of prayer.

While faithful promises still stand

Make me a man of prayer

And faith can move God's Mighty Hand

Make me a man of prayer.

While Christ Himself lives just to pray

Make me a man of prayer

And grants His Spirit day by day

Make me a man of prayer.

(May be sung to the tune of "Near to the heart of God").

"Verily, verily, I say unto you... the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these

Shall he do: because I go unto My Father.

And whatsoever ye shall ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in My Name. I will do it" (John 14:12-14).

Note: "Prayer in the Name" is prayer prayed by those who are IN UNION WITH THE LORD. The fact is that, after His ascension, Christ poured out the Holy Spirit, - thereby implanting His own Risen Life into the hearts of those who believe on Him. He thus became the Vital Head of a CORPORATE ORGANISM, -and all who are part of that organism rightly share the NAME of Him Who is its Head. This glorious reality also eliminates all thought of selfish or superficial prayers, as such cannot even exist in an Organism, where a Selfless Christ is the Head and the Life. This is a great secret in the matter of prevailing prayer.

The basic call to the CHRISTIAN, now, is to "DO ALL IN THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him" (Col.3: 17). We just ABIDE IN HIM, --by faith.
Hallelujah!