

The Wednesday Word, February 3, 2016: A Much Misunderstood Scripture

*“Verily I say unto you, among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is **least** in the **kingdom** of heaven is greater than he.”*

Matthew 11:11

In my early years as a Christian, I was taught that this verse demonstrated that the weakest believer in the New Covenant was greater than John the Baptist. I was told that wee Betty Murphy, a woman who at times neither knew if she was saved or lost was greater than the final prophet of the Old Covenant. Poor little Betty didn't know the difference between predestination and a bar of soap but, according to the prevalent theory, Betty was greater than the One who faithfully prepared the way of the Lord. I'm sorry, but I just couldn't get my head around that.

Then one day, I believe God opened my eyes. Who was the least in the Kingdom when this was spoken? Think about it. The least in the Kingdom was none other than the Lord Jesus. To this point, He had, with success, spent His earthly life making Himself the least and the last.

Consider this:

He made Himself the least when He was born to an unwed Jewish teenager.

He made Himself the least when He allowed His first bed to be a feeding trough for cattle.

He made Himself the least when He lived in obscurity for 30 years avoiding recognition.

He made Himself the least as He worked quietly at the carpenter's bench.

He made Himself the least when, for that entire time, He refused to vaunt His divine attributes.

No one could have guessed that He was God in human flesh appearing for he made himself the least. As we read in Philippians; *“....Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross”* (Philippians 2:5-8).

He made Himself the least.

Consider the absolutely stunning truth of the Incarnation. God came here Himself! Does this not amaze you? In Heaven, He had been enthroned in majesty and surrounded by at least 100 million worshiping angels (Revelation 5:11). Yet He made Himself the least. Thunder, lightning and voices proceed from His throne (Revelation 4:5)...yet He made Himself the least. He was the absolute sovereign and ruler of all things...yet He made Himself the least.

As we abide in Him, we will find a growing desire to also become the least. It should, therefore, be a foreign thing for the believer to join in conspiracies against the Pastor. How can a person who sees themselves as the least do that? Likewise, it should be an alien practice for the believer to jockey for political power within the Church assembly. After all, we are called to be followers of the One who didn't try to promote Himself but made Himself the least.

Jesus was the least, yet He was greater than John the Baptist and the Old Covenant. He brought in better promises (Hebrews 8:6) a better hope (Hebrews 7:19), a better covenant (Hebrews 8:6) and a better sacrifice (Hebrews 9:23). To do this, He became the least. He was patient, kind and without envy. He did not seek his own way and was not easily provoked. He took the servant's place and

washed the disciple's feet and did so because He was the least.

What Matthew 11:11 is telling us is that Jesus, not some stumbling weak saint, is greater than John the Baptist. The New Covenant is greater than the Old. In Christ Jesus we see that the greatest became the least and has now again taken His place as the greatest of all.

And that's the Gospel Truth!