

# Greater Than John

by Robert B. Thompson

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*To become a member of the Kingdom of God, we must die to our self-will and choose to obey God's will, allowing Christ to be born in us and our old personality to be replaced with a new, Divine personality.*

**Topics:** "New Creation", "Spiritual Growth"

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## Description

Robert B. Thompson preaches on the concept that the least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than John the Baptist, emphasizing the transformation required to become a new creation in Christ. He delves into the process of dying to self-will and allowing Christ to be formed within, leading to a new humanity of Divine origin. Thompson highlights the importance of obedience, self-denial, and enduring trials as ways to progress in the Kingdom of God, ultimately becoming partakers of the Divine Nature through Christ.

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## Transcript

I tell you the truth: Among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. (Matthew 11:11)

The Lord said John was more than a prophet. He claimed John was Elijah. The angel proclaimed to Zechariah that his son, John, would go before Jesus in the spirit and power of Elijah.

Jesus remarked that no person born of woman was greater than John the Baptist. Yet the person who is least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than John, the Lord stated.

At first glance it seems impossible that the least individual in the Kingdom of God is greater than John the Baptist. Yet we know Christ spoke only the truth. So we must give this matter some thought.

To answer the question of how it could be that the least member of the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than any person born of woman, we have to understand what it means to be a member of the Kingdom. We understand what it means to be born of woman, but do we understand what it means to be in the Kingdom of Heaven, or least in the Kingdom of Heaven?

What is the Kingdom of Heaven, of God (for they are the same kingdom, in spite of some current teaching to the contrary)? The Kingdom of God is the Kingdom that has come to us from Heaven. It is as simple as this. The same parables found in Matthew that describe the Kingdom of Heaven are found also in Mark and Luke. In Matthew and Luke they are termed parables of the Kingdom of God.

The Kingdom of God is God in Christ in the saints governing God's creatures.

To become a member of the Kingdom of God we have to be born again. This means Christ has to be born in us. There has to be a new creation in which the old things have passed away and all has become new; and all is of God.

Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, (II Corinthians 5:17,18--NASB)

Think about this for a moment. The old things of our personality have passed away. New things have come, things that are from God.

If Christ has been born in us, and then formed in us until all the old aspects of our first, human personality have been removed, and in their place have come all new things from God, then we no longer are our original personality. We are different. Our first humanity has been replaced with a new humanity that is Divine in origin.

From the expression "least in the kingdom of heaven" we assume there are various ranks in the Kingdom. Every member has undergone the transition from the merely human to the Divinely human, but some are of higher rank than others.

Now let us think about Moses and the Prophets, or of John the Baptist. All of them were profoundly anointed with the Holy Spirit. Yet each of them maintained his original human personality--that which is born of women. Isn't that so?

Yet here comes someone who at one time was born of a woman, but now has been changed such that his original human personality has passed away and now he is a Divinely human person. Certainly the Apostle Paul was a Divinely human person. "I am crucified with Christ. Nevertheless I live. Yet it is not I who am living but Christ who is living in me." It appears Paul's original personality has been crucified. The old has passed away. What is living now is Christ--that is, the Virtue of Christ has permeated Paul's soul and spirit such that it can be maintained the old has passed away, the new has come, and the new is of God.

Now compare such an individual with Elijah. Elijah had one of the greatest anointings of the Holy Spirit of the people we read about in the Bible. Yet Elijah was a human being. The Apostle Paul was more than just a human being, we might say. His original personality was dead on the cross with Christ. His new personality was ordered of God. Therefore Paul (although certainly not least in the Kingdom) was greater than any of the men of God of the Old Testament.

And this is true of each member of the Kingdom of God.

This brings up a point. Can we say that every person who professes faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is greater than John the Baptist? Most decidedly not!

But numerous Christian believers claim to be new creations in Christ.

The truth is, many who profess faith in Christ have barely started on the path to becoming a new creation in Jesus Christ. They believe Christ is the Son of God. They have placed their faith in the blood of

atonement for the forgiveness of their sins. They have received a portion of the Life of the Spirit. They have had the Seed of Christ planted in their heart. And now they are waiting to go to Heaven.

They have never denied themselves. They have never taken up their cross and followed Christ.

God, through the atoning blood, has given them the authority to walk forward on the road to becoming a new creation in Christ. God has given them of His Holy Spirit so they might have the wisdom and power necessary to walk forward on the road to becoming a new creation in Christ.

Yet, it could not be said of them that the old has passed away and all has become new. Therefore they do not qualify as being greater than Moses and the Prophets.

Because of incorrect teaching, or for whatever other reason, many have stopped at the starting point of the Christian salvation.

In order to move forward on the path that leads into the fullness of the Kingdom of God we have to die. In order to become a new creation in Jesus Christ, the old creation has to die.

Now, how do we go about dying? Remember, it is not our physical body that dies, it is our inner person, our true person. Our body is no more than a house, a visible form that covers our true, eternal spiritual personality.

How do we attain to the death we are seeking, in which the old passes away and all becomes new and of God?

First, let us realize the most distinguishing feature of our true spiritual personality is our will. It is our will that identifies our true personality as a unique individual. If we are to submit our true personality to death, the death must be accomplished by our will.

Our true personality must learn seven words and repeat them frequently: "Not my will but Yours be done." These seven words are the key to our becoming a new creation in the Lord Jesus Christ.

There are three major areas of sin in our original personality. These are first, our willingness to find our survival and security in the world spirit; second, the appetites and passions that inhabit our flesh; and third, our personal ambition and self-centeredness. These three are spiritual darkness in our original personality. God wants to replace them with spiritual light--the very Light of God's Life.

Our will must motivate us to deal successfully with each of these three areas, if the old is to pass away and the new is to take its place.

Our will chooses to look to God for our daily needs, not to the Antichrist world spirit. We do not make money our god, which often is done in the United States. We look to God instead of to the military establishments and other resources of our state government to keep us from harm. This is a choice we must make; and if we pray fervently to God He will help us choose to look to Him instead of to the world for our survival and security. This is the first step toward becoming a new creation--one who is greater than any of the Prophets.

Our will chooses to not yield to the appetites and passions of our sinful nature. We absolutely refuse to give in to the whimperings of our flesh. We have to take a firm hand with the passions of our physical body. As Paul taught us, we must beat our body down and keep it under control, or we will be disqualified

for membership in the Kingdom of God.

Make no mistake: your physical body is one of your worst enemies. It will kill your spiritual life if you allow it to. It is only a visible covering for your true person. Never let your body forget that. Rule it with an iron hand. It is certain no one will govern the nations with Jesus Christ if he is not able to bring his own body under subjection to his will.

Do you know what it means to lose your soul? It means to permit your body instead of your true person to make your decisions. Once your body gains the upper hand, you are dwelling in a state of corruption. This will be revealed in the Day of Resurrection unless through prayer you are able to take back the rulership over your personality.

So by our will we bring to the cross our trust in the world system.

By our will we bring to the cross the lusts and appetites of our flesh.

You know, as the Apostle Paul pointed out, we must put off the old man and put on the new man. We do this by a change in the attitude of our mind.

You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; To be made new in the attitude of your minds; And to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. (Ephesians 4:22-24)

We have dealt with our trust in the Antichrist world spirit. We have dealt with the lusts and passions that dwell in our flesh.

Now we turn to what is by far the most difficult area of our original personality--difficult to dislodge and replace with the new Divine Life. I am referring now to the self-will that identifies our true personality. Previously we relied on our will to deal with worldliness and the lusts of our flesh. Now we are ready to use our will to choose to replace our will with the will of God.

Since it is obvious our will cannot crucify itself, we must look to God to accomplish this third and greatest step.

When we are dealing with the world spirit and with the lusts of our flesh we are addressing attitudes and compulsions that we recognize to be sinful and undesirable. But to take the next step, and seek to have our will brought into alignment with God's will, is to proceed beyond the battle against that which obviously is sinful and destructive. It is this third step that brings us to the fullness of fruitfulness and conquest.

We presently, as I have stated in other writings, are at the golden Lampstand of the Tabernacle of the Congregation, that is, if we have come as far as the Pentecostal experience in our Christian walk. Now we are facing the Altar of Incense. It is at the Altar of Incense that we cry out, "Not my will but Yours be done." When we repeatedly make this declaration, the angels of God begin to blow the trumpets of judgment and war.

Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and hurled it on the earth; and there came peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning and an earthquake. Then the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared to sound them. (Revelation 8:5,6)

There are two examples in the Old Testament of the power that issues from God's Throne when someone is willing to say "Not my will but Yours be done."

The first is the incredible act of obedience on the part of Abraham when he chose to obey God in the matter of the sacrifice of Isaac. Here is an example of a will that is choosing to die to itself in order that God's will might be done.

The result was extraordinary fruitfulness and extraordinary conquest.

The angel of the LORD called to Abraham from heaven a second time And said, "I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, And through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me." (Genesis 22:15-18)

Now notice carefully: this was not an issue of worldliness. Worldliness had been dealt with when Abraham was called out of the civilization of Ur.

This was not an issue of the lusts of the flesh. The lusts of Abraham's flesh had been dealt with when God said: "Walk before Me and be perfect."

Rather, the sacrifice of Isaac was an issue of Abraham's will. Isaac did not represent worldliness. Isaac did not represent the sinful nature. Isaac represented the will of the true person of Abraham; not the appetites of his flesh, but his right to live and have a son.

This is what makes the crucifixion of the will so difficult. It is not a replacing of that which is sinful with that which is righteous and holy. It is a replacing of our right to be an ordinary human being, as it were, with God's desires.

The second example of the crucifixion of the will occurred in Gethsemane. Here the Lord Jesus was faced with the possibility of spending eternity in Hell with the demons. This was a much more severe test than that administered to Abraham. But, of course, the Person being tested was much stronger than Abraham.

Jesus Christ learned obedience by the things He suffered, the Bible tells us. The willingness of the Lord Jesus Christ to relinquish His own right to enjoy the Presence of God resulted in the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world.

The willingness of one person to obey the Lord implicitly can change the history of the world.

So we pass the test of worldliness. We pass the test of bodily lusts. Now we are facing the test of obedience.

As I said, we cannot teach ourselves obedience. Our will cannot crucify itself. Our will can and must choose to obey God's will, even though that obedience means the death of itself in the process.

We become a member of the Kingdom of God when the old worldliness has passed away and in its place has come trust in God for our physical survival. It is the test of bread.

We become a member of the Kingdom of God when we put to death the actions of our sinful nature and in their place have come the righteousness and holiness of the Kingdom of God. It is the test of pleasure and

worship.

We become a member of the Kingdom of God when we do God's will rather than our own. It is the test of the gable of the Temple.

Absolute obedience! Stern obedience to the Father! We learn this through self-denial as God permits Satan to put us in prison.

We overcome the accuser of the brothers by loving not our life to the death.

God permits Satan to put us in prison, although God always retains control of our imprisonment--just as He retained control of Job's imprisonment.

When you are put in prison, a situation which you dislike, and there is no way out of the prison except by breaking God's laws, then you have to stay there and suffer. How long! Until God sees that your will has been sufficiently converted in terms of the place in the Kingdom God has for you.

The higher the rank in the Kingdom to which you have been called, the longer and more difficult your imprisonment will be.

A painful marriage! Sickness! A hated employment! An area in which you do not want to live! An infirmity of some sort! Continual pain! Poverty! Slandered by your peers! Humility! Lack of recognition! No opportunity to marry! A situation you are forced into which you detest! The deferral of your hopes and desires for many years!

God has His ways. But what are we to do? We are to pray, pray, pray, pray and ask God for the desires of our heart, in the meanwhile giving Him thanks for His goodness. Anyone can give God thanks and praise when everything is fine. It is when we are very low and our hope is almost gone that our thanks and praise are specially dear to God.

In these kinds of situations we learn obedience. We come to know God, if we remain faithful.

If God's hand is on you, and He has called you to Himself by placing you in painful and distressing circumstances, do not expect other Christians to understand what is taking place in your life.

Christians are very good at comforting Job. Believe me, they know more than we do. They offer what they believe to be excellent advice: "If you had faith you would gain the victory; if you had brought up your children correctly they would not have gone astray; if you forgive people your arthritis will disappear; if your are depressed it is because you are not praising God."

It helps to read the Book of Job and the Lamentations of Jeremiah. They will sustain you during the trial of your faith.

The Christian literature in America is filled with books that tell us how to be a Christian without really trying. There are a few that have insight; but the remainder seem to be of little use to the individual whom God has called to Himself.

As a pastor I have noted the various seminars, books, and tapes that offer management techniques to the person who wants to build a large congregation. I hope these resources prove to be helpful for some. But to the individual with whom God is dealing, these are as so much chaff. It is as though they have put the

Ark of God in a new car and are driving it around town in an advertising campaign.

When God is ready for us to be fruitful and to exercise conquest over His enemies He will bring us to several points of decision. We have to choose to obey God no matter how it hurts. You know, it really is not past enduring when we have a willing and obedient spirit. We just put our hand in God's hand and trust Him to lead us through the darkness.

The River Jordan represents death to our self-will. We have to die in Jordan, as it were, if we are to enter the land of our inheritance. The Veil of the Tabernacle also represents death to our self-will.

By death to our self-will I do not mean we become passive. We keep our will honed to razor-sharpness. We are decisive, not double-minded when it comes to our choices. But we always defer to the Lord. No matter what He requires, we always defer to His will.

There have risen mighty men of God in time past--men born of women who were heavily anointed with the Spirit of God.

Then came the Lord Jesus Christ who was born of a woman, but also of the Spirit of God. When He arose from the dead He was the Firstborn of the Kingdom of God.

Then He ascended to the Father. Now through the Spirit of God we can partake of His Divinity. Now we also have been born of a woman and of the Spirit of God. Like Him, we are son of man and son of God.

Our original personality has been brought to the cross with Him. Our new personality has come from God, such that all we are has partaken of the Divine Nature.

Jesus told us some would be able to see Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the prophets in the Kingdom of God. Since the only manner in which anyone can enter the Kingdom of God is by being born again, we conclude that the patriarchs and prophets, who were born of women and then died, and who now are in the Kingdom of God, have received Christ while living before God in the spirit world. Many of them are probably of high rank in the Kingdom.

God is doing great things for us today. Let us pay full attention as God removes the old and places the new in our personality until we in truth have become a new creation.

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