

Articles and Sermons :: What did Jesus mean when he said we would do greater work than he did?

**What did Jesus mean when he said we would do greater work than he did? - posted by Giggles (), on: 2010/2/22 22:36**

First of all, he said that to his disciples and only to us indirectly, if at all. He is speaking to the first-century church, and he makes the statement that the works they do will be greater than the works that he performed. Let me tell you what I don't think it means. There are many today who believe that there are people running around this world right now who are performing greater miracles, performing miracles in greater abundance, and actually doing more incredible acts of divine healing than Jesus himself did. I can't think of any more serious delusion than that, that somebody would actually think they have exceeded Jesus in terms of the works he has done. There's nobody who comes close to the work that Jesus did. Some say that perhaps we can't do greater works than Jesus individually but that corporately we are able to exceed in power the things that Jesus did. We see amazing things happening in the first-century church through the power that Christ gave to his apostles. We see people raised from the dead through Peter and Paul. But at the same time I would challenge people by telling them to add up all of the miracles that, according to New Testament records, were wrought through the hands of Paul, Peter, and the rest of the disciples corporately, put them all together, and see if they measure a greater degree than those which our Lord performed. If Jesus meant that people would do greater miracles than he performed in the sense of displaying more power and more astonishing things than he did, then obviously one of the works that Jesus failed to perform was sound prophecy, because that just didn't happen. Nobody exceeded Jesus' works. That's what leads me to believe that's not what he meant. I think he's using the term "greater" in a different way. I heard a church historian say that he was convinced that when Jesus made the statement "Greater works than these will you do," he was referring to the whole scope of the impact of Christ's people and his church on the world throughout history. I know a lot of people look at the history of Western civilization and say that the bulk of the church's influence has been negative—the black eye of the Crusades, the Galileo episode, and holy wars, etc. If you look at the record, you will see that it was the Christian church that spearheaded the abolition of slavery, the end of the Roman arena, the whole concept of education, the concept of charitable hospitals and orphanages, and a host of other humanitarian activities. I think, personally, that that's what Jesus meant when he talked about greater works.

-R.C. Sproul

I think this is an interesting exegesis into this mysterious declaration of the Lord. Does anyone else have some insight?

**Re: What did Jesus mean when he said we would do greater work than he did? - posted by Areadymind (), on: 2010/2/22 22:36**

How many disciples did Jesus make in His life? What is the greatest miracle a human being, by the power of God, can experience in this life? How many disciples did the early church make, and then continue on throughout history making?

**Re: What did Jesus mean when he said we would do greater work than he did? - posted by Veronica226 (), on: 2010/2/22 22:36**

Sorry this post is sooooo long. I wanted to make myself clear. (edited because I can't spell today. lol)

I totally absolutely, 110% disagree with Mr. Sproul. Respectfully of course. Because if you follow this train of thought to its logical conclusion, then the Bible begins to contradict itself. Let me explain. IF Christ was only speaking to The Twelve then the preceding verses in chapter 14 along with the rest of the chapter and chapters 15 and 16 are also ONLY for The Twelve. So we shouldn't pray in Jesus name (14:13), we DON'T receive the Holy Spirit (14:16), we aren't branches so Jesus isn't the vine (to us) and we don't have to abide in Him (15:5-8), we don't have to bear fruit (15:16), the world won't hate us (15:18-20), we won't have peace because He only told these things to the Twelve (16:33). And all of that contradicts other Scriptures. And if there are true contradictions in the Bible then it really isn't the inerrant Word of God and our faith falls apart. If ALL Scripture is NOT useful for training in righteousness, (2 Timothy 3:16) what's the point of having things in it that aren't useful for us?

Secondly he is taking one sentence out of the context of the verse. The full context of the verse is: "I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father." (John 14:12) HE THAT BELIEVES ON ME or ANYONE WHO HAS FAITH IN ME. Sounds pretty all inclusive to me. And the prerequisite for doing greater works, belief! faith! trust! The reason this can happen? Because

He goes to the Father! He has now been given all dominion, power and authority! Ephesians 3:20 says: "Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us." Immeasurable more. Sounds like greater works to me...

I personally believe the reason that Mr. Sproul can't believe that this verse applies to all believers is because he doesn't see "greater works" in his own life and so therefore since he "believes" it can't be true for all believers. Because IF that verse is true for all believers and he isn't seeing greater works in his life it means that he has a heart of UNBELIEF. Because Christ says that he who believes on Me will do greater works. It is a lot easier to rationalize a verse like this away and say it doesn't apply to me, than to admit that I have an unbelieving heart and a weak faith. But that is what it comes down to. James 1:6-7 says: "But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord;" This confirms that you can't do greater works if you doubt. Reasoning away a verse like Mr. Sproul did comes down to one thing: the sin of unbelief. It is ridiculous to say that "greater works" is only meant in the social, economical or educational sense (though that is included) rather than the spiritual sense. Just another way to to explain away your lack of faith and trust.

Let's give a real life example. Rees Howells and his students prayed during WWII that the German army would go and attack Russia so that communism would fall. This was an absolutely ridiculous prayer. There were absolutely no signs that Hitler was even considering anything of that nature. However it DID happen. One day out of the blue, Hitler gave the order to invade Russia. Now did Mr. Howells and his students literally make the German army attack Russia? No. But I would still consider it a greater work. Why? Because Christ never prayed to rout an army (though we know He could have), but Mr. Howells did and God answered him. And we know that God is the ultimate doer of ALL greater works. And we know that PRAYER is work. It is not play.

I can't even explain how grieved my spirit was when I read this. It made me sick to my stomach. That someone who espouses how carefully Scripture must be study would then go and say something that completely undermines the Bible is very grievous indeed. Truly the sin of unbelief is rampant in our culture. I'm apologize if this sounded harsh. But the glory of my Lord and His exceedingly precious promises were at stake. I cannot sit back and listen to someone malign the Word of God just because they "can't believe that."

Here's what Andrew Murray had to say about that verse.

"He who would work must pray: it is in prayer that the power for work is obtained. He that in faith would do the works that Jesus did, must pray in His Name. As long as Jesus was here on earth, He Himself did the greatest works: devils the disciples could not cast out, fled at His word. When He went to the Father, He was no longer here in the body to work directly. The disciples were now His body: all His work from the throne in heaven here on earth must and could be done through them. One might have thought that now He was leaving the scene Himself, and could only work through commissioners, the works might be fewer and weaker. He assures us of the contrary: Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also, and he shall do greater works.Â' His approaching death was to be such a real breaking down and making an end of the power of sin; with the resurrection the powers of the Eternal Life were so truly to take possession of the human body and to obtain supremacy over human life; with His ascension He was to receive the power to communicate the Holy Spirit so fully to His own; the union, the oneness between Himself on the throne and them on earth, was to be so intensely and divinely perfect, that He meant it as the literal truth: Â'Greater works than these shall he do, because I go to the Father.' ...

But there is one condition: Â'He that believeth on me, he shall do greater works, because I go to the Father; and whatsoever ye shall ask in my Name, that will I do.Â' His going to the Father would give Him a new power to hear prayer. For the doing of the greater works, two things were needed: His going to the Father to receive all power, our prayer in His Name to receive all power from Him again. As He asks the Father, He receives and bestows on us the power of the new dispensation for the greater works; as we believe, and ask in His Name, the power comes and takes possession of us to do the greater works.

Alas! how much working there is in the work of God, in which there is little or nothing to be seen of the power to do anything like Christ's works, not to speak of greater works. There can be but one reason: the believing on Him, the believing prayer in His Name, this is so much wanting. O that every labourer and leader in church, or school, in the work of home philanthropy or foreign missions might learn the lesson: Prayer in the Name of Jesus is the way to share in the mighty power which Jesus has received of the Father for His people, and it is in this power alone that he that believeth can do the greater works. To every complaint as to weakness or unfitness, as to difficulties or want of success, Jesus gives this one answer: Â'He that believeth on me shall do greater works, because I go to the Father, and whatsoever ye shall ask in my Name, that will I do.Â' We must understand that the first and chief thing for everyone who would do the

work of Jesus, is to believe, and so to get linked to Him, the Almighty One, and then to pray the prayer of faith in His Name. Without this our work is but human and carnal; it may have some use in restraining sin, or preparing the way for blessing, but the real power is wanting. Effectual working needs first effectual prayer." - Andrew Murray in "With Christ in the School of Prayer" pg 138-140 (Can also be found here on the site: <https://www.sermonindex.net/modules/articles/index.php?viewarticle&aid10166>) I go unto the father - Andrew Murray)

**Re: - posted by Giggles (), on: 2010/2/25 2:30**

Fantastic response Veronica226!!! I must say you did debunk Mr. Spruoul's reasoning, respectfully of course :) Thank you for sharing.

Areadymind, also thanks to you for intriguing questions to ponder on. Very obliged.

**Re: - posted by KingJimmy (), on: 2010/2/25 7:05**

I think when Jesus said this thing, He said it so as to leave endless possibilities open for us... the possibilities of faith.

**Re: - posted by Veronica226 (), on: 2010/2/25 20:28**

Giggles said,

Quote:  
-----Fantastic response Veronica226!!! I must say you did debunk Mr. Spruoul's reasoning, respectfully of course :) Thank you for sharing.  
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Oh good! After I posted it I thought maybe it was a tad harsh. I just prayed that God would give grace that the people who would/will read this wouldn't misunderstand me. I definitely wasn't trying to "be a hater" on Mr. Spruol! lol (I really need to stop second guessing myself when I feel God is leading me to say something! Sheesh!)

KingJimmy said,

Quote:  
-----I think when Jesus said this thing, He said it so as to leave endless possibilities open for us... the possibilities of faith.  
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That is an amazing statement! Love it! And agree.