

## Greater Works (John 14:12–17)

By Pastor Jeff Alexander (5/1/2022)

### Introduction

1. The passage before us, John 13:31–14:31, is the first part of the Lord’s conversation with His disciples to prepare them for His departure. This part of the discourse was given at the table when Jesus ate the Passover with His disciples. As He finished, He said, “*Rise, let us go from here.*” Jesus continued His discourse as they walked to the Mount of Olives and the Garden of Gethsemane.
2. Jesus’ revelation that He was leaving them to return to the Heavenly Father, compounded by the threat of the Jews’ determination to put Him to death, produced troubled hearts. Jesus asked His disciples to trust Him just as they were to trust God (v. 1).
  - a. This admonition was followed by three incredible announcements. First, Jesus declared He was the only *way* to God, being the *truth* and *life* of God (v. 6). Second, Jesus declared He was equal to God (v. 10). Then, third, even more incredibly, Jesus declared that the one who truly trusts in Him would do the works He did (v. 12). It is this last declaration that this message examines today.
  - b. Because of these announcements, two questions surface:
    - 1) Jesus stated that believers would do the *works* that He did. How is it possible for the average Christian to do the works Jesus did in His earthly walk? He further stated that His followers would do *greater* works. Who would ever suggest that he could outdo Jesus in the works that He did? However, the issue here is not about the nature of Jesus’ works, but their purpose. The works that we are enabled to do are designed to carry on the purpose God wills to accomplish.
    - 2) How can we live in the reality of this declaration?

### I. Important Background to Understand Jesus’ Upper-Room Discourse

1. These promises Jesus made must be understood in light of the dawn of the gospel age and its principles as outlined in Jesus’ teachings. His first statement to assure them in their present anxiety was to explain that He was the heavenly Bridegroom who was leaving to prepare for them a place in the Father’s house. Then He promised to return to take His bride to Himself (Isaiah 62:1–5).

During the absence of the Lord, His people would do a glorious work in gathering His bride out of all nations of earth to build a great kingdom to which the King and Bridegroom would return (Zephaniah 3:18–20).

2. The work that Jesus promised His followers would do involved the gathering promised in these Old Testament texts.

First, these works do not necessarily involve miracles. According to the Scripture, miracles were purposed for special identification (Isaiah 35:3–6). Does not this text reflect the text we are presently addressing?

Second, these works were possible only because Jesus returned to the Father. This simple statement is pregnant with glorious truth. His going to the Father required His obedience to

the purpose for which He came—to be the perfect sacrifice for sins so that God could forgive and redeem His people. After finishing this necessary task, Jesus would be raised in victory over death, the great enemy and consequence of sin. Then, He would ascend to the right Hand of the Father where He would sit as King of kings and Lord of lords.

Jesus is Lord of His church and directing her operations on earth from His heavenly throne. He is building His church as He promised (Matthew 16:18), using His servants on earth to accomplish this kingdom work. The kingdom is here now, and it is accomplishing what He planned so that one day soon He will return and claim His bride for Himself (Revelation 19:7).

## II. The Requirements for Believers to Work the Works of Christ

1. For His servants to do the work Christ did (working in obedience to the Father to redeem a people and build His kingdom on earth), His followers must also trust the Lord and His Father in full surrender to the will of God, believing that he will be used by God in accomplishing His purpose on earth (vv. 1, 12). Are you fully committed to Christ, trusting Him without reservation?
2. For His servants to do the work of Christ, they must be fully dependent on divine resources to accomplish that work.
  - a. They will be given all that they need to do His will as they seek Him in prayer (vv. 13–15). Again, we must ask, what are the parameters that govern the understanding of this seemingly wide-open promise? There are many such promises in the Bible that are not blank checks, such as Mark 11:22–24.
  - b. They will be given a new Helper, the Holy Spirit, to work in them (vv. 16, 17). The One called *Helper* here is a translation of the Greek term, *parakletos*, meaning “to call alongside.” It has been variously translated *Advocate*, *Comforter*, or *Counselor*. None of these translations work. For example, *Comforter* is misleading, particularly in our time. It suggests one who puts his arm around a distraught person and wipes his tears. When the King James Version was translated, the Latin root of the term *comfort* meant, “with strength.” Thus, Jesus argued it was necessary for Him physically to leave them in order for the Holy Spirit to indwell them and enable them to do God’s work with divine power.

Paul argued that believers “*be filled with the Spirit*” or, better, “*be being continually controlled by the Spirit*” (Ephesians 5:17). As Moses was the mediator of the old covenant, Jesus is the mediator of the new covenant. Thus, as the Spirit was given to those who assisted Moses (Numbers 11:16, 17), so the Spirit is given to those who serve the King of kings. This portended the glorious truth prophesied in Joel (2:28, 29). This was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2.

Are you enabled and controlled by His Spirit? Are you loving and obeying the Savior? Are you fully surrendered and committed to the work of the gospel in this kingdom age? Are you truly a follower of Jesus?