

GREATER WORKS?

Some people (false teachers) claim to be able to do even greater miracles than what Jesus did! False teachers are characteristically presumptuous, and self-willed and think of themselves way out of proportion to reality. They are FULL of themselves, thinking they are someone GREAT (cf. 2 Pet. 2:10-12). And false teachers usually have a “proof text” that is almost always taken out of context!! Such is the case with John 14:12.

John 14:12 (NKJV)

12 “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father.

This verse (Jn. 14:12) has caused no small amount of confusion in the charismatic ranks. Because of this verse some claim to be able to do even greater miracles than what Jesus did. Now it doesn't take a lot to figure out Jesus is not talking about physical miracles when He promises that believers will do even greater works.

I can prove it to you very easily. Jesus raised Himself from the dead. If one claims they can do greater miracles than Jesus my challenge is this: Do something greater than raising yourself from the dead. In fact, I will let you off easy – just do what Jesus did and get yourself killed (in keeping with prophecy) and then bring yourself back to life. You know what - no one does this! Jesus, at times, healed EVERYONE. No one does this. Jesus did miracles over nature. No one does this – even the apostles did not do miracles over nature – such as stilling storms.

Jesus was clear that “the servant is not greater than his master” (John 13:16). So, the issue is not QUALITY of works but rather QUANTITY! Note the indicator, “***because I go to My Father***”. That is KEY! What happened when Jesus went to the Father was that He then sent the Holy Spirit to empower His people to be His witnesses (Acts 1:8).

What Jesus had in mind in John 14:12 was not greater physical miracles. He was not talking about greater sign miracles, but rather about greater spiritual works in terms of **EXTENT** as God would in the future work through His people collectively in the power of the Holy Spirit (cf. Jn. 7:39; 14:16-17, 26; 15:26; 16:7, 13; Acts 1:5, 8; Eph. 3:20).

This is what is in view in the whole surrounding context. It's talking about **putting the TRUTH of God on display**. This is what Jesus did in the context of a single human body. Now, this same reality was about to be put

on display in an even greater way in terms of EXTENT through all believers. That's the context! Today God's people are the TEMPLE of the living God (1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19). As we walk in the Spirit we are putting God on display everywhere we go. Thus, the EXTENT of putting God on display in the context of a human body is a far "greater work" than what Christ Himself did in the context of a single body.

Jesus reached only a few people (relatively speaking) during His earthly ministry. He never traveled much beyond the Holy Land. Peter himself reached more people (3000) with the gospel in one day (on the day of Pentecost) than Jesus did in His whole ministry (see Acts 2). Thus, in terms of EXTENT this is a GREATER thing. Jesus reached the small area of the Holy Land, but the world of the Gentiles was essentially still untouched. Now through His people the entire world would be impacted (cf. Acts 1:8; 17:6).

Jesus' ministry was very limited in scope, but through believers, the gospel, as empowered by the Spirit, has gone throughout the entire world. The issue here is scope and extent of ministry. It was not a matter of sign miracles or physical POWER displays. Rather, it was a matter of putting the truth of God on display in a GREATER way in terms of extent than what Jesus ever did.

Really, the book of Acts constitutes the historical record of Jesus beginning to bring to pass the "**greater works**" that He prophesied here in John 14:12 (cf. Acts 1:1).

In summary, the "**greater works**" that Jesus promised believers would do has to do with putting the truth of God on display, 1) in a greater way in terms of sheer scope and volume; and 2) in terms of the vehicles used. It was one thing for God to put Himself on display through the God-Man Jesus, but in a sense, it's an even greater feat to put Himself on display through fallen human beings in the form of the body of Christ, and then to magnify that reality throughout the entire world (cf. Eph. 3:20-21). These are the GREATER WORKS!

Jesus was also CLEAR when He went on to say, "without Me you can do nothing." (John 15:5). Consideration of the WHOLE counsel of God, and not taking isolated verses out of context, is KEY to rightly dividing the word of truth!

2 Timothy 2:15 (NKJV)

15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.