

PRESENT TRUTH

A Teaching Letter of Lifestream Teaching Ministries

For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. (2 Peter 1:12 NKJV)

Volume 9, Issue 10

October 2011

Least in the Kingdom

Art Nelson

Introduction

There is an interesting story in Luke chapter seven that has intrigued me. John the Baptist had sent messengers to Jesus to ask if He was the Expected One or were they to seek another. Jesus told them to return to John and tell him what they had seen and heard. They observed miracles of the blind seeing, the lame walking, the lepers being cleansed, the dead being raised, and the gospel being preached to the poor. When John's messengers had left Jesus then spoke to the crowd about John and who did they think that they had gone into the wilderness to see.

"But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and one who is more than a prophet. "This is the one about whom it is written, 'BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER AHEAD OF YOU, WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY BEFORE YOU.' "I say to you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John; yet he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he." (Luke 7:26-28 NASB)

Jesus called John "more than a prophet"; "my messenger"; one who was to prepare the way for Him. He says that "among those born of women there is no one greater than John". These are great testimonies of John from our Lord and yet Jesus says, "he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater" than John. What did He mean by that?

Those Born of Women

The implication of these verses is that there are two kinds of people existing on the earth.

1. Those born of women, and
2. Those born of God

Those born of women are the natural descendants of Adam. They have arrived in the world through a natural birth. Those born of God are descendants of the Last Adam, the New Man. They have arrived in the world through a spiritual birth.

for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, *that is*, through the living and enduring word of God. (1 Peter 1:23 NASB)

Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. (John 3:5-6 NASB)

John the Baptist was a "man born of woman" like everyone else who is born into this world. His father was Zechariah and his mother was Elizabeth. He did not have the opportunity to be born of God because the new birth of the spirit was not available to him. However, he did achieve his full potential as a man born of woman. While there may have been many others through history who have achieved the fullness of human potential in the natural, none have exceeded John in reaching their highest potential and fulfilling God's predestined plan and purpose for them. Jesus' own testimony is that there have been none greater than John.

However, the least in the Kingdom of God is greater. Why? Because they belong to the category of those who are born of God. The first of that category is Jesus. Mary was overshadowed by the Holy Spirit and she conceived Jesus, the Word made flesh.

Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" The angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God. (Luke 1:34-35 NASB)

Jesus became the first born of a new race so that we might have the right to become children of God who believe in His name.

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, *even* to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:12-14 NASB)

The least of this new race, those who have been born of God, are greater than John the Baptist simply because they have been born of the Spirit. This is the essence of the New Covenant.

Growing Up

Of those are who born of God, the Scriptures give us three growth categories [*I John 2:12-14*]

1. little children (Paul refers to these as "babes"),
2. young men, and
3. fathers.

Although even a "babe" who is in the Kingdom of God is greater than John the Baptist, the "babe" must grow up in order to achieve the full potential of God's plan and purpose. Is "growing up" in the Lord something that we can opt out of? I think not. Nowhere do the Scriptures imply that maturity is an option; rather it seems to be a requirement to fulfill God's purpose.

The institutional church has given us all of this as "options of grace"; there aren't really any

requirements for us, just “grace”. These are simply man-centered excuses for us to ignore God's government and the sovereign rule of our Lord. In the Kingdom of God no one can do whatever he wants, whenever he wants. The Father does not smile on that behavior. Anarchy is not accepted conduct; nor is it covered by “unmerited grace”. The Father's love does not endorse lawlessness in His children.

A Fantasy Eternity

A false picture of eternity is being preached in our institutional churches. It is a fantasy created from the vain imagination of men and promoted by gospel songs. These present heaven as a glorious place of rest and relaxation, an eternal vacation time, where we sit around and just sing and praise God all of the time. This is not anywhere close to the picture of heaven and eternity that is presented in the Scriptures. If the songwriters would just read the book of Revelation they would write quite different songs.

In fantasy heaven we walk up to Jesus and shake hands with Him and thank Him for dying for us. In reality we fall as dead men before His presence; we cover our face from the consuming fire of His eyes; we try to avoid being incinerated by His feet that are burning like burnished bronze [Rev. 1:14-15]. The fact is that God's presence is a terrible place. He dwells in the midst of everlasting burnings because our God is a consuming fire.

In the Kingdom of God you either consent and obey or you refuse and rebel [Isa. 1:19-20]. There is no middle ground. In Revelation the lampstand church of Laodicea is spit out of His mouth for lukewarmness. Why? Because that attitude and casual lifestyle is not acceptable in the Kingdom. Everyone who doesn't desire the will of God and who does not want to live that way is spit out of the Kingdom. The Eternal Government of God is ruling the universe and determines and enforces the predestined plan of God. The Kingdom of Heaven is not about singing and being on an eternal holiday. Why?

For He did not subject to angels the world to come, concerning which we are speaking.
(Hebrews 2:5 NASB)

We create a “fantasy heaven” if we ignore the fact that there is world after this one, a world to come. This world is not subject to angels but to men who will have dominion or rulership over it. It stands to reason then that man must be prepared for the responsibility of ruling. The ones who rule will be the overcomers who are like Jesus and who will rule like Jesus.

In our “fantasy heaven” character, attitude, obedience, and spiritual growth are irrelevant. However, they are very pertinent to our future place in the reality of God's government.

Those who can qualify, (by their obedience), to judge the angels, (for their disobedience), will take up their place in the eternal Government and be part of that Kingdom of God. This is an active ongoing Government that is functioning over both heaven and earth and over all the works of God's hands. Only those who have proven their obedience and character in this life will qualify to rule in the new heavens and earth. Since the Government of God is large, encompassing both heaven and earth, there will be a great diversity of assigned work and workers at many different levels and realms depending upon the workers level of Kingdom character and the degree to which they have been conformed to the image of Christ Jesus, the Living Word of God.

Recap

If you are a “person born of woman” your highest potential is that of John the Baptist. He, of course, could preach repentance and announce that the Kingdom has come. However, if you have been “born of God” your highest potential is to be like the Lord Jesus Christ. We should seek to fulfill our highest calling, our full potential. We are children of God. Let us grow up to be sons of God and do the work for which we have been prepared.

© 2003-2011 by Art Nelson and [Lifestream Teaching Ministries](http://www.LifestreamTeaching.com)

Previous issues of Present Truth are on the website: www.Lifestreamteaching.com

For comments or questions contact Art Nelson at this address:

artnelson@lifestreamteaching.com

You have permission to copy and distribute these materials provided:

1) no changes are made to the content, and, 2) they are not sold.

Removal instructions:

This is a free teaching letter, without cost or obligation.

If you have received this teaching letter in error or if you desire not to receive "Present Truth" teaching letter please reply with "remove" in the subject area.