

What Did Jesus Mean by 'Greater Works'?

In John 14:12 (NKJV) Jesus made an incredible claim:

"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 has been a matter of much controversy. Who would dare claim "greater works" than those performed by the Son of God Himself? Yet He was truth incarnate, so everything He said was irrefutable and unalterable—so it must be so. But what is the correct interpretation?

There are four different ways we can explain this amazing proclamation:

No. 1 Literally. We could take Jesus' words literally and expect miraculous supernatural manifestations that exceed anything He did during His earthly ministry: opening the eyes of the blind, raising the dead, casting out demons, stilling the storm, walking on the water and multiplying loaves and fishes. But that seems highly unlikely. It certainly hasn't happened yet.

No. 2 Quantitatively. Possibly, Jesus was indicating that miraculous works would be greater in number. It would imply "greater works," not in the quality of the supernatural manifestations but the quantity of miracles wrought. Instead of flowing through one person in one place (the firstborn Son of God), miraculous manifestations would flow through a multitude that represent Him around the globe. Yet that seems highly unlikely because He did not use the plural words "those" or "they" ("those who believe in Me, the works I do they will do also").

No. 3 Spiritually. By the phrase “greater works,” Jesus could have been referring to the more excellent spiritual works that would result from his death, burial, resurrection, ascension and the sending forth of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost—the impartation of the “born again” experience, when a repentant sinner receive a “new spirit,” a “new heart,” the indwelling presence of God, the washing of the blood of Jesus, the impartation of the gift of righteousness and the gift of eternal life. These are far “greater” acts of God than blind eyes opening and deaf ears hearing. Temporary healings in physical bodies that still go to the grave cannot be compared to the miraculous transformation of the soul that lasts for eternity. This is powerful, yet I tend to believe that it was something else altogether that Jesus meant.

No. 4 Eternally. Notice Jesus said the reason His disciples would do “greater works” was because He was going to the Father. Could He have meant that while He was on the earth in a physical body, He did earthly miracles, but He was ascending into heaven where He would manifest even greater displays of creative power? He did say, “I go to prepare a place for you” earlier in the same chapter—which would surely involve fantastic supernatural manifestations in the celestial world (John 14:2). If He has used certain gifted people to repeat His miraculous works in the earth, why not believe that He will use glorified saints in immortal, heavenly bodies to perform “greater works” in a heavenly sphere? Yes, there will be things to do when the Lord returns because the Bible says, “His reward is with Him and His work before Him” (Isa. 40:10). Could it be that He will use His saints to fulfill this verse and bring paradise to earth once again?

This last possibility is actually No. 4 in a list of 10 ways we will be made like the Lord Jesus when we see Him at His return. There are nine other significant ways children of the Resurrection will be made like the Lord Jesus Christ when He descends in glory.

Learn them all in this episode of *Discover Your Spiritual Identity* on our calling to be children of the Resurrection.
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