

The Greatest in the Kingdom

Key Verse:
*“Whosoever
therefore shall
humble himself as
this little child, the
same is greatest in
the kingdom of
heaven.”*
—Matthew 18:4

Selected Scriptures:
Matthew 18:1-6;
Mark 10:13-16

THE DISCIPLES ASKED

Jesus who would be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. On more than one occasion he observed them discussing this question in quite a heated manner. Two of them, in fact, had made a special request of him to have the privilege of being especially honored by sitting on the right and left hand of his throne. It was quite difficult for the disciples to understand that

they needed to eliminate this ambitious desire. However, as a result of the Holy Spirit's influence following Pentecost, they at last began to understand their need for humility.—Matt. 18:1-3; Mark 10:35-37

Our Key Verse affirms the necessity for humility as an essential character attribute for all who will be exalted to a position in the heavenly kingdom. Christian humility, a fruit of the Holy Spirit, implies having a sober evaluation of one's abilities, not thinking too highly or too lowly of ourselves. (Rom. 12:3; Phil. 2:3-5) Pride, on the other hand, is the opposite of humility and was originally manifested by Lucifer, causing his fall.—Isa. 14:12-14; Prov. 16:18

Humility, in light of both Old and New Testament scriptures, is a necessity of the believer's faith. The best example of humility is Jesus, who described himself as "meek and lowly in heart," and who "made himself of no reputation."—Matt. 11:29; Phil. 2:7,8

Christ set the standard of humble service when he washed the feet of his disciples, declaring "I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you." (John 13:14,15) Thus, putting on humility implies a readiness to serve. If, like Jesus, we humble ourselves before God, we will be exalted in the future with a crown of glory that will last forever.

The principle of humility must be manifested by all who would be fit to serve in God's kingdom. "Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence."—I Cor. 1:26-29

Those who perform good deeds from a proper motive will be remembered by the Lord during the resurrection and receive earthly blessings proportionally as they make progress on the highway of holiness. (Matt. 25:34-40; Isa. 35:8-10) Devoted followers of Christ in this life, however, go beyond doing good. They engage in self-denial, sacrifice, and service faithfully unto death, that they may attain the hope of receiving a heavenly resurrection to divine life. "When the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. ... Be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time."—I Pet. 5:4-6 ■