

IS IT A CONTRADICTION?

"Ye shall see...all the prophets in the kingdom of God." (Luke 13:28.)

"But what went ye out for to see! A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet.... Verily, I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." (Matt. 11:9-11.)

In the above Scripture we have what might appear to many candid students a contradiction in Jesus' teachings. The Jews regarded John as a prophet, and Jesus agreed with them, ("Yea,") showing that he was not only a prophet, but the greatest of them, in that he was the immediate forerunner of the Messiah. And notwithstanding his teaching on another occasion, that all the prophets, (which of course would include John,) would be in the kingdom of God, he now states that the least one in the kingdom would be greater than this greatest prophet. And this statement excludes John, as well as the other prophets, entirely from the kingdom.

One of two things is certainly true – either this is a contradiction, or else Jesus was speaking of the kingdom of God in two different senses. The latter we find to be the case, and so these statements prove to be harmonious. As there was a fleshly house of Israel developed during the Jewish age, so a spiritual Israel has been developing during the Gospel age. (1 Cor. 10:18; Gal. 6:16.) The promises to the former were of an earthly character, while the promises to the latter were "exceeding great" and "better promises" of a heavenly or spiritual character. So the kingdom of God which is to rule the earth in the age to come, is to consist of an earthly,

visible phase, and a spiritual phase which is higher and invisible to men. And Jesus affirms that the least one in this higher phase, shall be greater than the greatest in the visible, earthly phase of the kingdom.

Paul shows us further that those who shall have part in the earthly kingdom, shall partake of the earthly or human nature, while those who have part in the heavenly or spiritual kingdom shall partake of the spiritual nature: –

"Some will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?...God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body....There is a natural [human] body, and there is a spiritual body. ...As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly." (1 Cor. 15:35-48.)

This exceeding great and precious promise, the spiritual kingdom, was **[R638 : page 4]** never made known until Jesus brought it to light, (2 Tim. 1:10,) and he as the head of that spiritual kingdom, was the forerunner of all that "little flock" who shall inherit it. It will be seen also that this high exaltation of the few, is for the blessing of the many subjects of the kingdom.

Upon the recognition of the two natures, human and spiritual, and the two corresponding phases of the kingdom of God, depends to a very great extent our ability to rightly divide the word of truth. If we fail to discern this distinction so clearly set forth in the Scriptures, we fail entirely to discern the high calling of the saints of the Gospel age, and all necessity for this age, as distinguished from the next.

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