

Who Is The G.O.A.T.? Matthew 11:11,25

Close your eyes. Picture the ideal Christian. What do you see?

- What sticks out to you (Appearance, Age, Gender, Race, Action, Recognizable)?

We all have a mental picture of what it looks like to be a follower of Jesus, but does that image fit with the teachings of Jesus Himself?

Out of all of God's people, from creation to the present, who is the G.O.A.T.?

- Abraham – The Father of God's people.
- Moses – The deliverer of God's people in Egypt.
- Elijah – The prophet of God who never died - ushered up to heaven on a chariot
- King David – The man after God's own heart. The King. The Psalmist.
- Mary the mother of Jesus – Obeyed God and mothered the Son of God.
- Simon Peter – The "Rock". He walked on water. The apostle to Israel.
- Apostle Paul – Dramatic conversion. The Apostle to the Gentiles. N.T. writer.
- Martin Luther – The igniter of the Reformation. Stood up against false teaching.
- Mother Theresa – Lived a life of poverty to serve the least of these.
- Billy Graham – The great evangelist. Whose crusades impacted millions!

We all have an idea of who we would call the "greatest" in God's Kingdom, but Jesus flips that thinking on its head here in Matthew 11.

Matthew 11:11,25 - "Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist... Did anyone say John? Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he..." "At that time Jesus declared, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven & earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children;"

Jesus says that John the Baptist is the greatest to ever be born! This was probably shocking for most of Jesus' hearers because John was a weird dude

- He wore a camel hair outer garment with a leather girdle, he ate locusts, he never cut his hair. He didn't fit the typical Sunday morning church goer.

So what made John the Baptist great?

- He responded to Jesus before he was even born. Luke 1:41 - Mary & Elizabeth
- John was an ascetic – he practiced the spiritual discipline of self-denial.
- He preached repentance & baptized many, pointing them to the Messiah.
- John paved the way for Jesus & was beheaded for his prophetic message.

Jesus calls John the greatest to ever be born, but he doesn't end the conversation there. He goes on to say **"Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."**

This is a strange and hard saying of Jesus!

- First of all, no one would have expected John to be called the G.O.A.T. He didn't fit their mental picture of what greatness looked like!
- Secondly, if he is the G.O.A.T., then why does Jesus go on to say that the least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he?

What is Jesus trying to tell us in this discussion about the G.O.A.T.?

What would make the "least" in God's Kingdom greater than John?

- John's knowledge of Jesus was incomplete – **Matthew 11:2-3**
- John lived in the Old Testament era - "*watching/waiting/hoping*"
- John never got to experience the reality of the resurrection!
- The least in the Kingdom of Heaven, who has the knowledge of Jesus' true identity, who lives in the New Testament era where salvation is offered to all, who gets to experience not only the baptism of repentance but also the baptism of the Spirit – this is a person who is exceedingly blessed and in Jesus' eyes - "greater" than even John – not because of who that person is, but because of who Jesus is to them!

The most righteous person, the most educated person, the person we would naturally say is most deserving of the designation – the G.O.A.T., does not measure up to the person who simply has Jesus as their righteousness, the person who knows Jesus as their Lord/Messiah, the person who trusts in Jesus alone for their salvation. This is the person who truly is the G.O.A.T.

It is this truth that leads Jesus to say in vs. 25 that the Father has **"hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children."**

It's not about what you know, as much as it is about "who" you know! Knowledge and understanding can only take you to the doorway to Jesus, but faith is what steps through it!

It is Jesus, and our response to Him, that makes a person great in the Kingdom of Heaven! Example A – children! **Matthew 18:1-4**

Children have an amazing way of trusting without having all the answers, responding with love and acceptance without reservation, acknowledging what they can't do yet receive what only someone else can do for them!

Let me close with a story Jesus told in **Matt. 20** to drive home the point that it's more about Him, than about us & what we can do to gain status in His Kingdom.