

Check It Out Tracts

LITTLE CHILDREN

CHECK IT OUT

By John W. White

Matthew 18:3-4 "And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become **as little children** [*pai di on*], ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. **4.** Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this **little child** [*pai di on*], the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

Matthew 18:1 "At the same time came the **disciples** unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the **kingdom of heaven**?" The kingdom of the heavens is the rule of the heavens over the earth. The present administration in the kingdom of the heaven is Satan and the angels that followed him when he desired to exalt his throne above the throne of God. The fallen angels that are with Satan in the heavenlies are called "... **principalities**, against **powers**, against the **rulers** of the darkness of this world, ..." in **Ephesians 6:12** Satan has authority over the kingdoms of the earth at the present time. Satan offered the kingdom of the heavens to Jesus Christ in the wilderness in **Matthew 4:8-9** "Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth him **all the kingdoms of the world**, ...; **9.** And saith ..., All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." If Jesus Christ accepted Satan's offer, then Satan would be over Jesus Christ and that was not possible. Satan and his angels will be cast out of heaven in **Revelation 12:7-8** "... Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, **8.** And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven." This seems to be in the middle of the tribulation. Just before Satan and his host are removed from heaven we see the change in command in **Revelation 11:15** "... The kingdoms of this world are become *the kingdoms* of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever." The good and faithful servants will rule over many cities. **Luke 19:17** "And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over **ten cities.**" John saw those that were ruling over many cities in **Revelation 20:4** "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: ... they ...**reigned with Christ** a thousand years." **Revelation 2:26-27** "And he that **overcometh**, and **keepeth my works** unto the end, to him will I give **power over the nations**: **27.** And **he shall rule** them with a rod of iron..."

SEEING AND ENTERING

Matthew 18:3 "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not **enter into the kingdom of heaven.**" Jesus was teaching his disciples about entering into the kingdom of heaven and not just seeing the kingdom of heaven. If a person is born into the family of God then he will be able to see the kingdom as promised in **John 3:3** "... Except a man be born again, he cannot **see the kingdom of God.**" The apostles were learning what it meant to enter into the kingdom of heavens. Jesus was teaching them about this in **Matthew 18:3** "I say unto **you** [disciples], Except ye be converted, and **become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.**" The disciples were learning that entering into the kingdom of heaven had to do with position in that kingdom. They debated among themselves who would be the greatest in the kingdom and they finally got up enough courage to ask the Lord about this issue in **Matthew 18:1** "At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" We see this again in **Mark 9:33-35** "... he asked them, What was it

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that ye disputed among yourselves ...? 34. But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who *should be* the greatest. 35. And he ... called the twelve, and saith ..., If any man desire to be first, *the same* shall be **last** of all, and **servant** of all." To be great in the kingdom means that in this life time that we have to "...be **last** of all and **servant** of all." This is also confirmed in **Luke 22:26, 27** "But ye *shall not be* so: but he that is **greatest** among you, let him be as the **younger**; and he that is **chief**, as he that doth **serve**. 27. For whether *is* greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? *is not* he that sitteth at meat? but **I am among you as he that serveth**." If we expect to be promoted in the coming kingdom of our Lord we must be willing to demote ourselves in this present age. The choice is ours to "be as the younger" and to be "as he that doth serve." We have to humble ourselves to become a servant of servants. The choice is ours to make. The question is "Are we willing to pay the price of no recognition in this present age for recognition in the age to come?" **Matthew 18:4** "Whosoever therefore shall **humble himself** as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

BE CONVERTED

Matthew 18:3 "Except ye be **converted**, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." The plural pronoun "ye" is a reference to His disciples. Jesus wanted his disciples to be converted and become as little children. Disciples are those who have been saved and are growing in the Word. **John 8:31** "Then said Jesus to those Jews which **believed** on him, If ye **continue** in **my word**, *then* are ye my **disciples** indeed;" The phrase "Except ye be converted" is not an invitation to his disciples be saved, but an invitation to a change of direction. The word "convert" is translated "**turned about**" in **Luke 7:9** "When Jesus heard these things, he marvelled at him, and **turned him about**, and said unto the people **that followed him...**" For Jesus to face the crowd that followed him he had to "To twist, i.e. turn quite around or reverse." (Strong) The Greek word for "**convert**" is not the same Greek word for "**repent**."

BECOME AS

Matthew 18:3 "Except ye be converted, and **become as** little children, ye shall not **enter** into the kingdom of heaven." The Lord does not want us to become childish in our behavior but become **as little children** in our attitude and rank. We are to be men as found in **1 Corinthians 14:20** "Brethren, be not **children** [*paidion*] in **understanding** [*thought*]: howbeit in malice be ye children [*paidion*], but **in understanding** [*thought*] be men [*tebeiov*, mature]." He wants us to be strong in doctrine. **Ephesians 4:14** "That we *henceforth* be no more children (*nhpiov*, not able to speak), tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine." The Lord wants us to grow from being a child with very little to say, to one who is able to teach. **Hebrews 5:12,14** "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ..." [who] 14. "...are of full age, *even* those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."

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For the disciples to become as little children by turning around this implies they have matured beyond being little children. It is interesting to note that the Greek word for "little children," [*paidion*], is the diminutive of the Greek word [*paiw*] which carries the thought of maturity. To become a little child implies spiritual maturity on the part of the one turning around and becoming as a little child. **Becoming a little child is a conscious decision made by someone**

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who has matured in his spiritual life and sees the value of becoming as a little child in their spiritual life. The value of becoming a little child is realized when we hear the Lord teach us to become **as** little children; and that becoming **as** a little child provides the believer with a greater benefit of **entering** into the kingdom rather than just **seeing** the kingdom of the heavens. We are not to become little children but become **as** little children. Strong suggest that one of the meanings of the word **as** to be " in that manner." The manner of a little child is to be willing to be less in rank. **Matthew 18:3** "... Except ye [may] be converted, and [may] **become** [for yourself] **as** little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Both of the verbs "converted" and "become" are subjunctive and therefore the words "**should, or may**" should be in the translation. The subjunctive implies the possibility of failure. The middle voice of the verb "become" would have the extension of the phrase "for myself" which implies personal choice, as in this case the disciples.

What does it mean then to become as little children? To become a little child is to become less than being an adult, but only in the area of attitude. **Philippians 2:3** "...in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." **Romans 12:10** "... in honour preferring one another;" To be a little child one must chose to be in lowliness of mind. **Philippians 2:5, 7-8** "Let this mind be in you ["Have this attitude." NASV], which was also in Christ Jesus: 7. "But **made himself of no reputation, ... a servant, ... 8. ... he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death,...**" **Philippians 2:6** "[Jesus]... thought it not robbery [something to be grasped or to be held on to] to be equal with God:" **Hebrews 2:9** "But we see Jesus, who was made a **little lower** [in rank] than the **angels** for the suffering of death, ..." Jesus was willing to be made a little less in rank than the Angels and was willing to be less than equal in rank with God so that He could **Hebrews 12:2** "...for the **joy** that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Ref. 1 Corinthians 15:21-28) The same **joy** is set before us also. If we are willing to be less in rank than our brothers in Christ today and endure our cross, we will hear **Matthew 25:23** "Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the **joy** of thy lord."

WHEN DO YOU WANT TO HOLD RANK?

Matthew 18:4 "Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is **greatest in the kingdom of heaven.**" The question that caused strife among the disciples was who would be the greatest or have the highest rank in the kingdom of heaven. **Luke 22:24-30** "And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the **greatest.** 25. And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise **lordship over** them; and they that exercise **authority upon** them are called benefactors. 26. But **ye shall not be so:** but he that is **greatest among you,** let him be as the **younger** [last, as in Mark 9:35]; and he that is **chief,** as he that **doth serve** [servant of all, as in Mark 9:35]. 27. For whether *is* greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? *is* not he that sitteth at meat? but **I am among you as he that serveth.** [The mind of Christ] 28. Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. 29. And I **appoint** unto **you** a **kingdom,** as my Father hath appointed unto me; 30. That ye may eat and drink at my table **in my kingdom,** and **sit on thrones** judging the twelve tribes of Israel." The context is that of sitting upon thrones and judging the twelve tribes of Israel. This will be the time when Jesus Christ will be reigning over the earth. **Matthew 19:28** "And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the

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twelve tribes of Israel." In Matthew's account Jesus responds to Peter's question "We have forsaken all, ... what shall we have?" Jesus concludes that portion of the lesson in **Matthew 19:30** "But **many that are first** shall be **last**; and the **last shall be first**."

CHOICE

Matthew 18:3-4 "And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye [may] be **converted**, and [may] **become** [for yourselves] as little children, ye shall not [may] **enter** into the kingdom of heaven. 4. Whosoever therefore shall **humble himself** as this little child, the same is **greatest** [mei~zwn, elder] in the kingdom of heaven." The verbs that have "may" in brackets before them in Matthew 18:3 are in the subjunctive mode. The subjunctive mode expresses the possibility of failure. There is a possibility that one may not want to humble themselves and become child like because the cost is too high. The cost of stepping down in rank or stepping back to be last might be too high of a price to pay. Just as the rich ruler went away sorrowful because the cost was too high to enter the Kingdom of the Heavens. The verb "become" is in the middle voice. The middle voice is translated with the phrase "for myself." We do not ask God to humble us, but we humble ourselves by our own volition. **Matthew 23:12** "And whosoever shall **exalt himself** [now] shall be abased [reduced in rank in the coming kingdom]; and he that shall **humble himself** [now] shall be **exalted**. [promoted in rank in the coming kingdom]" Those who will humble themselves will have rank in the coming kingdom of our Lord. The choice is ours to make now in this present time. **1 Peter 5:5-6** "... be clothed with **humility**: for God resisteth the proud, and **giveth grace** to the **humble**. 6. **Humble** yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that **he may exalt** [promote] **you in due time**:"

THE CHOICE IS OURS

There are those today that want to be seen of men and to be honored by their peers. They **Matthew 23:6-7** "love the **uppermost rooms** at feasts, and the **chief seats** in the synagogues, 7. ...to be called of men, **Rabbi**..." Jesus taught **Luke 14:8-11** "...sit not down in the **highest** room; lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him; 9. ... and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with **shame** to take the lowest room. 10. ... sit down in the **lowest** room; that ...he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have **worship [glory]** in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee. 11. For whosoever **exalteth** himself shall be **abased**; and he that **humbleth** himself shall be **exalted**." Little children do not **expect** to have those places of honor today and neither should we if we desire to be exalted in the kingdom of the heavens.

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