

"I did not come with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:1-2).

The Three Degrees

When advancing in the higher education of this world, one goes from a Bachelor's to a Master's to a Doctorate degree. When becoming a doctor, particularly in the physical and mental health fields, he or she is entitled, and most often desires, to be addressed as "Doctor." The world does indeed honor and glorify their own, who do not subscribe to God the Creator or acknowledge His personal Lordship over all that He has made.

Is this not a matter of pride? Truly, those who insist on being known, respected and addressed as "Doctor" by society take the step of usurping the glory that is truly God's, whether they profess faith in Him or not. Pride is that which, the Word of God declares, God hates and resists:

"In the same way you younger people must submit yourselves to your elders. And all of you must put on the apron of humility, to serve one another; for the Scripture says, 'God resists the proud, but shows favor to the humble'" (1 Peter 5:5 GNB).

There are three degrees of advancement in the spiritual development with God.

It should be pointed out that, in the world, education may be more accurately described as achievement rather than as advancement. In this world, by the world, man is glorified; he is honored and chooses to receive honor. However, no being can achieve anything without God, be it in this world or the next. God reigns supreme over all things at all times. As Jesus said to Pilate, no man can receive anything except it be given him from above.

While we speak of a higher education in this world, there is an infinitely higher "education," of which the greatest scholars and promulgators of this world's education know nothing. The least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than they.

Just as there are three degrees of advancement in higher education, there are also three degrees of advancement in the spiritual development with God. By use of the word, "advancement," concerning the spiritual realm, I wish to suggest that the spiritual development is not man's achievement but God's. In the Kingdom of God, which dimension is here, yet not here, Jesus Christ is glorified, receiving the honor.

That is why it makes it that much more an offence when men imagine that they ought to be respected because of some achievements in this world. Whatever power they had to achieve anything was not intrinsically of their own being, but God-granted.

It is recorded that, in attitude, Nebuchadnezzar once begged to differ with that truth of God's absolute sovereignty, and determined that he, by his own might, accomplished the establishment of his first and great empire, which God likened to the head of gold in the image described in the Book of Daniel.

What are doctors to Nebuchadnezzar? He reigned over every last one of them in his dominion. And what happened to him when he presumed to boast of himself? He was turned into a beastly creature, losing all, and living in the outdoors, eating grass for a set time, until God determined to restore all to him. Here is the account of what happened:

Nebuchadnezzar said:

“Look at this, Babylon the great! And I built it all by myself, a royal palace adequate to display my honor and glory!” (Daniel 4:30 MSG)

One repents, turns from himself and his self-importance to God.

The words were no sooner out of his mouth than a voice out of heaven spoke:

“This is the verdict on you, King Nebuchadnezzar: Your kingdom is taken from you. You will be driven out of human company and live with the wild animals. You will eat grass like an ox. The sentence is for seven seasons, enough time to learn that the High God rules human kingdoms and puts whomever He wishes in charge” (Daniel 4:31-32 MSG).

That which was decreed from Heaven occurred at once:

“Nebuchadnezzar was driven out of human company, ate grass like an ox, and was soaked in heaven’s dew. His hair grew like the feathers of an eagle and his nails like the claws of a hawk” (Daniel 4:33 MSG).

When God was finished with him, he declared:

Daniel 4:34-37 MSG

(34) “At the end of the seven years, I, Nebuchadnezzar, looked to heaven. I was given my mind back and I blessed the High God, thanking and glorifying God, Who lives forever. His sovereign rule lasts and lasts, His Kingdom never declines and falls.

(35) Life on this earth doesn’t add up to much, but God’s heavenly army keeps everything going. No one can interrupt His work, no one can call His rule into question.

(36) At the same time that I was given back my mind, I was also given back my majesty and splendor, making my kingdom shine. All the leaders and important people came looking for me. I was reestablished as king in my kingdom and became greater than ever.

(37) And that’s why I’m singing--I, Nebuchadnezzar--singing and praising the King of Heaven: Everything He does is right, and he does it the right way. He knows how to turn a proud person into a humble man or woman.”

He tastes of the Spirit of God and of the Kingdom.

Let me identify what are the true and substantial degrees of advancement in a person's spiritual development with God:

One repents, that is, turns from himself and his self-importance to God. That is the First Degree. In that, he becomes an "undergraduate," a "bachelor." Part of the Webster definition of "bachelor":

"In the feudal system, a young knight and landholder, who served under another's banner."

"A man who has not married."

He has become his Maker's experiential demonstration of the Passover, the first Feast of God. He has begun to serve as a young one, subject to the laws of the Kingdom of God, under not his own, but his Lord's, banner. He is still unmarried to God, not yet a part of the Bride of Christ.

He becomes aware of, or sees from afar, the Kingdom of God. It is his *calling*. He now enters into the dimension of being proven, of asserting that which is not recognized or appreciated by the world. He is the "thesis" in progress, proving for himself the nature of the Kingdom of God and the will of the King. From there, he is washed by water (truth by the Law of God), and progresses to be born again.

Enduring, he advances to the Second Degree, the "Masters." He now tastes of the Spirit of God and of the Kingdom, celebrating the Feast of Pentecost. He receives power, yet only a portion. This is his being *chosen* to be identified with his Creator, born of Him, and set in process of purging and transformation by fire. Having been called, he is now chosen.

However, "he that endures to the end, the same shall be saved." The fires are hot, painful, and unrelenting, truly unmerciful to the carnal man, who must endure the cross to the bitter end, the end of himself. There is nothing spared or left unchanged in the slightest within any "candidate" that would thwart in any way the will of God, the harmony, perfection, and establishment of the Kingdom of God within.

The Bride must be without spot or wrinkle. Nothing less than perfect will be acceptable to the Groom, the Perfect and Perfecting One, Who fashions the chosen one in His own image.

He is now married to his Groom, no more a bachelor or a student.

Prevailing unto the end, the spiritual sojourner, the vessel called, chosen, and fashioned by the Master Potter, finally enters the fourth dimension. He has been found *faithful*, and becomes the celebration of the third and final Feast, the Feast of Tabernacles, that glorious place of rest from his labors. The Third Degree is the final step, wherein Heaven recognizes him as an authority, with ruling rights and duties, because he is united with his Maker in holy wedlock. He is now married to his Groom, no more a bachelor or a student.

He has reached the “high learning” of Heaven on earth that eclipses the highest learning on earth as the light of the midday sun eclipses that of the moon. Men gaze on the moon and appreciate its glory, but they are not able to gaze on the sun, so glorious and powerful it is.

The work is finished. He has completed his dissertation and receives his doctorate, his Ph.D., though it is much more than a matter of philosophy, or an alleged *comprehension* of some aspect of life. It is, rather, an *apprehension* of life itself. Even more accurately, Life has apprehended him.

How is this so? It is so by a change of nature, which only his Creator, and not he, could accomplish. He has not “achieved” as is the case in the world of the proud, those who exalt themselves over their fellow man, even if subtly and secretly. He has been transformed by the grace and mercy of God, Who alone receives the honor, praise, glory, thanksgiving, blessing, power and worship due His Holy Name.

It becomes their mission to declare the wondrous works of God.

In the education and degrees of this world, men are glorified and honored by men, and they love to have it so. In the true, substantial “education,” God is glorified and honored. Those with the spiritual degrees do not desire or seek the glory and honor of men, though they have the true substance from God.

By virtue of the advancement in their very natures from the heavenly “education,” they know very well that it is not for them to take any credit or to vaunt themselves over their fellow man. Indeed, it becomes their mission to declare the wondrous works of God and to bring, as He wills, their fellow man into that same education, that same virtue, freedom, blessing, peace and fruitfulness they have received by His unmerited favor.

Among those of us who have been called together, by His grace, as a body of witnesses unto God, there are some who have received their Bachelor’s Degree, some their Master’s, and some their Doctorate. Yet all are one in Christ, one no better than another, and none sees him or herself as better than any who has received no degree at all. They see no one as higher or lower.

They can relate to one another and to all in a humility that refreshes the soul. Their goal is to freely bring others to the highest and most glorious education attainable in the universe, the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, Who loved us and gave Himself for us. Of that great and mighty King of kings, it is written:

Philippians 2:6-11 GNB

(6) He always had the nature of God, but He did not think that by force He should try to remain equal with God.

(7) Instead of this, of His own free will, He gave up all He had, and took the nature of a servant. He became like a human being and appeared in human likeness.

(8) He was humble and walked the path of obedience all the way to death--- His death on the cross.

(9) For this reason God raised Him to the highest place above and gave Him the Name that is greater than any other name.

(10) And so, in honor of the Name of Jesus, all beings in heaven, on earth, and in the world below will fall on their knees,

(11) and all will openly proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The Dean of deans has set the qualifications, the standard, and the pace. Without meeting these, no man has any room for pride or self-importance of any degree. With these met, any and all partakers deem themselves as humble, unworthy servants, and have much for which to be thankful beyond all imagination.

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