

Synopsis 011 The Early Life of Jesus [Luke 2:40-52]

In the Scriptures, the word “child” or “children” has been translated from five basic Greek words. There are several words in reference to children in the Greek language. There are obvious and discoverable meanings that are both physically chronological and indicative of the spiritual status of those who have been born from above by God into his family.

First, there’s βρέφος (brephos), which refers to a newborn or a baby still in his mother’s womb. [Luke 1:41; Luke 2:12; Luke 18:15 – literal; 1 Peter 2:2 - spiritual]

Then, there’s νήπιος (nepios), which is from two parts, the first being a negation and the second meaning “speaking”, so literally, “not speaking”, so it’s referring to an infant, or figuratively a simple-minded person, or spiritually referring to an immature Christian (babe or child (-ish)). [Galatians 4:1; Hebrews 5:3 – literal; 1 Corinthians 3:1; 13:11 – spiritual]

There’s also υἱός (huios), which is a mature child or an adult; spiritually, it’s a person who is spiritually where God wants him to be. [Matthew 3:17; 5:9]

But, in this passage we just read, there are three words for “child” that we’re going to look at that are different than the words I just mentioned. In verse 40, we have the word “child”; in verse 43, we have the word “child”, but it’s a different Greek word; in verse 48, we have the word “son”, but it is not huios, it’s another word: τέκνον (teknon).

[Matthew 18:3-4] This is talking about the Kingdom of Heaven, or more appropriately, the Kingdom of the Heavens. It’s always plural. The word “heaven” appears, many, many times, but when it’s used with the word “Kingdom”, it’s always plural. But, this is talking about the Kingdom of the Heavens. Read with me in [Matthew 18:1].

The Kingdom of the Heavens is the rule of the heavens over the Earth. The present administration in the Kingdom of the Heavens is Satan and the angels that followed him when he desired to exalt his throne above the throne of God. (Once again, we see that self-esteem, which is so prized in the world today, is the root of all our problems.) [Ephesians 6:12:] The fallen angels that are with Satan in the heavenlies are called, “principalities”, “powers”, and “rulers” of the darkness of this world. Satan has authority over kingdoms of the earth at the present time.

Satan offered the Kingdom of the Heavens, or the rule of the heavens over the Earth, to Jesus in the wilderness in [Matthew 4:8-9:]. In no place does Scripture deny Satan’s authority to make this offer this to Jesus. If Jesus accepted Satan’s offer, Satan would be over Jesus the Christ, and that is not possible. [Revelation 12:7-8: Keep Matthew 18 marked as we turn to different passages] tells us that Satan and his angels will be cast out of heaven. This seems to be in the middle of the Tribulation, but just before Satan and his angels are removed from heaven, we see the change in command in [Revelation 11:15].

Scripture tells us the good and faithful servants will rule over many cities. Luke 19:17 says, “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]. [Revelation 2:26-27]

[Matthew 18:3] Jesus was teaching his disciples about entering into the Kingdom of the Heavens, and not just seeing the Kingdom. [John 3:3:] If a person is born into the family of God, he will be able to see the Kingdom, as promised in this verse. The apostles were learning what it meant to enter the Kingdom of the 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, **you shall not enter into the Kingdom of the Heavens.**”

The disciples were learning that **entering** into the Kingdom had to do with position in that Kingdom. They debated among themselves who would be the greatest in the Kingdom, and they finally got enough courage to ask the Lord about the issue in [Matthew 18:1].

[Mark 9:33-35:] This is confirmed in [Luke 22:26-27, which says, “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**. 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. We have to forget self-esteem and placing ourselves on a pedestal. The choice is ours to make. The question is, are we willing to pay the price of no recognition in this present age in exchange 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.”]

Don’t read this as, “as this little child *humbles himself*”, but as, “shall make himself humble as this little child is lowly”. In other words, “whosoever shall willingly become by spiritual process what the child is by nature”. (The ninth-century story that the child was Ignatius is worthless; it’s just an old husband’s tale.) It is not that the child humbled himself, but that the child is humble from the nature of the case in relation to older persons. That is true, no matter how bumptious or self-assertive the child may be.

[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”, or more properly, “ya’ll”, is a reference to his disciples; that’s who he’s talking to. Jesus wanted his disciples to be converted and become as little children.

Disciples. Disciples are not lost people. In all cases, it implies that the person not only accepts the views of the teacher, but that he adheres to those teachings in practice in his life. He embraces the teachings of the one of whom he is a disciple. In the widest sense, it refers to those who accept the teachings of any particular person, **not only in belief, but**

***in life.*** The disciples of John the Baptizer embraced and lived the teachings of John (Matthew 9:14; Luke 7:18; John 3:25); the Pharisees had disciples (Matthew 22:16; Mark 2:18; Luke 5:33); Moses had disciples (John 9:28). But, the most common usage of this term is used to designate those who embraced and adhered to the teachings of Jesus. Often, it's the only name for followers of Jesus in the Gospels (Matthew 10:42; Luke 6:17; John 6:66: From that *time* many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.) He had many, many disciples, but only twelve apostles. In the Acts, after his death and ascension, disciples are those who confess him as the anointed one of God. Then, Acts 11:26 tells us, "And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch." Disciples are those who have been saved and are growing in the Word; disciples are not just random, unsaved people. [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;"]

[Matthew 18:3: Except ye be **converted**, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.] The phrase, "Except you be converted" is not an invitation to his disciples to be saved, but an invitation to a change of direction. The word "convert" is translated "turned about" in [Luke 7:9, which says, "When Jesus heard these things, he marvelled at him, and ***turned him about***, and said unto the people that ***followed him***, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel."] For Jesus to face the crowd that followed him, he had to twist or turn around or reverse. Keep in mind that the Greek word for "convert" is not the same as the Greek word for "repent".

[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 he wants us to become as little children in our attitude and rank. We are to be men, as found in [1 Corinthians 14:20, which says, "Brethren, be not children [παιδίον (paidion)] in understanding [thought]: howbeit in malice be ye children [a verb form of "nepios"], but in understanding [thought] be men [teleion (mature)]."] He wants us to be strong in doctrine.

[Ephesians 4:14 says, "That we *henceforth* be no more children [nepios; not able to speak; minor], tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, *and* cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;"] The Lord wants us to grow from being a child with very little to say, to one who is able to teach. What does Hebrews 5:12-14 say? Turn with me there. "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which *be* the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk *is* unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are ***of full age***, *even* those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."

For the disciples to become as little children by turning around, 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 [pais], which carries the thought of maturity. To become as 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 who has matured in his spiritual life and sees the value of becoming as a little child in his spiritual life.** The value of becoming as 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 of the Heavens, instead of just **seeing** the Kingdom.

We are not to become little children, but we are to become **as** little children. One of the meanings of the word translated as “as” is “in that manner”. The manner of a little child is to be willing to be less in rank. [Matthew 18:3: Except you [may] be converted, and [may] become [for yourself] as little children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of the Heavens.] Both the verb “converted” and the verb “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, and is applied in this case to the disciples.

What does it mean 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] says, “*Let nothing **be done** through strife or vainglory; but **in lowliness of mind** let each esteem other better than themselves.*” (There’s that word “esteem”, and who are we to esteem?) [Romans 12:10 says, “*Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; **in honour preferring one another**.”]*

To be a little child, one must choose to be in lowliness of mind. [Philippians 2:5-8] tells us, “Let this mind be in you [have this attitude], which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But **made himself of no reputation**, and took upon him the form of **a servant**, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he **humbled himself**, and became **obedient** unto death, even the death of the cross.” Verse 6 tells us that Jesus thought it not robbery (something to be grasped or to be held onto) to be equal with God.

Hebrews 2:9 tells us, “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower [in rank] than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every ~~man~~ person.” Jesus was willing to be less than equal in rank with God and, “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”. (Hebrews 12:2) [You can reference that to 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, as it says in Matthew 25:23, “Well done, good and faithful servant; thou has been faithful (imperfect) over a few things, I will make (future, active, indicative) thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of the Lord”.

So, the question is, 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 the Heavens.

[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 the Christ will be reigning over the earth.

In [Matthew 19:27], Peter asks Jesus a question. In [Matthew 19:28-29], Jesus answers. 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**.]

It's a personal 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** [*meizOn*, elder] in the Kingdom of the Heavens." The verbs "converted", "become", and "enter" are all in the subjunctive mode. Remember, the subjunctive mode expresses the possibility of failure. There is the possibility that one may not want to humble himself and become as a child 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 young 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, and the middle voice is translated with the phrase "for myself". We do not ask God to humble us, but we humble ourselves of 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 yours to make now in this present time.

[1 Peter 5:5-6 says, "...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 yours. There are those today who want to be seen of men and to be honored by their peers. They are like those that are talked about in Matthew 23:6-7, who:

“love the uppermost rooms at feasts and the chief seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi.”

In [Luke 14:8-11], Jesus taught, “When thou art bidden of any *man* to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him; And he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room. But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room (the children’s table!); that when he that bade thee cometh, 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. For whosoever exalteth himself [now] shall be abased [future]; and he that humbleth himself [now] shall be exalted [future].”

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. That’s what this passage in Luke 2 is showing us. It shows a progression of Jesus in maturity, but then he steps down and was subject unto his parents. That’s what we’re to do; we’re to humble ourselves, if we want to one day be exalted in the coming Kingdom of our Lord.