



Links Players

Who's the Greatest?

*Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable. (Psalm 145:3)
...something greater than the temple is here...something greater than Jonah is here...something greater than Solomon is here. (Matthew 12: 6, 41-42, ESV)*

One question that golfers never weary in asking is, "Who is the greatest golfer of all time?" Depending on the era, the candidates change. Some serious contenders have been Bobby Jones, Walter Hagen, Ben Hogan, Sam Snead, Arnold Palmer, Jack Nicklaus, and Tiger Woods!

These days the debate usually revolves around Jack and Tiger. One major obstacle in deciding between Jack and Tiger is the gap in time; Jack preceded Tiger by decades. Therefore, a head-to-head series is out of the question. Not to be outdone, we look to the archived records and compare.

The statistical categories are many. To mention only a handful: the total number of tournaments won, the number of majors won, the ratio of tournaments played to tournaments won, the number of times a player finished second, the number of times a player finished in the top three, etc.

To be sure, the debate swirling around the greatest golfer who ever lived is an intriguing one. Calling the role of those under consideration for the best golfer of all time would take some time. Calling the role for the greatest man who ever lived takes less than a second.

In Matthew's gospel, we discover Jesus' commentary on the issue. There, he says about himself, "...something greater than the temple is here," "...something greater than Jonah is here," and "...something greater than Solomon is here."

Now, if you are Jewish and living in the first century, in your mind hardly anything is greater than the Temple, King Solomon, and the prophet Jonah. For anyone to say about themselves that they are greater than all three would be foolish unless, of course, it's true.

Deliberately, Jesus is comparing himself to all three Old Testament offices: prophet (Jonah), priest (Temple), and king (Solomon). Jesus takes representative examples of each office and unequivocally announces he is greater than all three.

At the end of Luke's gospel, Jesus explains that the entire Old Testament is ultimately about him (Luke 24: 27, 44). One way the Old Testament speaks about Jesus is through typology. Typology is a person, institution, or event in the Old Testament that foreshadows the person and work of Christ.

What we discover in Matthew gospels are three examples of typology. The temple was where the presence of God resided and where people met with him. Its place in the larger scheme of things was to foreshadow the "greater temple," Jesus Christ (John 2). It is here, in the person of Jesus, that God's glory is ultimately found and where sinners meet God (2 Corinthians 3:17-18).

Jonah was a prophet who spent three days and nights in the belly of a large sea creature and "rose again" in a mortal body. Jesus spent three days and three nights in the grip of death and rose again in an immortal body. A "resurrected" Jonah saw a city repent and believe. A resurrected Jesus will see people from every nation repent and believe. Jonah's story finds its ultimate significance in foretelling the greater story of him who was to conquer the grave.

Solomon ruled a vast kingdom. Jesus rules all the kingdoms of the world. Solomon's wealth was unsurpassed until the arrival of Jesus, "...in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge...." Solomon's greatest accomplishment is in prefiguring the King who was to come.

As magnificent as the Temple, Jonah, and Solomon were, they pale in comparison to their antitype. The greatness of Jesus Christ is, in a word, incomparable.

Prayer- Father, "...grant us the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him."

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Dennis Darville

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