

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

“through the eye of a needle”

Mark 10:17-27

Introduction

During the personal ministry of Jesus, questions were often asked of Him by His hearers, disciples and critics. In response to the rich young ruler’s question, *“what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”* Jesus pointed out the necessity of keeping the Law and because of His love for the young man He told him the one thing he lacked to enter the kingdom of heaven. Jesus instructed the young ruler saying, *“go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me.”* The text tells us that this man rejected the instructions he sought from the Good Master – *“And he was sad at the saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions”* (Mk. 10:22; cf. Matt. 19:16-26; Lk. 18:18-30).

Jesus’ Illustration

Not only did the words of Jesus have a marked impact on the young ruler, the disciples of Jesus who had witnessed this encounter were astonished at his words as well. Jesus then began to teach the impossibility of one entering heaven who trusts in riches. In verse 23 Jesus said, *“How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!”* The NRSV renders this verse *“How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!”* Similar language is used also on verse 24. Upon the astonishment of the disciples by this saying, Jesus in verse 25 used a proverbial statement to illustrate this impossibility by saying, *“It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.”*

The Needle’s Eye

Jesus uses the literal *“camel”* and the *“needle’s eye”* (Lk. 18:25) to illustrate the absolute impossibility of one entering heaven who trusts in riches. The Greek word rendered *“eye”* in Matthew 19:24 and Mark 10:25 is *trumalia*, *“...used of the eye of a needle,”* according to Vine, (*Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, p. 404). Some have attempted to soften this saying of Jesus and water it down by saying that the needle’s eye was only referring to a small passage way or small gate. Such a notion is unfounded! Vine says in his notes on the word *“needle”* – *“The idea of applying ‘the needle’s eye’ to small gates seems to be a modern one; there is no ancient trace of it. The Lord’s object in the statement is to express the human impossibility and there is no need to endeavor to soften the difficulty by taking the needle to mean anything more than the ordinary instrument.”* Mackie points out (*Hastings’ Bible Dictionary*) that *“an attempt is sometimes made to explain the words as a reference to the small door, a little over 2 feet square, in the heavy gate of a walled city. This mars the figure without materially altering the meaning, and receives no justification from the language and traditions of Palestine.”* (Ibid, p. 788). The attempts to soften the saying of Jesus in this and other passages are not surprising. What Jesus and the Apostles taught as being an absolute impossibility, many religious rebels, renegades and even some of my brethren try to make possible in an effort to justify lawlessness! The impossibility of putting that camel through the needle’s eye can be set in contrast to other impossibilities revealed in the scriptures!

Other Impossibilities

It is impossible for those who have not been baptized into Christ to enter the kingdom of God. Jesus said to Nicodemus in John 3:4, *“Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the king-*

dom of God.” Jesus said in Mark 16:16, **“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”** Paul said, **“we are buried with him by baptism”** (Rom. 6:1-6); that those who **“have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ”** (Gal. 3:27). Recorded in the book of Acts are those who were baptized in the name of Christ in water – those on Pentecost (2:1-47); the Samaritans (8:5-12); Simon (8:13); the Ethiopian treasurer (8:26-40); Saul (9:1-18; 22:1-6; 26:12-18); Cornelius and his household (10:1-48; 11:1-17); Lydia (16:14, 15); the Philippian jailer (16:25-40); the Corinthians (18:8); the Ephesians (19:1-7). Therefore, those who have NOT been baptized into Christ SHALL NOT enter the kingdom of God, denominational doctrine notwithstanding!

It is impossible for those involved in religious and doctrinal error to inherit the kingdom of God. Jesus denounced doing things religiously without His authority by saying, **“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity”** (Matt. 7:21-23). Jesus also identified the worship of doctrines and commandments of men as vain worship (Matt. 15:9)! All things religious must be done by His authority (Col. 3:17).

It is impossible for those living in an adulterous marriage to enter the kingdom of God. Many have tried to soften the definite teaching of Jesus on divorce and remarriage in Matthew 19:9 where he said, **“And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.”** Those who heard Jesus were shocked at His strict law. Jesus in this encounter with the Pharisees, reaffirmed Genesis 2:24, one man for one woman for life! When one divorces their mate for a cause other than fornication and marries another, then they go to the bed of adultery with the unlawful mate and Paul taught that the adulterer SHALL NOT enter the kingdom of heaven (1 Cor. 6:9; Heb. 13:4)!

It is impossible for the sexually immoral to enter the kingdom of God. The word **“fornication”** includes all sexual immorality. This word includes homosexuality, lesbianism, incest, rape, pedophilia, bestiality, whoredom, and adultery. It includes the ungodly arrangement of “shacking up,” practiced by so many couples today! Paul condemned those involved in sexual immorality as well as those involved in the list of sins in Romans 1:21-32 (cf. Gal. 5:19-21; 1 Cor. 5:1-5; 1 Cor. 6:15-20; and Col. 3:5, 6).

It is impossible for the liar to enter the kingdom of God. John the revelator said, **“all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death”** (Rev. 21:8). This includes “little white lies” you often hear many refer to at times. The lake which burneth with fire and brimstone is not the kingdom of God, it is eternal ruin!

It is impossible for those consumed with worldly pleasures to enter the kingdom of God. Paul said in Philippians 3:18 and 19, **“For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.”** It is sad to say, many brethren are in this condition and this truth can be applied to those brethren who more interested in stuffing the stomach rather than feeding the soul, by their promotion and practice of the social gospel (cf. Jn. 6:26-37).

It is impossible for a covetous person to enter the kingdom of God. Jesus in response to a request to be the divider of an inheritance said to the man who made the request, **“Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth”** (Lk. 12:15). Jesus then spoke the parable of the rich fool, who was not rich toward God, neither cared nor had any concern for his fellow man. He was only interested in keeping and all he had and canning all he could get, filling his own belly and living it up (Lk. 12:13-30). How many do you know who are like this? Jesus called this man a FOOL! This man lost favor with God, and he lost his life and soul and all the worldly treasures he laid up for himself. That very night his soul was required and Jesus said in verse 21, **“So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”** Are those who are miserly, grudging givers or not givers at all, rich toward God? Can one of this nature be pleasing to God? All like this man, including covetous brethren, will loose their

souls because of their desire for worldly pleasures and satisfaction of the lusts of the flesh (1 Jn. 2:15-17). Think about it!

It is impossible for the unrighteous or disobedient to enter the kingdom of God. It should be obvious to all who all who are honestly trying to live a Godly life, that there is no end to things that could be mentioned that will keep one from entering the kingdom of God. What about the gossip (Ps. 16:28, 26:20; Eph. 4:31)? What about the hypocrite (Matt. 23:1-30; Lk. 12:2; Jas. 3:17)? What about those negligent in their service to God (Matt. 25:1-13)? What about the rebellious (1 Sam. 15:23)? What about those engaged in addictive practices such as use of tobacco, social drinking, illegal drugs, gambling and pornography? And what about those with the wrong attitude toward the truth and preachers and teachers of it? In Galatians 5:19-21 and 1 Corinthians 6:9-19, Paul lists numerous sins that are the *“works of the flesh.”* In answer to his own rhetorical question he said, *“Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not enter the kingdom of God?”* He answered with the warning, *“Be not deceived: neither fornicators...nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God”* (1 Cor. 6:9, 10).

Conclusion

Some teach and many are deceived into believing, that such people will inherit the kingdom of God. Paul’s teaching says that this notion is not so! The truth is, heaven is reserved only for the obedient child of God whose faith has endured *“the trial of fire”* (1 Pet. 1:3-9). Let these Apostolic words sink deep into our hearts, *“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly, in this present world”* (Titus 2:11, 12). To attempt to put the ungodly, the disobedient, the alien sinner or an erring brother into the eternal kingdom of God (Heaven), is like trying to put that camel *“through the eye of the needle.”* An IMPOSSIBILITY! *“Be not deceived”* my friends and brethren! — *tgmc* ■

When Church Is Boring

By Frank Himmel

What do you do when you find that church is boring? It’s time for a change! Now the question is, change what?

Many folks think the answer is to change the church. I just read an article about a new church created for men only, men who find church boring. Discarding more traditional environments, they meet in a gymnasium one Saturday evening a month. A rock band provides entertainment. The preacher speaks in front of the scoreboard, with the clock running. He guarantees to have them out in one hour!

Some might not go that far, yet they still insist on change. Contemporary music, drama, and short sermons that are little more than pep talks are the order of the day. Celebration and praise are the buzzwords.

Malachi lived at a time when people found “church” boring. Speaking of Israel’s worship, God said through the prophet, *“You also say, ‘My, how tiresome it is!’ And you disdainfully sniff at it”* (Mal. 1:13).

God proposed two changes in these who turned up their noses at His worship. One was to just stay home (1:10). The better solution – the change He preferred – was to repent (2:2). Notice what God did not approve of: changing the structure or activities of worship to accommodate individual tastes.

The preacher or the one who leads the prayer can give more thought to what he says and the song leader can try to select more meaningful hymns. But when worship as God directed is boring, the main change that is needed is in the heart of the worshiper. – *Collegue church of Christ Articles*, February 21, 2021. ■

Service Times - Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM - Wednesday: 7:00 PM

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