

Bryan Station Baptist Church

INDEPENDENT ESTABLISHED 1786 MISSIONARY

THE PIONEER BAPTIST

"Preaching The Same Truth We Preached Before Kentucky Was A State"

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THE CAMEL AND THE NEEDLE'S EYE

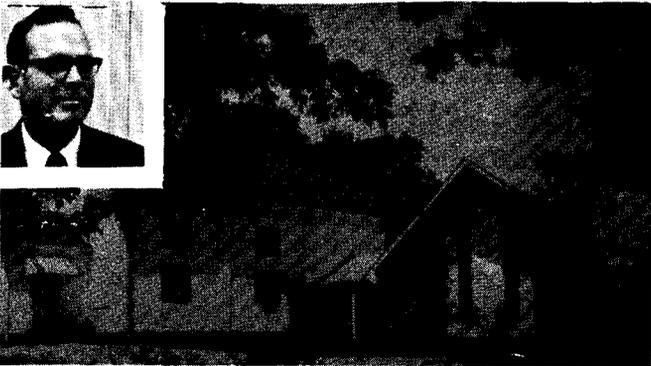
"And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God" (Matt. 19:24).

This is a familiar but neglected text. Nearly everybody knows it is in the Bible but it is not often quoted or pondered. It is a simple and yet puzzling text--men wonder what it means, and yet our Lord spoke in plain and impressive terms. It is an amazing text but in full harmony with the revealed plan of salvation. Christ's own disciples were exceedingly amazed.

The text does not express a difficulty but an impossibility. It is not merely difficult for a camel to go through the eye of a needle; it is an absolute impossibility in the very nature of things. The disciples would not have been so amazed if He had been speaking of something hard to do.

I. What does the text mean? Some explain this by saying there was a certain gate at Jerusalem called the Needle's Eye--a gate so narrow that a camel could not get through except on bended knee and with its burden lifted. But such an explanation destroys the whole force of the passage. The Jaffa gate at Jerusalem is called the Needle's Eye, but it was not so called in our Lord's day. It got its name from this passage rather than that this passage got its meaning from such gate. There is no proof that the Jaffa gate was called the Needle's Eye when our Lord spoke these words.

Others call it a hyperbole, a figure of speech or fanciful exaggeration.



Location: 3.3 miles out Bryan Station Road. Right on Briar Hill Road.

Sunday School 9:45 a.m.
Worship Service 11:00 a.m.
Evening Service 7:00 p.m.
Wednesday Night Prayer Meeting 7:30 p.m.

Air-Conditioned

Nursery Provided

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Lexington, Ky. 40505

But we take it as a plain statement of fact. In the days of our Lord a camel was a well-known animal and a needle, much like these used by women today, was also well-known. The definite article was not used as it would have been if a certain gate had been intended. It is not the needle but a needle, if we are to stick to scriptural expression.

II. The message of the passage. What is the teaching of this text?

1. That salvation by human effort is absolutely impossible. It is not merely difficult but impossible. If salvation were by works, the rich man would have the advantage over the poor man. A man with money can do a lot of good things. Riches are valuable only as they are used in doing good. Riches used to gratify the lust of the eyes and the lust of the flesh and the pride of life are not a blessing but a curse. Paul told Timothy to charge the rich in this world to be rich in good works. But good works no more procure salvation than evil works. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph 2:8-9). "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus 3:5).

So our Lord takes the man who has the best opportunity to enter the kingdom of heaven by his own efforts and shows that it is impossible. If salvation were by works it would be by good works of course, and the rich man would have the best chance to be saved. If the man with the best opportunity cannot enter the kingdom by his own efforts, then what chance is there for the poor man? None, absolutely none. No man can save himself--no man can enter the kingdom by his own efforts. "Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3).

2. Salvation is of the Lord. "With God all things are possible." There is nothing too hard for God. He who created this vast universe controls it. He has never vacated His throne, nor will He ever vacate it. God knows nothing of crisis and emergencies.

If salvation is of the Lord, then it is by grace. This means that God is not obligated to save. Grace is the undeserving favor of God. There is nothing of human merit or human power or human wisdom in salvation. All the merit is in the blood of Christ; all the power is in the Holy Spirit, and the only instrument is the Gospel. Salvation by grace does not give the rich man any advantage over the poor man. There are many dangers in riches:

(1) Danger of independency. A man worth lots of money is naturally inclined to feel independent. "Give us this day our daily bread" (Matt. 6:11). "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy" (I Tim. 6:17).

(2) Danger of falling in love with money. "Trust not in oppression, and become not vain in robbery: if riches increase, set not your heart upon them" (Ps. 62:10).

The drawing that brings men to Christ is an inward and gracious work of God in the soul, and the coming is the exercise of mind and heart in which a person takes the place of a sinner and puts his faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour. When Jesus said, "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life" (John 5:40), those to whom He spoke were already in His physical presence. He was saying, "You will not trust Me for salvation." The clear implication is that had they trusted Him they would have received life. Every man ought to come to Christ, for he that believeth not shall be damned (Mark 16:16). The believer gladly confesses: "I broke God's law, Christ came between; I'm depending on Him to save."

— By the late C. D. Cole