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THE CAMEL AND THE NEEDLE'S EYE

—MATT. 19:13-26.—

Golden Text:—'Jesus said, Suffer little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven.'



ON ROUTE toward Jerusalem the Master was met by mothers desiring to have his blessing upon their children. The Apostles, realizing the greatness of their Master and the importance of his time, forbade this and rebuked the mothers. When Jesus heard, he called them and said: 'Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me; for such is the kingdom of heaven', and he put his hands in blessing upon their heads.

From this we are not to understand that the Kingdom of Heaven will be composed of little children. This erroneous idea has gone broadcast, and such an impression respecting the Kingdom has thus resulted. On the contrary, no little children can get into the Kingdom. Only those who have the hearing of faith are even 'called' to the Kingdom and its glories. Our Lord's blessing upon little children merely signified his sympathy and love and his appreciation of the purity and innocence of childhood. Those who will be of the Kingdom of God must be like little children in the sense of being simple hearted, true, honest and trustful of their heavenly Father—of such-like will be the inheritors of the Kingdom.

Another account tells us of Jesus' further words to the effect that all who would be his disciples must become *as* little children—must be *like* little children in guilelessness, faith, etc. But those who will be heirs of the Kingdom will all be 'overcomers'. Such take up their cross and follow the Lord whithersoever he leadeth. As our Lord could not have taken up his cross when he was a boy of nine, so likewise children cannot become the followers of Christ in the Scriptural sense until they have reached the age of discretion, which with some may occur much earlier than with others. We have known children of twelve

years or thereabouts to give excellent evidence of faith, obedience and consecration to the Lord's will and evidence of being begotten of the holy Spirit. These, of course, but no other children, could have hope of sharing with Christ in his Millennial Kingdom.

THE YOUNG NOBLEMAN'S TEST

On his journey our Lord was accosted by one who said, 'Good Master, what good things shall I do that I may have eternal life?' He had the right idea, namely, that eternal life is the grand desideratum, the grand hope of all hopes before the human family. We are glad of the question, for it brought forth the inspired answer, in which everybody is interested. What is the value of the present life, except as it leads us up the passageway to eternal life? How utterly lost we should feel if assured that at death we would be blotted out forever! How little in this life would be worth consideration—how little it could do toward filling the longing of our hearts, which yearn for eternal life!

Our Lord parried the question, in order to draw out the young man and make him commit himself. 'Why do you call me good?' Why do you acknowledge me as a good teacher? I am either the Messiah, as I claim, or else an impostor and far from good. Do you accept my Messiahship? If you do not, how can you call me good or acknowledge that anything could be good that does not proceed from God, the Fountain of all goodness? But answering your question; if you would enter into eternal life, keep the commandments. The young man replied, Which? The Master answered, 'Thou shalt do no murder, nor commit adultery, nor steal, nor bear false witness, but honour thy father and thy mother and love thy neighbour as thyself.' The young man replied, 'All these things have I observed from my youth. What lack I yet?'

He was a model young man and Jesus loved him. Evidently he was keeping the Jewish Law to the extent of his knowledge and ability. He thought that he was loving his neighbour as himself; but this was a mistake which the Lord disclosed to him by the following suggestion: 'If thou wouldest be perfect, go sell all that thou hast and give to the poor and thou shalt have treasure in heaven' instead of on earth; sacrifice also your earthly reputation and become my follower.

Ah, how the Lord knew to put his finger on the sore spot! The young man had come to him very boastful, very sure that if any one in the world was seeking to be in harmony with the Divine arrangement he was that one. He came for the Master's approval, that he might hear him say, 'You are the one exception to the rule'. The Lord did not say, 'If you love your neighbour as you love yourself you will at least put forth an effort to make that neighbour as comfortable as you desire to be comfortable'. He was content to be very rich, while some of his neighbours whom he thought he loved as he loved himself were very poor—abjectly, sorrowfully so. When Jesus discovered to him the difficulty of his situation, he grasped it at once. He saw himself as never before. It became a new test with him. Thus it is with all. A previous lesson showed us the Kingdom as a great prize, a pearl of great value, a treasure, which to possess, will cost all that we have; and this lesson points out the same fact.

Let us not make the mistake made by some, and suppose that the young man who lived so honourable a life and failed to gain heaven, would be thrust down into eternal torment because he did not sacrifice his *all* to become the Lord's disciple. His loss of the Kingdom was a sufficient penalty without suffering eternal torment in the future. Such members of the human family, under the blessed conditions of the Millennial Kingdom, will doubtless make very rapid progress and will obtain eternal life on the plane of human perfection, though not worthy of the Kingdom honours which belong only to the elect. And the elect are those only who are gladly sacrificing their lives and their all to gain the great prize.

PASSING THROUGH THE NEEDLE'S EYE

Our Lord commented upon the matter to his disciples and added that the rich must have great difficulty in connection with their endeavour to enter the Kingdom. He said, sympathetically, rather than in a denunciatory manner, 'It is easier for a

camel to go through the needle's eye than for the rich to enter the kingdom of God.' This astonished the disciples very greatly, for they knew that the majority of the religionists of their day belonged to the wealthy class, the Scribes and the Pharisees. They replied, 'Who, then, can get into the Kingdom, if these cannot?' Our Lord's reply was, 'With men this is impossible, but not with God.' Men would be inclined to say that God would find no one for the Kingdom at all if he rejected the rich.

In a word, no *rich* man can get into the Kingdom. He must give up everything to the Lord or else be barred from a place in the Kingdom. The terms of acceptance are the same to the rich as to the poor. He who would have the 'pearl of great price' must sell all that he has in order that he may obtain it. The rich must give up all to the Lord, and then as stewards of their riches will be held responsible for their stewardship.

The following little poem describes the needle's eye, or small gate beside the larger gate, through which the camels might pass into the walled city after sundown and without any of their burden. So the rich by unloading and becoming poor may get into the Kingdom:—

THROUGH THE NEEDLE'S EYE

"Tall was my camel and laden high,
And small the gate as a needle's eye.
"The city within was very fair,
And I and my camel would enter there.
"You must lower your load', the porter cried,
'You must throw away that bundle of pride'.
"This I did, but the load was great,
Far too wide for the narrow gate.
"Now', said the porter, 'to make it less,
Discard that hamper of selfishness'.
"I obeyed, though with much ado,
Yet still nor camel nor I got through.
"Ah', said the porter, 'your load must hold
Some little package of trust-in-gold'.
"The merest handful was all I had,
Yet 'Throw it away', the porter bade.
"Then lo, a marvel! the camel tall
Shrank to the size of the portal small,
"And all my riches, a vast estate,
Easily passed through the narrow gate!"



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