



Boston Catholic Journal



NIHIL NISI IESUM

Dedicated to Mary, Mother of God

Salus Animarum Suprema Lex Esto (Canon Law 175)

The Salvation of Souls is the Supreme Law in the Church

THE NARROW GATE



and “Broader Meanings” ...

“Lord, will only a few people be saved?” He answered them:
“Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I tell you,
will seek to enter but will not be able.” (St. Luke 13.23-24)

So many of us look for some esoteric meaning in the words of Christ, *a*

meaning hidden beneath the surface, beyond the obvious, and we pride ourselves that we are clever in having understood it in light of some obscure aspect of history, archeology, or Semitic culture. We delve into the construction of walls and buildings, look to artifacts, cultic practices, and so forth. In other words, we look everywhere to find the meaning of what Jesus says ... *except* in what Jesus says.

In our obsession with the “*hidden*”, the “*secret*”, the “*real*” message obscured by, and cleverly concealed within the words — we completely overlook the obvious. It is too simple for us, too transparent for our “sophisticated” minds — we are far more clever than these simple Jews from some obscure province of Rome.

At Mass today, many of us will be guided through the intricacies of the construction of the walls surrounding the Holy City of Jerusalem, with a special emphasis on “the Narrow Gate” (*kheta*) and the “Eye of the Needle”. The priest will presume that we cannot understand the obvious apart from the obscure, and by focusing upon, by belaboring the obscure, he will successfully elucidate the obvious.

After our architectural lesson, we will all warmly congratulate ourselves on how clever and insightful we have subsequently become. Now we know all about the Narrow gate: how wide it is, how encumbered camels cannot pass through it, that it was a security measure, albeit primitive, to prevent the mass influx of an enemy that may possibly lay siege to Jerusalem; that it was so high and this long — oh, by the way, and in conclusion ... Jesus was using the Narrow Gate as an analogy that has something to do with sin and salvation; however, by now I am unclear about the point of the analogy ... “*how many cubits high did you say it was ... and a cubit equals how many feet?*”

At this point I must make a confession: I do not know how wide the gate was. I do not even know how wide a camel is. What is more ... I have no compelling reason to find out — and, I suspect, neither do you. But I do know that both the Gate and the Camel are really beside the point – and so do you. You *know* what Jesus is saying.

We *know*, but we wish to quibble. “*Well, what if it was a Llama instead of a Camel? And does the parable presume the camel’s having three days supply on it, or four, in order to prevent it’s passing through the gate?*”

The point is that the parable is not about a camel or even about a narrow gate!

It is about you! It is about your soul making its way to Heaven. *Of course* Christ used parables, but He also spoke in strikingly clear and unquestionable terms.

Why should this be important to you? Because He tells you that *many will attempt to enter — but will not.*

Why? They will be busy measuring the gates ... instead of endeavoring to walk through them.

Geoffrey K. Mondello
Editor
Boston Catholic Journal



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