

Straining Out Gnats While Swallowing Camels

I. Introduction: (Matthew 23:23-24)

A. Under the Law of Moses, both the camel and gnat would be unclean to eat (**Leviticus 11:4; 20** – NKJV flying insects / ASV 1901 winged creeping things).

1. As Jesus said, “*these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone*”, we cannot perceive one thing greater than another (**Exodus 24:3, Deuteronomy 27:26, Deuteronomy 29:29, Jeremiah 26:2-3, Acts 5:17-20, James 2:10, and II John 9**).

2. Partial worship and service is rejected by God (**Jeremiah 6:19-20, Jeremiah 14:10-12, Amos 5:21-24, and I Timothy 5:21**).

B. Some people love the appearance of being religious (**Luke 13:23-28**).

1. The Pharisees did ‘a’ part by tithing (**Deuteronomy 12:5-6**).

2. It was common for the Pharisees to do some things right for all the wrong reasons (**Matthew 23:1-5 and Luke 18:10-14**).

II. Body: Do we find ourselves focusing on a small part of the picture while missing the whole or even the true picture (i.e. Jews loved the law, but missed the promises to the Gentile therein - **Acts 22:21-22**; cf. **Galatians 3:6-8**).

A. Some carry out traditions, while teaching against such (**Mark 7:8-9**), and make their traditional ideas and terminology the standard while missing a whole herd of camels.

1. Focus on “five acts of worship” and miss the object of our worship (**Revelation 22:6-9**).

a. Love preaching about denominationalism, alcoholism, baptism, but don’t preach to me about me. We forget the purpose of preaching (**I Corinthians 1:21**).

b. A prayer here, a prayer there, just not everywhere (**I Timothy 2:8**).

c. Giving, but just because I have to forgetting to whom and why I am giving (**II Corinthians 9:7**).

d. The bread, the fruit of the vine, the first day of the week, but forget about why: “in remembrance of me” (**I Corinthians 11:23-26**).

e. No piano, scriptural songs, on key, I’m singing; but to who (**Ephesians 5:19**)?

2. Focus on “five steps to salvation” and forget the source of salvation (**Acts 4:10-12 and Galatians 1:3-5**).

3. Focus on “is it a church of Christ?” (**Romans 16:16**) missing if the group truly belongs to Christ (**Revelation 2:5**; cf. **II Timothy 1:13 and Titus 2:1**).

4. Focus on “worship apparel” (i.e. tie, coat, dress, etc.) and miss the true apparel (**Galatians 3:27, Colossians 3:9-10, Ephesians 6:11, and I Peter 5:5**).

B. Sometimes we miss the big picture by focusing on symptoms rather than spiritual illnesses (i.e. we worry about those who fall away thinking they’re victims, but they’re really not – **Hebrews 3:12**).

1. Unfaithfulness in attendance is a symptom that must be treated (**Hebrews 10:23-25**); but there are larger, underlying problems (**Psalms 122:1**; cf. **I Timothy 3:15**).

- a. The unfaithful in attendance is really saying “I’m not interested” in spiritual matters (**Colossians 1:21-23**).
- b. They are also saying they are not interested in working with the local saints (**Philippians 1:27**).
- c. Those who do not attend faithfully are telling others they have a priority problem (**Luke 9:62**).
- d. God provided us with brethren to assemble locally with for our building up, spiritual nourishment, and assistance (**Ephesians 4:16**); neglecting that is a denial of what God surely believes we need (**Acts 2:42-46**).
- 2. We see ignorance and state the obvious, “that person is not studying”, but we fail to ask “why not?” (**Psalms 119:97**; cf. **John 14:23**).
- 3. We see children who are badly misbehaved and say “bad child”, but why not bad parent (**Proverbs 29:15**)? Aren’t children a measuring stick of the parents (cf. **I Timothy 3:4-5** and **II Timothy 1:5**).
- C. We can miss the big picture in self-examination (**Matthew 7:1-5**).
- 1. We can often deny worldliness (**Titus 2:13**), while missing how worldly influences have changed us (**Nehemiah 13:23-27**).
- a. Changes our talk (**Titus 2:7-8** and **I Peter 4:11**).
- b. Changes our conduct (**Ephesians 4:21-23**; cf. **Ephesians 2:1-5**).
- c. Changes our apparel (**Genesis 3:7; 21, Exodus 28:42**, and **I Timothy 2:9-10**).
- d. Changes our friendships (**James 4:4**).
- 2. Sometimes if we’d just live up to our own standards, we’d be okay (**Romans 2:1-6**).

III. Conclusion:

- A. Let’s make our focus on the whole, not just little parts of what God wants us to do (**Psalms 119:5-6**).
- B. **Matthew 5:20**