

Ordinary 21C - 2025

A little boy once asked his mother if people who told lies went to Heaven. She replied, "*Of course not.*" "Well," he said, "*it must be awfully lonesome and boring there with only God and George Washington.*"

"Are you saved?" When the questioner asked Jesus "*How many will be saved?*" he was assuming that the salvation of God's Chosen People was virtually guaranteed, provided they kept the Law. In other words, the Kingdom of God was reserved for the Jews alone, and Gentiles would be shut out. The Jewish catechism, *Mishnah*, taught: "*All Israelites have a share in the world to come.*" The author of the Apocalypse of Ezra declared, "*this age the Most High has made for the many, but the age to come for a few*" (4 Ezra 8:1). Hence, Jesus' answer must have come as a shock. In answering the question, Jesus shifts the focus from "**how many will be saved**" to "**how one is to be saved,**" declaring that it is, by *entering "through the narrow gate."* From Jesus' answer we already see the absurdity of those who, like the Jehovah Witnesses, believe they know the precise number of the saved: 144,000.00 Jesus affirms that God wants all persons to enjoy eternal life. But he stresses our need for constant fidelity and vigilance throughout our lives. Thus, Jesus reminds us that, even though God wants all of us to be saved, He cannot, and will not, force us to be saved, for He has given us the freedom to accept His invitation or to refuse it.

72% of Americans "deserve" Heaven: According to most polls, most Americans not only believe in Heaven, they believe that they someday will be there. For example, a poll conducted by *USA Today* sometime back showed that 72% of the people polled rated their chances of getting to Heaven as good to excellent. Interestingly enough, these same people said that only 60% of their friends will go to Heaven. I wonder why the discrepancy! 80% said they believe in Heaven, but only 67% said they believe in Hell. [Glenn Van Ekeren, *Speaker's Sourcebook II* (Englewood Cliffs, NY: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1994), p. 326.]

Here's what interests me: By what authority do they assume that they are likely candidates for Heaven? Particularly if they are only nominally interested in religion as are most Americans? And, for that matter, by what authority do they believe in Heaven but not in Hell? The evangelical Christians are so obsessed by the notion of salvation by Faith that we totally ignore an entire body of Jesus' teachings that call for commitment and sacrifice. (Rev. King Duncan). (<https://frtonyshomilies.com/>)

Twenty million tons of cement. In 1974, in the wake of oil boom, the government of Nigeria decided to bring their country at a single leap into line with most developed Western

nations. The planners calculated that to build the new roads, airfields, and military buildings which the plan required would call for some **20 million tons of cement**. This was duly ordered and shipped by freighters from all over the world, to be unloaded onto the docks at Lagos, Nigeria. Twenty million tons of cement. — Unfortunately, the Nigerian planners had not considered the fact that the docks at Lagos were only capable of handling **two thousand tons a day**. **Working every day**, it would have taken **twenty-seven years** to unload the ships that were at one point waiting at sea off Lagos. These contained a third of the world's supply of cement, much of it showing its fine quality by setting solid in the holds of the freighters. — Hasty transactions bring painful losses. Poor planning yields disastrous results. Building a tower before counting the cost is most unwise. (<https://frtonyshomilies.com/>)

Self-discipline: Many years ago, an editorial in the magazine, *War Cry* put it like this: "*A loose wire gives out no musical note; but fasten the ends, and the piano, the harp or the violin is born. Free steam drives no machine. But hamper and confine it with piston and turbine and you have the great world of machinery made possible. The unhampered river drives no dynamos but dam it up and we get power sufficient to light a great city. So, our lives must be disciplined if we are to be of any real service in this world.*" — If you are going to walk with Jesus, there are some things you will need to leave behind. (<https://frtonyshomilies.com/>)

Coach Carter: Some of you are maybe familiar with the movie *Coach Carter*. *Coach Carter* tells the true story of Kenneth Carter, an inner-city Richmond basketball coach who took a ragtag group of high school players and shaped them into a tightly disciplined and almost unstoppable team of athletes. "*To accomplish that, he was brutal. He pushed the boys, always to the edge of their endurance, and then a little further. Any insolence was immediately reprimanded with a crackdown of grueling drills. The slightest lateness was penalized. Backtalk was squelched beneath a mounting regimen of workouts. To show you that Carter meant business, he made headlines in 1999 for benching his entire undefeated high school basketball team due to poor academic results. When was the last time you heard of a coach doing that? Under Coach Carter's taskmaster harshness, the boys at first withered, then flourished.*" [Mark Buchanan, *Hidden In Plain Sight* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2002), p. 60.]

Why did Carter put his players through such agony? Was it because he hated them? No, it was because he loved them and wanted the best for them. His desire was that they should be more than they were. And that is Christ's desire for us. He wants us to be fit to share eternity with him. (Rev. King Duncan). (<https://frtonyshomilies.com/>)