

46. The “all things” which are “richly supplied” to believers have to do with the capacity for blessings that is developed over time through the process of spiritual growth
47. From this emerges a principle: capacity for blessings must precede blessings in life.
48. Capacity for blessings is systematically acquired as the advancing believer comes to realize that the unseen blessings from God are more quickly acquired through the mechanics of testing.
49. This is the advantage of enduring the scrum. The positive believer must endure and surpass the mental roadblocks that confront him.
50. This is done by learning not only to acquire an inventory of biblical ideas, but the courage to apply them to life and circumstances.
51. The unbeliever, and especially a rich unbeliever, is rarely able to comprehend the grace provision of salvation acquired by faith rather than by the performance of “good works.”
52. This weakness often follows the rich believer into the scrum of the angelic conflict. He will be distracted by the possession of worldly assets he assumes will protect him against life’s difficulties.
53. But the grace that saved him will provide solutions that are exceedingly abundant and go beyond any advantages available in the devil’s world.
54. Among the Ten Problem-Solving Devices there are assets called Grace Orientation and Doctrinal Orientation. These two form the momentum necessary to move forward in the plan of God.
55. Grace is the divine policy that once comprehended creates humility in the soul. Doctrine is the biblical system by which the renovation of the soul is accomplished.

56. Divine good emerges from these two under the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit. His ministry is activated by the status quo of spirituality which describes the result of the rebound technique and the filling of the Holy Spirit.
57. The things we have learned about the rich young ruler are his complete absence of these divine assets due to the evil idea of performing good works for salvation.
58. This heresy was so facilitated in the soul of this man that he rejected the grace offer of salvation from a personal invitation expressed by the Messiah Himself.
59. Notice how a free-will decision by the young man did not leave him copacetic. He still had his stuff, but his soul was awash with grief. The major reason for this seeming dichotomy is expressed by our Lord in:

Matthew 19:23 - And Jesus said to His disciples, "Truly I say to you [Literally, "I am telling you the truth."], it is hard [δυσκόλως (*duskólōs*) with difficulty] for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven."

60. This difficulty is self-imposed. Grace would have guaranteed his entry into the kingdom, but human-good works required human effort that, short of subsequent salvation, would have produced nothing but judgment.
61. The Lord now uses hyperbole on illustrate the difficulty any rich man faces to enter into the kingdom of heaven:

Matthew 19:24 - "Again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle [ράφίς (*rhaphís*): sewing needle], than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven."

1. In verse 23, the Lord said, "it is hard for a rich man" but in verse 24, "it is easier for a camel."

2. In the latter, the Lord uses a figure of speech called hyperbole: "Exaggeration for the sake of emphasis in a figure of speech not meant literally."¹
3. This figure of speech depicts a camel going through the eye of a sewing needle easier than a rich man can enter the kingdom of heaven.
4. Taken literally, some expositors have tried to invent a way by which a camel could go through the eye of a needle, but with difficulty. Background on this idea and its development is provide by this article:

MATTHEW 19. Since the Middle Ages commentators have considered the possibility that Jesus' statement concerning the "eye of a needle" may have been a reference to certain doors or gates that actually existed in his day. Some homes did in fact have large doors that would allow a fully loaded camel to enter into the courtyard. Since such doors were cumbersome and required great effort to open, there were often smaller doors cut within them, permitting easy passage of people and smaller animals into the house. Some interpreters have argued that this smaller door was the "needle's eye gate," while others have suggested that the needle's eye referred to smaller doors within larger city gates, such as those at Jaffa and Hebron. Passage through the smaller gate, it was said, would have forced a camel to its knees. Thus, the point of Jesus' teaching in verse 24 is supposedly that a rich man can enter the kingdom of heaven only if he falls down to his knees.

As illustrative as these theories are, they in fact diminish the force of Jesus' words. The point is not that salvation is difficult without God but that it is *impossible* without him. Jesus' contrast of the largest animal known in Palestine with the smallest of holes created a vivid and memorable illustration. The fact that modern-day gates have been so named can most likely be attributed to the influence of this and similar statements within the Talmud and the Koran. In other words, the term "needle's eye gate" most likely did not precede the teaching; rather, the popularity of the term evidently came about because of the teaching. But in Jesus' original setting, it is very likely that a needle's eye was simply a needle's eye and not a gate at all.²

¹ Chris Baldick, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 103.

² "The eye of a needle refers to a sewing needle. (The gate in Jerusalem known as "The Needle's Eye" was built during the middle ages and was not in existence in Jesus' day.) Jesus was saying rhetorically that it is impossible for a rich person to enter God's kingdom, unless God (v. 26) intervenes" (*The NET Bible* [Dallas: Biblical Studies Press, 2005], 1845sn20).

Bible readers do well to beware of legendary, pseudo-archaeological interpretations, which can be quite misleading and even distort or undermine the true meaning of a Biblical text.³

5. The Lord's illustration in verse 24 intensifies his statement in verse 23. Both statements occur after the "rich man" had gone away choosing to retain his property rather than follow Jesus.
6. The second is hyperbolic, using the figure of speech to illustrate that it is as impossible for the "rich man" to enter into heaven as it is for a camel to go through the eye of a needle.
7. The man wanted to accomplish the goal by performing a "good thing" (v. 16), but he had a limit about how far he would go in the doing-of-a-good-thing department (v. 22).
8. In verse 23, the Lord states, "It is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven." It can be done by expressing faith alone in Christ alone.
9. In verse 24, after the "rich young man" had departed, Jesus teaches his disciples that it is impossible for a man to enter the kingdom of God.

Matthew 19:25 - When the disciples heard this, they were very astonished [imperfect passive indicative of ἐκπλήσσω (*ekpléssō*): disciples received continuous action of astonishment] and said, "Then who can be saved?"

10. The disciples understood how a person is saved, but they did not grasp the hyperbolic illustration since it required an impossible feat.
11. They were correct in their assumption as Jesus confirms.

Matthew 19:26 - And looking at them Jesus said to them, "With people this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

³ "The Legend of the Needle's Eye Gate," in *Archaeological Study Bible: An Illustrated Walk through Biblical History and Culture* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 1594.