

Hard Sayings Of Jesus

Lesson 19

So what is a "rich person?" How much does it take to be "rich?" Are you rich? "Rich man" here means not only a man who has heaped up gold like dust or silver like sand, but anyone who has more than the necessities and conveniences of life. Anyone who has food and clothing for himself and his family and something more, is rich.

I. This Week's Hard Saying

Mark 10:25 It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. KJV

II. Why This Is Hard

- If understood literally, according to Jesus' plain statement it is **impossible** for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.
- Those who heard this statement were immediately struck by the difficulty of his words and were perplexed and **astonished**.

Mark 10:26-27 And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved? 27 And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible. KJV

III. Attempts to Soften Jesus' Words

- There are several possible explanations for what Jesus said. Some suggest that "eye of a needle" was a **narrow mountain pass** of which it was difficult for a camel to go through.
- That explanation is plausible but not very likely, there being **no** known pass by that name in that part of the world.
- It could refer to a **small door** fixed in a gate which could be opened after dark. To pass through, the camel must be unloaded. Hence the difficulty of the rich man. He must be unloaded, and hence the proverb, common in the East.
- The problem with this explanation is that there is **no record** of this expression having been used in Bible times to refer to such an opening in a wall around any city. This usage is of a much more recent derivation.
- Another attempt to soften Jesus' words is to point out that the Aramaic word for cable (**rope**) and camel are very close in spelling and sound. They suggest that Jesus said "it is easier for a rope to go through the eye of a needle."
- The manuscript evidence for this translation is found in a few late manuscripts/lectionaries, mostly 11th century or later, and in one 9th or 10th century manuscript. The oldest manuscripts are **unanimous** in reading kamelos, i.e., camel.
- The Babylonian Talmud refers to an **elephant** passing through the eye of a needle as a figure of speech expressing sheer impossibility. However, in Palestine the camel would be a more recognizable symbol, but this expression is not found.

IV. The Context

- The context of this passage has to do with entering the kingdom of God (**salvation**). The rich man had come to Jesus anxious to know what he had to do to inherit eternal life.
- When Jesus told him to sell his property and come and follow Him, that price was more than he was prepared to pay and he went away sad. This man was as the seed sown amongst **thorns**. *Mark 4:18-19 And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word, 19 And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful. KJV*
- Many living in the Bible lands at the time when the Gospels were written believed **erroneously** that if one was poor, it was proof of some moral defect, but, if one was rich it was proof of one's righteousness before God.
- Therefore, they thought that if the rich found it impossible to enter the kingdom of God that poor people would be even **less likely** to enter. *Mark 10:26 And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved?*
- While the disciples were not wealthy men, they had left all to follow Jesus, they did not realize how **stringent** the requirements were (and are) for entering into the kingdom of God.
- There is no doubt that in this case Jesus was using the language of **hyperbole** just as when he spoke of the man with a whole plank sticking out of his eye offering to remove the speck of sawdust from his neighbor's eye. *Matt 7:3-5 "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? 4 How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? 5 You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye. NIV*
- But we must bear in mind that the language of hyperbole was intended to drive the message home: it is impossible for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God- that is; it is **humanly impossible**. *Mark 10:27 Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God." NIV*

V. A Proper Understanding

- To gain a proper understanding of what Jesus meant when he said it is impossible for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God (**to be saved**) we need to summarize some key truths of saving faith.
- The kingdom of God can not be bought with the **resources** that a rich man has at his disposal. A person's wealth is no indication that he has superior standing with God. *Rev 3:17-18 Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: 18 I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. KJV*
- He must comprehend that his need is **spiritual**, not carnal; internal, not external; and that he is powerless to supply his own need. *John 3:5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. KJV*

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- d. He must believe that the key to access to the kingdom of God is inextricably linked to a **personal faith** that only Jesus can provide. John 3:15 That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. KJV
- e. The rich man who believes and comprehends these things does so **by grace**, it is a gift of God who has given him a new spiritual birth. Eph 2:7-8 That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: KJV

VI. Pursuit of Wealth--hindrance to holiness

- a. It creates a preoccupation (**burdening** one's self) with accumulating, maintaining and protecting what you have amassed which distracts one from an earnest and whole-hearted pursuit of God. Heb 12:1 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, KJV
- b. It tends to make a person trust in wealth rather than looking to God for contentment, comfort, and **security**. Luke 12:15-21 And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: 17 And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? 18 And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. 19 And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. 20 But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? 21 So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God. KJV 1 Tim 5:5-6 *Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day. 6 But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth. KJV*
- c. The pursuit of wealth indicates that the **heart** is drawn to this world and away from the things of eternity. Matt 6:21 *For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. KJV* 1 John 2:15 *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. KJV*
- d. Psychologically, having wealth makes getting saved more difficult because a rich man must **lay aside** his power and prestige and come to God as a sinner on the level with his poorest employee or with the basest sort of humanity. 2 Kings 5:10-12 *And Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean. 11 But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper. 12 Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage. KJV*
- e. Having wealth obscures one's awareness of one's own defects, weaknesses, and shortcomings. Hence it often **masks** the need for true humility. Matt 18:4 *Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. KJV*
- f. Having wealth prevents an attitude of meekness because meekness increases in proportion to our own **decreasing** opinion of ourselves. Matt 5:5 *Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. KJV*
- g. Having wealth makes it harder to practice "**yieldedness**" to God and others because one develops an expectation that others ought to be subordinate to those of superior socioeconomic status to themselves. Heb 13:17 *Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you. KJV*

VII. Wealth—Increasing the temptation

- a. The rich are even more tempted toward self-gratification because they **can** indulge the self. This is the opposite of self-denial. Luke 9:23 *And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. KJV*
- b. Wealth feeds the **desire** of the eyes, and so a rich person has the ability to satisfy their longing for those things which are grand, wonderful, beautiful, exotic or new. This is may grow into idolatry. 1 John 2:16 *For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. KJV*
- c. Wealth fosters the pride of life because it attracts **praise** from every quarter to the person who has it. This may cause one to believe that they truly are as good as the praises that they receive James 2:1-3 *2:1 My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. 2 For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; 3 And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: KJV* Rom 12:3 *For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; KJV*

VIII. Application: Are YOU a rich Person? 1Tim 6:6-11

If you own your home, you have more than most in the world do.

If you have a car, you are richer than most.

If you have ever spent money to lose weight, then you are wealthy in the world's eyes

If you buy a Coke, or a cup of coffee, you spent a day's wages for many humans.

If you own a personal computer it is an unaffordable luxury to most in the world.

If you can draw a glass of clean water from a tap within your home this is unheard of in much of the world.

If you have a toilet, you have more than 60-80% of people in the world

If you take a week's vacation, you will spend more in those seven days than the world's average yearly income

If you go to dinner and a movie you will spend more than the total monthly household income of most people in the world.

Some Proverbs to Ponder: Proverbs 10:4, 11:4, 11:28, 19:17, 21:13, 23:4; Ecclesiastes 5:10

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II. Why This Is Hard

- If understood literally, according to Jesus' plain statement it is _____ for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.
- Those who heard this statement were immediately struck by the difficulty of His words and were perplexed and _____.
Mark 10:26-27 And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved? 27 And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible. KJV

III. Attempts to Soften Jesus' Words

- There are several possible explanations for what Jesus said. Some suggest that "eye of a needle" was a _____ of which it was difficult for a camel to go through.
- That explanation is plausible but not very likely, there being _____ known pass by that name in that part of the world.
- It could refer to a _____ fixed in a gate which could be opened after dark. To pass through, the camel must be unloaded. Hence the difficulty of the rich man. He must be unloaded before going through.
- The problem with this explanation is that there is _____ of this expression having been used in Bible times to refer to such an opening in a wall around any city. This usage is of a much more recent derivation.
- Another attempt to soften Jesus' words is to point out that the Aramaic word for cable (_____) and camel are very close in spelling and sound. They suggest that Jesus said "it is easier for a rope to go through the eye of a needle."
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- The context of this passage has to do with entering the kingdom of God (_____). The rich man had come to Jesus anxious to know what he had to do to inherit eternal life.
- When Jesus told him to sell his property and come and follow Him, that price was more than he was prepared to pay and he went away sad. This man was as the seed sown amongst _____. *Mark 4:18-19 And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word, 19 And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful. KJV*
- Many living in the Bible lands at the time when the Gospels were written believed _____ that if one was poor, it was proof of some moral defect, but, if one was rich it was proof of one's righteousness before God.
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VIII. Application: Are YOU a rich Person? 1Tim 6:6-11

If your annual income is \$47,500 or more you are in the top 1% of wage earners in the world.

If you own your home, you have more than most in the world do.

If you have a car, you are richer than most.

If you buy a Coke, or a cup of coffee, you spend a day's wages for many around the world.

If you own a personal computer it is an unaffordable luxury to most in the world.

If you can draw a glass of clean water from a tap within your home this is unheard of luxury in much of the world.

If you have a toilet, you have more than 60-80% of people in the world

If you take a week's vacation, you will spend more in those seven days than the world's average annual income for an individual.

If you go to dinner and a movie you will spend more than the total monthly household income of most people in the world.

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