

# Jesus Talks With the Rich Young Man

Here's a complete explanation of **Jesus' conversation with the Rich Young Ruler**, as found in:

- **Matthew 19:16–30**
- **Mark 10:17–31**
- **Luke 18:18–30**

## OVERVIEW

Feature	Matthew 19	Mark 10	Luke 18
Questioner	"A <b>young man</b> "	"A man ran up"	"A <b>ruler</b> "
Main Question	"What <b>good thing</b> must I do to get eternal life?"	"What must I do to <b>inherit</b> eternal life?"	"What must I do to <b>inherit</b> eternal life?"
Response Focus	Goodness & Law	God's goodness & commandments	God's goodness & commandments
Emotional Response	Goes away sad	Face fell; went away sorrowful	Became very sad

## TEXT SUMMARY & BREAKDOWN

### 1. The Man's Question

- He approaches Jesus respectfully (kneels in Mark).
- Asks: "*What must I do to inherit eternal life?*"
- Matthew emphasizes "what **good** thing must I do?"

### Jesus' Initial Response:

- Challenges the idea of human "goodness."
  - "*Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone.*"
  - *Wanted to see if the man knew Jesus' true identity (God)*
- Points to the **commandments** (specifically those about loving neighbor).

## COMMANDMENTS QUOTED BY JESUS

#	Commandment	MT 19:18–19	MK 10:19	LK 18:20
5	Honor your father and mother	✓	✓	✓
6	Do not murder	✓	✓	✓
7	Do not commit adultery	✓	✓	✓
8	Do not steal	✓	✓	✓
9	Do not bear false witness	✓	✓	✓
?	"Do not defraud" (Lev. 19:13)	✗	✓	✓
	"Love your neighbor as yourself" (Lev. 19:18)	✓	✗	✗
10	Do not covet	✗	✗	✗

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## 2. The Man's Moral Confidence

- The man claims to have **kept all the commandments** since his youth.
  - He's a devout Jew, confident in his external obedience.
- 🔥 Mark adds: *"Jesus looked at him and loved him."*

## 3. Jesus' Call to Radical Discipleship

- Jesus says:  
*"You lack one thing. Go, sell all you have, give to the poor... then come, follow Me."*
  - This is not about earning salvation by poverty but about revealing the **man's true master: his wealth**.
- 💔 The man's response:
- He **goes away sad** because he had **great wealth**.

## 4. Jesus' Teaching to the Disciples

Jesus uses the moment to teach about wealth and the Kingdom:

Teaching	Meaning
"Hard for the rich to enter the kingdom"	Wealth can <b>blind</b> us to our need for God.
"Easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle"	Hyperbole to show <b>impossibility</b> without God.
"With God, all things are possible"	Only <b>God's power</b> can change hearts and save.

## 5. Peter's Question and Jesus' Promise

Peter says: *"We have left everything to follow you!"*

Jesus responds with a **promise**:

Now (in this life)	Eternal Life
Homes, family, fields—with persecutions 100x more	In the <b>age to come</b> : Eternal life

🌀 Matthew alone adds:

*"You who have followed Me will sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."* (Mt 19:28)

## 🧠 KEY THEMES & LESSONS

Theme	Explanation
<b>True Goodness</b>	Only God is truly good; we must abandon self-righteousness.
<b>Heart Exposure</b>	Jesus pinpointed the man's idol: his wealth.
<b>Discipleship Costs</b>	Following Jesus requires <b>total surrender</b> .
<b>Wealth is a test</b>	Riches can be a spiritual <b>stumbling block</b> .
<b>Reward of Sacrifice</b>	God repays sacrificial obedience — in this life and eternally.

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## CROSS REFERENCES

Topic	Scripture
Love of money	1 Timothy 6:9–10
God alone is good	Psalms 14:1–3; Romans 3:10–12
Count the cost	Luke 14:26–33
Forsaking all for Christ	Philippians 3:7–8
Eternal reward	Revelation 2:10; Matthew 25:21



## VISUAL SUMMARY

Scene	Description
Rich man asks	What must I do to gain eternal life?
Jesus refers to law	Commandments about others are listed
Man claims righteousness	“All these I have kept”
Jesus loves him	But calls him to surrender wealth
He leaves sad	His possessions own his heart
Jesus teaches disciples	Wealth is dangerous, but God saves
Reward promised	Sacrifices for Christ will be repaid

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The statement “**It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle...**” (found in **Matthew 19:24, Mark 10:25, Luke 18:25**) is a striking **hyperbolic metaphor**, and it has sparked much cultural and interpretive discussion.

Let’s explore the cultural background and possible interpretations:



## PHRASE IN SCRIPTURE

“**It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.**”

This statement comes right after Jesus tells the rich young man to sell all he owns and follow Him — and the man goes away sad.



## INTERPRETATION OPTIONS

### 1. Literal Hyperbole (Most Likely)

- **Cultural Style:**  
Jewish teachers often used **extreme images** to make a point (cf. “strain out a gnat but swallow a camel” – Matt. 23:24).
- **Meaning:**  
Jesus is saying it is **impossible by human effort** for someone entangled in wealth to enter God's kingdom.
- **Support:**  
The disciples react in shock: “*Then who can be saved?*” (Mark 10:26), showing they took it literally.

✓ Most scholars consider this the **original meaning**: a shocking image to emphasize **spiritual impossibility without God**.

### 2. The “Needle Gate” Theory (Unlikely)

- **Claim:** There was a small gate in Jerusalem called the “Eye of the Needle” that camels had to kneel and squeeze through.
- **Problem:**  
No historical or archaeological evidence for such a gate **before the 9th century A.D.**
- **Likely Origin:** A later attempt to soften Jesus’ words and make the story more about humility than impossibility.

✗ Not supported by first-century sources or rabbinic literature.

### 3. Textual Variant: Camel vs. Rope

- **Greek word for “camel”:** *kamelos* (κάμηλος)
- **Greek word for “rope” or “cable”:** *kamilos* (κάμιλος)

Some argue this could have originally meant “rope” — which still wouldn't fit through a needle, but is slightly less absurd.

🔍 A few manuscripts have “rope,” but most ancient copies clearly say “camel.”

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## CULTURAL IMPACT

Culture	Interpretation
Jewish	Known for exaggeration to teach moral truths. This fits that style well.
Greek-Roman	They used similar absurd sayings (e.g., elephants through tiny spaces).
Medieval Christian	“Needle Gate” theory emerged to explain away the impossibility.
Modern	Often cited to emphasize the spiritual <b>danger of wealth</b> and the need for <b>God’s intervention</b> in salvation.

## Summary Table

Element	Meaning
Camel	Largest animal in the region; symbol of burden and wealth
Eye of a needle	Smallest opening imaginable
Metaphor type	<b>Hyperbole</b> — emphasizes <b>human impossibility</b>
Main point	Salvation is not earned, especially not by wealthy security
Cultural background	Common rabbinic style; absurd comparison to shock the listener
Solution	“With man it is impossible, but with God all things are possible” (Mark 10:27)