

THE KING OF KINGS: A STUDY OF MATTHEW

The King's Ministry: A Study of Matthew 14–20

STUDY EIGHTEEN

Lessons Learned from a Fat Camel

Matthew 19:23–30

The whole message of Christ is designed to teach us the importance of leaning. It is easy in life to become so self-sustaining that we look upon leaning on anyone or anything else as a mark of weakness when, in fact, it is the secret of eternal life.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

THE kingdom of heaven is an *upside-down* kingdom. What the kingdoms of this world celebrate, Jesus detests, because they ultimately lead us away from God. Jesus' way, however, leads toward a right relationship with God and abundant life, and we find no better picture of Jesus' radical kingdom values than the Sermon on the Mount. Just look at Jesus' opening line Matthew 5:3.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

How shocking! The kingdoms of the world say, "Blessed are the *rich*," but no amount of material wealth can purchase citizenship in Jesus' kingdom. Jesus cares less about what fills our hands and more about what stirs our hearts and leads us to action. This is why He told people to give up *everything* to follow Him.

But who has enough faith to do that?

Jesus' disciples asked this very question and wondered whether *anyone* could enter Jesus' kingdom. In this *Searching the Scriptures* study, we'll join the disciples as Jesus patiently answers these difficult questions and teaches us eternal truth about wealth, salvation, and the power of God.



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

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Matthew 19:23–30



PREPARE YOUR HEART

As you prepare to dive into the depths of Scripture, pray that God would illuminate your mind to understand what He says and to soften your heart to apply His Word to your life:

My Father in heaven, thank You for all the earthly blessings You've given me. Before me today sits one of the greatest gifts You've ever given: Your written Word. Guide me as I study it and help me receive what You want to teach me. In Jesus' gracious name, amen.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

“Who in the world can be saved?” (Matthew 19:25). Jesus’ disciples stood exasperated after witnessing a tense conversation between Jesus and a very rich man. This young guy wanted to know what deed he needed to do to receive eternal life. But he didn’t like Jesus’ answer, so he left the conversation dejected. What three things did Jesus tell this man to do in [Matthew 19:21](#)?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Such a tall task . . . no wonder the disciples instantly piped in! They needed clarity, and in Matthew 19:23–30 they probed Jesus to explain the meaning of His challenging words.



Observation: Who Can Be Saved?

In his book *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs*, Pastor Chuck explains how to study a passage of Scripture. A key element of observation—the first step—is examining the passage’s surrounding context. He says, “We understand a verse of Scripture better when we grasp its context—when we acquaint ourselves with the surrounding verses.”¹



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So take a few minutes to carefully read *Matthew 19:16–30* as a whole. How does 19:23–30 logically follow 19:16–22, and what shocking statements did Jesus make in 19:23–24?

The rich young ruler packed in his life the riches of this world thinking that somehow his possessions would be enough to carry him through the narrow entrance to the kingdom. He was unwilling to relinquish what he had been clinging to all his adult life.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Human Impossibilities—Matthew 19:23–26

How did the disciples emotionally and theologically respond in *Matthew 19:25*?

According to Jesus in *19:26*, is there anything a person can do to earn salvation?



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The Disciples' Reward—Matthew 19:27–30

According to *Matthew 19:27*, how did the disciples' response to Jesus' call differ from the rich man's response? Cross-reference *4:18–22*.

What did Jesus promise in *19:29* to those who make sacrifices for Him in *this* life?

How hard is it for us to try to earn a spot in Jesus' kingdom by our own human efforts! But *nothing* is impossible for God. Only by His grace does anyone have a place in His kingdom.



Interpretation: Divine Possibilities

Now that we've examined Jesus' words in their context, let's ask deeper questions to see what His teaching means for His followers today.



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Imagine trying to squeeze a thousand-pound animal through a hole the size of a grain of sand! What did Jesus mean by comparing a rich person's ability to enter the kingdom to this ridiculous image? What does this truth teach us about the dangers of addiction to riches? For help, see pages 115–116 of Pastor Chuck's commentary *Insights on Matthew 16–28*.

What He assaults is the addiction to wealth—loving the things wealth buys, forgetting the meaning of the word enough, overlooking the importance of generosity and sharing.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

What did Jesus teach in *Matthew 19:25–26* about trying to earn salvation by human efforts? Now really think over Jesus' teaching and jot down a few theological implications.

What timeless principles did Jesus teach in *19:28–30* about rewards for those who follow Jesus? Use your *Bible study tools* to guide your thoughts.²



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Jesus puts the whole value system of this earth on its head. Many who are the greatest now will be least important then. And those who seem least important now will be the greatest then. By saying yes to the Savior, you are entering a world that will be marked by eternal rewards. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: Wisdom on Wealth

The temptation to earn favor with God the same way someone earns favor with people lurks around every corner. Proverbs, the Bible's book of wisdom, contains countless intangible treasures that provide deep insights into the hard topic of money.

Read *Proverbs 30:7–9*. What request did this author make of God? What is the danger of accumulating too much wealth? How do these principles correlate with what Jesus taught in Matthew 19:23–30.

All the rich man's shiny gold coins blinded him from seeing Jesus as Messiah and Savior—just as this proverb warned. It's easy to point out all the faults of this man, but this passage asks us a difficult question: In what ways are we similar to him?



Application: Warning against a Dangerous Addiction

Pastor Chuck teaches us some lessons from a fat camel and warns us about the dangers of an addiction to wealth. An insatiable appetite for riches:

1. Becomes a heady intoxicant rather than a blessing
2. Fools a person into thinking he or she doesn't need God
3. Produces a self-sufficient, anti-God, proud attitude



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4. Keeps someone's eyes on the world and off the Lord
5. Perverts values, making someone know the price of everything but the value of nothing
6. Creates a stubborn resistance against humble and helpless dependence
7. Makes someone selfish and stingy

Pause and reflect on this challenging list. Which of these seven dangers strikes home with you? How can you ditch that deceptive and destructive attitude for Jesus' kingdom way?

Is there a new habit you can start that would lead you to use your wealth to glorify God? It might be a new attitude, a new practice, or even a single act you want to do this week.

Money can't buy everything. Not love, not joy, not peace. Most importantly, money can't buy us eternal life. In fact, there is no good work that a person can do to earn favor with God. *So who can be saved?*

Thankfully, anyone who puts his or her trust and allegiance in Christ Jesus can be saved . . . because "with God everything is possible." The God of impossibilities is the one who began your salvation, and He will see it to completion.



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A FINAL PRAYER

Father, I'm comforted by Jesus' words today, as I'm reminded that nothing is impossible for You. I confess that material possessions occasionally have distracted me from my relationship with You. No earthly good compares to the salvation I've received through Your Son's sacrifice on the cross. Thank You for all that You've given me through Him. It's in His name I pray, amen.

ENDNOTES

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment your Soul Needs* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2016), 85.
2. Other tools we recommend are a whole-Bible commentary, such as the two-volume *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament* and *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*. Pastor Chuck's favorite Bible dictionary is the *New Unger's Bible Dictionary*. A variety of versions of the Bible are available at BibleGateway.com, and an excellent online Bible commentary by Thomas L. Constable is at netbible.org.

