

eternal life: Scholars point out the image of inheriting eternal life as based in OT texts in which Abraham and his descendents are promised the land of Canaan as an inheritance. See Genesis 15:7; Exodus 32:13; Joshua 13:7. But the disappointment of such hopes on the worldly level led to their transposition into an eschatological key and the frequent substitution of “eternal life” and related phrases for earthly inheritance. See Isaiah 60:21; Matthew 5:5 [taken from Joel Marcus’ commentary on Mark]

No one is good but God alone: This weird phrase is based in the principal affirmation of Genesis 1:1-2:3 that God is good, as well as the Shema in Deuteronomy 6:4 “Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone” which insists upon the uniqueness of God’s godness and goodness.

the commandments: the 10 commandments are recorded in Exodus 20:12-17 and Deuteronomy 5:16-21. The order of the commandments in this citation are 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 5. The ordering seems to have been flexible. The wording used in Mark 10 reflects the Greek translation of the Decalogue (10 commandments) used in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the First Testament) rather than the original Hebrew text.

go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor: the exhortation of Jesus goes well beyond standard acts of penance. It was considered extraordinary and radical for a rich man who repents to give away half of his goods. Here’s it’s all of it.

shocked and went away grieving: the words used in Greek come from the root word “to hate.” The connotation is thus both of sadness, defeat and also unhappiness, even resentment.

a man ran up ... went away: the man leaves in the opposite way that he arrives “running up to talk to Jesus”

many possessions: this can also be translated as “great estates.” The expression can mean both possessions in general, but often connotes landed property in particular. See Acts 5:1, 3) The latter nuance would be appropriate in the present passage: Jesus asks a landowner to stop exploiting his workers and instead to become their benefactor. [Joel Marcus notes]

Mark 10:17-31

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

¹⁷ As [Jesus] was setting out on a journey, *a man ran up* and knelt before him, and asked him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit *eternal life*?” ¹⁸ Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. ¹⁹ You know **the commandments**: ‘You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; You shall not defraud; Honor your father and mother.’” ²⁰ He said to him, “Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth.” ²¹ Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, “You lack one thing; **go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor**, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.” ²² When he heard this, he was *shocked and went away grieving*, for he had *many possessions*.

²³ Then Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How hard it will be for those who have *wealth* to enter the **KINGDOM OF GOD!**” ²⁴ And the disciples were perplexed at these words. But Jesus said to them again, “Children, how hard it is to enter the **KINGDOM OF GOD!**” ²⁵ It is easier for a camel to go through **the eye of a needle** than for someone who is rich to enter the **KINGDOM OF GOD.**” ²⁶ They were greatly astounded and said

Wealth : it would seem that what Jesus is saying is not that it's a crime to be rich, but rather it is to trust in one's riches. See 1 Timothy 6:17 "As for those who in the present age are rich, command them not to be haughty, or to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but rather on God who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment."

KINGDOM OF GOD: the expression can be translated as kingdom, reign, dominion. It represents both something that is geographical, as well as temporal. It's a place and a space. Jesus seems to imply that it can be entered in *now*, not just at the apocalypse.

the eye of a needle: This expression baffles scholars. Most deem it a fantasy that Jerusalem contained a gate called "The Needle's Eye" because of a lack of historical collaboration. The camel was proverbial for its size. Curiously though in rabbinical literature, the rabbis used elephants as animals representing great size. Camels were used as beasts of burden, to carry and transport wealth and riches. Maybe that's the connection that Jesus uses in this metaphor to talk about the impossible coming to pass.

saved: The word means both saved, or delivered, as well as made well, healed...in a therapeutic sense.

good news: this is the word for Gospel. It means both.

in this age ... the age to come : this dualism points to a contrast between the world here and now and the world to come in the eschatological future. This wording is first used in First Enoch and also in Romans 12:2, 1 Corinthians 2:6, and 8; Galatians 1:4. [Joel Marcus]

to one another, "Then who can be *saved*?" ²⁷ Jesus looked at them and said, "For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible."

²⁸ Peter began to say to him, "Look, we have left everything and followed you." ²⁹ Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the **good news**, ³⁰ who will not receive a hundredfold now **in this age**—houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields, with persecutions—and in **the age to come eternal life**. ³¹ But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first."