

Matthew 18:24

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents.

Analysis

One was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents (μύρια τάλαντα)—an impossible debt of approximately 60 million denarii (a denarius = day's wage). The Greek myria means 'ten thousand,' the highest Greek numeral, and talanton (talent) was the largest monetary unit, worth 6,000 denarii. This astronomical sum—equivalent to 200,000 years' wages—represents the infinite debt of sin before God.

The passive voice **was brought** (προσηνέχθη) suggests involuntary confrontation with debt, as sinners cannot willingly face the magnitude of their guilt. This servant likely held a position of high authority (satrap or tax collector) to accumulate such debt through embezzlement or mismanagement. The sum exceeds the annual tribute of entire provinces—Judea, Idumea, and Samaria paid 600 talents combined.

Historical Context

In the Roman Empire's eastern provinces (including Judea), debt bondage was legal and common. Talent values varied by region: Attic talent = 60 minae = 6,000 drachmas. Ten thousand talents would equal the entire tax revenue of Herod the Great's kingdom for 15-20 years. Debt servitude lasted until repayment, often becoming hereditary—children born into the master's household as slaves.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does the impossibility of this debt mirror your inability to satisfy God's justice through personal effort?
2. What does the involuntary accounting ('was brought') teach about the inescapability of divine judgment?
3. How do you tend to minimize the magnitude of sin in your life compared to God's holy standard?

Interlinear Text

ἀρξαμένου δὲ αὐτῷ συναίρειν προσηγέχθη αὐτῷ εἷς
had begun And him to reckon was brought him one
G756 G1161 G846 G4868 G4374 G846 G1520

όφειλέτης μυρίων ταλάντων
which owed ten thousand talents
G3781 G3463 G5007

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 38:4 (Parallel theme): For mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me.