

Matthew 19:25

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved?

Analysis

They were exceedingly amazed (ἐξεπλήσσοντο σφόδρα, exēplēssonto sphodra)—The disciples' astonishment reveals their residual belief in merit-based salvation. The verb ἐκπλήσσω (ekplēssō) means to strike with panic or shock; intensified by σφόδρα (sphodra, exceedingly), it conveys their theological world collapsing. If the wealthy and righteous cannot save themselves, **who then can be saved?** (τίς ἄρα δύναται σωθῆναι, tis ara dunatai sōthēnai)—their question exposes the universal impossibility of self-salvation.

Jesus's teaching that entrance through the needle's eye is impossible (v. 24) demolishes all human confidence in natural ability or achievement. The disciples understood the implication: if advantage, morality, and religious devotion cannot secure salvation, then salvation is humanly impossible. This sets up Jesus's revelation in verse 26 that with God all things are possible—salvation is divine work, not human achievement.

Historical Context

First-century Palestinian Judaism operated within a covenantal nomism framework—belief that God graciously chose Israel, and faithful Jews maintained covenant standing through Torah observance. The disciples' shock reflects their assumption that a Torah-observant, wealthy young man represented the best-case scenario for salvation. Jesus's teaching on wealth's spiritual danger threatened this entire paradigm.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does the disciples' question expose the human tendency to assess salvation by comparing ourselves favorably to others?
2. What modern equivalents to first-century Jewish confidence in wealth and religious pedigree do Christians trust for salvation?
3. How should Jesus's teaching on salvation's impossibility shape our evangelism, pastoral care, and personal assurance of grace?

Interlinear Text

ἀκούσαντες δὲ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ ἐξεπλήσσοντο

heard When G3588 disciples his amazed
G191 G1161 G3101 G846 G1605

σφόδρα λέγοντες, Τίς ἄρα δύναται σωθῆναι;

it they were exceedingly saying Who can be saved
G4970 G3004 G5101 G687 G1410 G4982

Additional Cross-References

Romans 10:13 (Salvation): For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Matthew 24:22 (Salvation): And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

