

# Matthew 19:30

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first.

## Analysis

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Jesus' paradoxical statement 'many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first' inverts worldly hierarchies. Those considered spiritually privileged (religiously established, wealthy, powerful) may end up last in kingdom accounting, while the humble and overlooked may be first. This saying frames the following parable of laborers (20:1-16) where late-coming workers receive equal pay with early workers. Reformed theology emphasizes grace over merit—kingdom standing depends on God's calling, not human achievement.

## Historical Context

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This saying responds to discussions about reward for discipleship and the rich young ruler's rejection of Jesus. Jewish expectation assumed Israel's priority and Gentiles' secondary status. Jesus announces reversal: tax collectors and prostitutes enter the kingdom before religious leaders (21:31). The last-becoming-first theme appears repeatedly in Jesus' teaching (Luke 13:30, Mark 10:31).

## Related Passages

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**Ephesians 2:8** — Salvation by grace through faith

**John 3:16** — God's love and salvation

## Study Questions

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1. What 'first place' privileges might you wrongly assume guarantee kingdom status?
2. Who are the 'last' people you tend to overlook whom God might exalt?
3. How does God's grace-based kingdom challenge your sense of deserving?

## Interlinear Text

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Πολλοὶ δὲ ἔσονται πρῶτοι ἔσχατοι καὶ ἔσχατοι  
**many** **But** **shall be** **shall be first** **last** **and** **last**  
G4183 G1161 G2071 G4413 G2078 G2532 G2078

πρῶτοι  
**shall be first**  
G4413

## Additional Cross-References

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**Luke 13:30** (Parallel theme): And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.

**Matthew 20:16** (Parallel theme): So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.

**Mark 10:31** (Parallel theme): But many that are first shall be last; and the last first.