

... FOR A CAMEL TO GO THROUGH THE EYE OF A NEEDLE

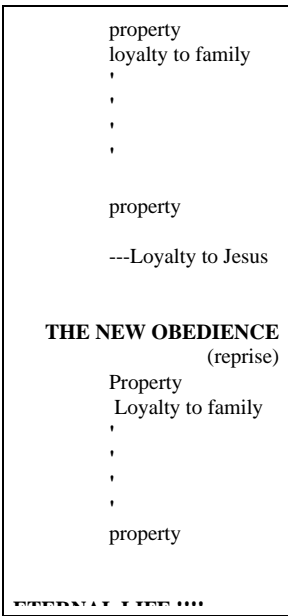
or children
 or fields,
 for my sake and for the sake of the good news,
 who will not receive a hundredfold

2'b) [now in this age—
houses,
brothers and sisters,
mothers
and children,
and fields with persecutions—]

1') and in the age to come eternal life.

But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first.” [© NRSV]

**Please prepare St. Mark 10:35-45
 for next Sunday.**



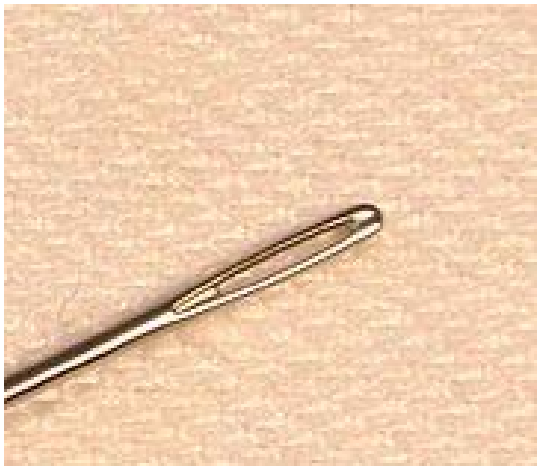
Most scholars believe that the *italicized* words (2'b) are an editorial reiteration added by the early church. Matthew's and Luke's versions omit it. It's omitted in the NRSV.

Cont. from p 1 In each couplet the subject of the first clause becomes part of the predicate of the second; the predicate of the first clause becomes a portion of the subject of the second.

Most of the Gospel's 30 some parables, are arranged in chiasms. Today's Gospel is organized in long, inverted parallel parables or *extended* chiasms. The Gospel is printed to show the inverted structure. Note that the climactic point is in the middle. The climax is numbered 5, 5', with the tiny *camel* parable included in 5'. The camel parable is itself another chiasm.

Jesus also aided his hearers' memories through the use of puns, rhythms and internal rhymes. When the Greek words of the Gospels have been translated back into Aramaic (the popular language of Jesus' time) the stories abound with such wordplays. It is largely because of the memory devices like chiasms and word plays that eyewitnesses remembered stories for decades so that the Gospel writers were able to collect the explicit details of Christ's words and life. What the writers took from eyewitnesses they translated from the original Aramaic into the then universal tongue, the *Koine* Greek of the Bible.

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Bible Structure

Did you love diagramming sentences in school? Yes? No? Well, diagramming Bible stories can be of immeasurable help in understanding their meaning. Today's Gospel (page 2) is arranged to show one of the features of Middle Eastern story telling. First century Jews recalled events and told their stories or parables in a form called a *chiasm*, (*CAI az im*) from the Greek *χιασμός*, an arrangement of repeated words and/or ideas in inverted parallels. Such a design makes stories more easy to remember.

An example of a simple chiasm is Christ's two clause statement:
all who exalt themselves will be humbled,
and those who humble themselves will be exalted.

Here's another: *The Sabbath was made for man,*
man was not made for the Sabbath.

Continued on page 4

Passing through the Needle's Eye

Few terms have caused more concern than the *needle's eye*, (α) below. For nearly two thousand years much Christian scholarship has been wasted trying to explain the term as something concrete rather than a metaphor designed to express an *impossibility*. One of the Rabbis wrote of an *elephant going through the eye of a needle* which was his illustration of what could never happen. Despite the rabbinical evidence, Christian scholars have tried to make

something more physical out of the camel. One attempt was to believe that *κάμηλος* (**kamelos**, *camel*) is a copyist's error for *κῶμιλος* (**kamilos**, *rope*) which in fact *is* an error found in a few manuscripts. Another involves the huge doors of peasant homes which were big enough to admit a loaded camel. Such heavy doors were opened only when necessary. There was a small, daily use door set into the big door, a thing we still see in some American commercial building service entrances. Some have tried to name this small door the *needle's eye*, but the term is completely unknown in the Middle East. A doubtful Internet explanation not found in the scholarly literature is that in Christ's Aramaic, this is a translation-to-Greek problem since *camel* and *rope* are the same word.

Consider: the Middle Eastern peasant would have likely believed that the rich man who could afford to build synagogues, relieve the distress of the poor and give lavish gifts to the Temple would be a man highly favored by God and certainly destined for Heaven. Not really so says Jesus, in the line marked (2). We do not buy our way into God's favor (Heaven) by the things that we have done. We get to Heaven by the act of God's loving generosity to us. The Scripture section marked β seems like a total reverse of a page from the worst of John Calvin's (or, especially, his followers') ideas of the total depravity of humanity.

Today's Gospel Saint Mark 10:17-31

✠ As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him,

1) "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

2) Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good?"

No one is good but God alone.

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."

He said to him, "Teacher,

I have kept all these since my youth."

3) 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;

Action of Respect to God.

ETERNAL LIFE????

**OLD REQUIREMENTS
(Ten Commandments)**

--fulfilled

6

7 (loyalty to family)

8 (property)

9

#s 9//8 (property)

8 (property)

5 (loyalty to family)

THE NEW OBEDIENCE

---demanded by Jesus

then come, follow me."

4) When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions.

5) 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!" And the disciples were perplexed at these words.

5') But Jesus said to them again, "Children, i) how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God!

(α) ii) It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle i) than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God."

4') They were greatly astounded and said to one another, "Then who can be saved?" Jesus looked at them and said, (β) "For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible."

3') Peter began to say to him, "Look, we have left everything and followed you."

2'a) Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father

--- sell what you have

-- treasure in Heaven

THE NEW OBEDIENCE

----- too hard

HARD TO ENTER THE KINGDOM

-----Apostles need direction

HARD TO ENTER THE KINGDOM (reprise)

----- hyperbolic example of salvation

---THE NEW OBEDIENCE

----- too hard for humans

----- possible only with God

THE NEW OBEDIENCE

---fulfilled by disciples

---Loyalty to

Christ