

# Entry Data

Mark 10:23-31 April 1, 2026

Some groups are hard to get into. 80% of Navy SEAL candidates fail out of BUD/S. NASA rejected 99.9% of applicants for their 2021 astronaut class. They selected only 10 out of 12,000.<sup>1</sup>

Maybe you've heard of *Skull and Bones*. It's the oldest of several secret societies at Yale. They admit just 15 members per year. Many of them go on to occupy positions of power in American society. Three presidents boasted membership.

It starts on a night in April called "tap night." High-achieving Juniors are "tapped" and invited into the initiation process,<sup>2</sup> which is full of strange, even satanic elements since it's founding in 1832.<sup>3</sup>

Initiates are forced to take oaths, drink "blood," (really just Kool-Aid), be whipped in the face by someone dressed as the Devil. They are forced to their knees, and must swear to secrecy.

Skull and Bones "is notorious for boasting stricter rules than any of Yale's other secret societies."<sup>4</sup> Members take on new names used by other bonesmen. Names like "Baal," "Gog," and "Magog."<sup>5</sup>

But harder than getting into the SEALs, the Astronaut Corps or Skull and Bones, is getting into the Kingdom of Heaven. In our text, Christ explains it is not only *difficult*, it is, in fact, *impossible* for men to make it in on their own. The Kingdom of Heaven is absolutely exclusive. And yet, God has thrown the gates open wide and beckoned all to come. But how can we enter if we can not qualify?

Christ explains entrance is not based on achievement or status or intellect. No, to get in you and I must do what the Rich Young Ruler refused to do: Die to self and become disciples. We follow Jesus through the gate. But that *includes* a willingness to relinquish all claims, all rights, and if demanded, even all possessions to the Lord, our Savior, our Master, our Leader.

Last time we were in Mark we saw the Rich Young Ruler run up to Jesus and say, "What do I have to do to inherit eternal life?" This was a guy who would've been in Skull and Bones. Sadly, at the end of his interaction with Jesus, he chose *not* to do the two things Jesus asked him to do: Give away his wealth and become a disciple. He wasn't willing. After all, *he was a ruler*.

Allowing someone with this much power and influence to slip away was shocking enough to the disciples. But now the Lord is going to use the situation as an object lesson, not just for those who are thinking about become disciples, but for all of us.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.wral.com/story/nasa-introduces-the-new-astronaut-class-of-2021/20021204/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://yaledailynews.com/articles/societies-hold-mystery>

<sup>3</sup> Alexandra Robbins *Secrets Of The Tomb: Skull And Bones, The Ivy League, And The Hidden Paths Of Power*

<sup>4</sup> Robbins

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*

**Mark 10:23-24a** - <sup>23</sup> **Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!"** <sup>24</sup> **The disciples were astonished at his words...**

They weren't just a little surprised, they were *greatly* astounded.<sup>6</sup> If these words were shocking and sobering to the disciples, they should be for us, too. Let's not pass casually by what the Lord is saying. After all, the conclusion Peter comes to is, "well...no one can be saved!"

As usually, Jesus upends their assumptions. *They* thought wealth was a sign of God's favor. R.T. France writes, "In Jewish society it was generally taken for granted that wealth was to be welcomed as a mark of God's blessing."<sup>7</sup> And yet, here is Jesus saying that affluence *is* a barrier to entry.

It is not the *only* barrier and wealth on its own is not evil. But it carries the dangerous spiritual side effect of self-reliance. Money can solve a lot of problems, at least in the short term. But a byproduct is *often* that a person starts to rely upon the earthly fortune rather than the heavenly Father.

You've heard about how certain drugs hijack the brain's reward system and can, for a time, flood the brain with plenty of dopamine. But eventually, it damages the brain's ability to create or process dopamine. The receptors start to die off.

In a spiritual sense, if a Christian relies on material resources for their security, their decisions, to be the driving motivator and navigator of life, it becomes a terrible barrier to discipleship.

We have *got* to take this warning to heart. I know "rich" is relative, but by nature of the time and place we live in, *all* of us have greater financial provision, stability, reserves than almost every human being who has ever lived! And the flesh wants to make Rich Young Rulers out of *all* of us.

**Mark 10:24b** - **Again Jesus said to them, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God!"**

Jesus wants to be clear - He did not misspeak. He didn't need to walk back His comments. He says, "No, you heard Me right." But notice what He calls them: *Children*. Jesus is not being clinical here, He's being caring. He speaks to them as beloved children, helping them understand.

Throughout this whole section of Mark, the Lord wants us to remember that we are *children*. Be like a child. In fact, if you don't receive the Kingdom like a child, you'll never enter it.<sup>8</sup> Consider what that means in *this* context. Children cannot be a rich young ruler. They're young, but they do not rule. Children are totally dependent on their parents for their room and their board and their schedules and their learning and so many other things. They are *ruled*. They are dependents.

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<sup>6</sup> James Swanson *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek (New Testament)*

<sup>7</sup> R.T. France *The Gospel Of Mark*

<sup>8</sup> Mark 10:15

And children are not rich. I mean, there are kids who live in rich families, but it's not *their* bank account or portfolio. They simply enjoy the riches of their parents.

Jerry Seinfeld once told the story of how his kids asked him if they were rich. His answer was, "*I am. You're not.*"<sup>9</sup> Whatever the Lord allows us to have, we should understand it's His, not ours.

**Mark 10:25 - <sup>25</sup> It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God."**

We need to have a carefully, purposefully loose hold on our wealth and possessions. The spiritual problems that wealth can cause are *not* limited to Lot or the Rich Young Ruler. Look at what happened to Ananias and Sapphira. They were believers who became ensnared by greed. Look at Demas, who had been a coworker in the ministry with Paul the apostle, but in the end deserted him because he loved this present world. It can happen to us. Wealth is a deceitful weed that can easily choke out the word and the growth of fruit in our lives.

Now, perhaps you have heard some Bible teacher say that there was this particularly little gate in Jerusalem, and that camels would have to unload all their cargo and get down on their knees to pass through this gate. It's a *great* sermon illustration. It's just not true. Not even a little bit. There is *no* historical evidence for any such gate.<sup>10</sup> The idea comes from a note in a ninth-century commentary.<sup>11</sup> Hopefully that doesn't burst anyone's bubble.

But that idea also flies in the face of what Jesus is saying. He's not saying, "Well just do a hard thing and *then* you'll be qualified." No, He's saying it's impossible. The largest animal, the smallest space. It's *not* going to happen. And that's exactly how the disciples understood it.

**Mark 10:26 - <sup>26</sup> They were even more astonished, saying to one another, "Then who can be saved?"**

They are overwhelmed by this truth.<sup>12</sup> And it *is* an overwhelming revelation. Because *all* of human religion comes down to human effort. That we, through work or piety or goodness or penance or contrition or whatever it is, *we* can earn our way out of hell and into heaven. But Jesus once and for all explains *why* Christianity is absolutely different from every other human religion or philosophy.

**Mark 10:27 - <sup>27</sup> Looking at them, Jesus said, "With man it is impossible, but not with God, because all things are possible with God."**

God will make a way. God makes it possible. *That's* why Jesus was there - to make the way so we can follow Him from death to life, from gloom to glory.

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<sup>9</sup> <https://abcnews.com/Entertainment/jerry-seinfeld-kevin-hart-kids-wealth-fame/story?id=26741350>

<sup>10</sup> Robert Utley *The Gospel According To Peter: Mark And I & II Peter*

<sup>11</sup> Ben Witherington *The Gospel Of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*

<sup>12</sup> John Walvoord and Roy Zuck *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*

So, Jesus rightly points out the hopelessness of the *situation* - and the disciples *felt* it. But He did not *leave* us hopeless. Here in verse 27, Jesus *sees* our weakness. With man, it's *impossible*. But then He provides a route to salvation by *His* strength.

It is an extra barrier to entry for those of us who are wealthy to enter the Kingdom. But, even if you're the poorest person on the planet, *none* of us can squeeze through on our own.

But God is *gracious*. He not only makes a way, He *clears* the way and shows us where the pitfalls are, where the stumbling stones are, which way to turn at the forks in the road.

That means no matter what you've done, no matter how badly you've messed up or spoiled your life, you can be made new by God's power. You can be rescued from your sin and your past and the guilt that you feel. With man it's impossible, because we are trapped by those things and are unable to go back and undo them. But God is eternal. He can make us white as snow and remember our sins no more. He can transform us and renew us and bring beauty from ashes.

**Mark 10:28 - <sup>28</sup> Peter began to tell him, "Look, we have left everything and followed you."**

Oh Peter! Still trying to rank himself. Still trying to earn his way in. You know, the Rich Young Ruler had come saying, "I've checked all the boxes, so I'm owed eternal life." Now Peter deflects the sharp standard Jesus has just laid out for them and says, "Well, look at the box WE checked. WE did the thing that other guy was unwilling to do. We have left *everything*." Of course, this is being said by the one who will soon deny he even *knows* Jesus three times.

They *had* left a lot, but they had not left *everything*. Peter still had a house. Still had a wife and a mother-in-law. He still owned a boat and tackle. And that's ok! But this is what we tend to do in our walk with the Lord. We rationalize certain choices and say, "Well, God certainly doesn't mean I need to sell my *house*! God certainly doesn't want me to give 10% of my income, 25% of my income, 50% of my income. I don't need to do that because I've already checked this other box over here."

That's the human mentality. The Rich Young Ruler had it, Peter had it, we tend to have it. But it's never about boxes. It's about the leading of our Lord, Who commands us to do what He knows we need to do. "One thing you lack," He told the Rich Young Ruler. So how is God leading you?

**Mark 10:29-31 - <sup>29</sup> "Truly I tell you," Jesus said, "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 gospel, <sup>30</sup> who will not receive a hundred times more, now at this time—houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields, with persecutions—and eternal life in the age to come. <sup>31</sup> But many who are first will be last, and the last first."**

When Jesus says we will receive these things "now at this time," He isn't teaching some sort of prosperity Gospel - after all notice the promise of persecution. He means that we find that family,

that support, that sustenance *in* the Church. Here we are to love each other as brothers and sisters. We open our homes to one another. We provide what is necessary in times of need.

Notice that Jesus said you can leave brothers or sisters, mother or father or children, but in return you receive brothers and sisters, mothers...and children. No father. Why? Because we all have a *heavenly* Father. God the Father. Who loves you like a son or daughter. He really does. *He* will always be your father, no matter what you've lost.

But there's another wonderful principle here for us to understand about the goodness and grace of our God. Look at His *generosity*. You leave a house for the sake of the Gospel, He gives you a *hundred* both now *and* in eternity. You lose a mother, He'll give you a hundred more. Our Lord is *never* in debt to us. He not only *repays*, He *overpays*.

William Lane writes, "God takes nothing away from a man without restoring it to him in a new and glorious form."<sup>13</sup>

But this text again reminds us that discipleship is not done in isolation. It's done together in the spiritual family that the Holy Spirit has drawn you to be a part of. We follow together. We support one another. We bear fruit individually *and* corporately. Yes, there are times when God sends us out alone, or does a solitary work in our lives. But the normal operation of discipleship is yoked together with other disciples. Worshipping together. Praying together. Rejoicing together. Weeping together. Growing together. The Church is a great *benefit* given to us by a generous God.

It's said that when you are initiated to Skull and Bones, you are forced to tell your whole life story, particularly things that are compromising or embarrassing. It provides the group with blackmail on each other to be leveraged at opportune times. What kind of a fraternity is *that*? A *worldly* one.

And no statement of purpose exists for Skull and Bones. People desperately want to be in the club, but what is it even for? My own prestige and position. My own advancement.

Christ calls us into discipleship with clear purposes: That we might have life and have it more abundantly. That God might accomplish the impossible for us and through us. That we can receive more and more of His power and grace as we walk with Him. That we can be set *free* from the traps we're in.

So, the question is: What steps is He asking of us today? Just as God looked at Peter, He looked at the Rich Young Ruler, so He looks at us. He sees who we are, where we are, what we need, what we *lack*, and He gives bespoke directions. It's not about checking boxes. It's about following our Master. Sacrifice *will* be a part of it. A change of perspective *is* demanded. After all, we're told to lose the world and save our souls. But what we gain is worth any cost, any effort, anything He asks us to leave behind.

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<sup>13</sup> William Lane *The Gospel Of Mark*