

• *The steward has been neglecting his duties – worried about his future*

• *He uses the short time left in his stewardship to benefit others, so that later others would be grateful to him*

• *Why should spiritual people not use theirs for their **eternal** advantage?*

God's day of reckoning will deal with the way we have used our possessions

1. *We are only stewards and managers*

2. *The time is short*

3. *Use your money now with an eye on your eternal future*

A follow-up to the parable

• *The way you use a little wealth...*

A rich man has a 'steward' – a financial manager – but one day he hears that his financial manager has been neglecting his duties; money has been lost. So the owner of the business asks for a full account of what has been happening to the money. The manager knows that he is about to lose his job^{□1} and is worried about his future.

So he comes to a decision that will give him some help in the future when he no longer has his work of being the steward of the rich man's property^{□1}. He uses his last remaining days to find a way of protecting himself. He calls each of the owner's debtors^{□2}. One of them owes money for a hundred measures of oil, worth about 1000 denarii (three years' wages for a labouring man). He is allowed to write a fresh document for half the amount^{□3}. He calls another debtor. This one owes money for a hundred measures of wheat, worth about 2500 denarii. It too is drastically reduced^{□4}. 'The master' in verse 8a probably refers to the rich man (since it is the same word as that used in 16:3). The owner of the business is forced to admit that the 'manager' has prepared skilfully for the future. He has used the short time left in his stewardship to benefit others, so that later others would be grateful to him.

What the steward did was quite legal. He had a certain amount of freedom in his work and, in the short time left, he used this freedom for his own advantage. Worldly people use their possessions to their own advantage. Why should spiritual people not use theirs for their **eternal** advantage?

What are the lessons of the parable?

God's day of reckoning will deal with the way we have used our possessions.

1. God is the owner of everything we have; we're only stewards and managers.

2. There is only a short time left for us in our stewardship. Soon the Owner is to come and our time in this world, managing what God gives us, will come to an end.

3. If we are wise we will use our resources now with our eye on what will happen to us on the day of judgement. We will use all that God has given us with a view to what He will require of us on the day of judgement. This is the main point of the parable: *'Make friends for yourselves by means of worldly wealth, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwellings'*^{□1}. It means: use your money with an eye on your eternal future. Use it in such a way that it supports God's kingdom and there are people in heaven because you have supported God's work. In the next parable^{□2}, the rich man did not use any of his wealth to help Lazarus. Lazarus died first, before the rich man, but the rich man was not welcomed into heaven by Lazarus! Use your money in such a way that in the afterlife there are people who are grateful to God because of you.

Luke 16:10–13 follows up the parable. The way you use a little wealth shows what you are really like. If God can trust you with little, you will be given more and so you will be able to demonstrate your faithfulness in the use of more. If you are not faithful in what belongs to God (the money you manage for Him), will He give you what is your

□1 16:2-3

□1 16:4
□2 16:5

□3 16:6

□4 16:7

□1 16:9

□2 16:19-30

...shows what you are really like

own (heavenly reward for your faithfulness)? If you are financially unfaithful, you cannot be serving God. No one can serve two masters at the same time. If you live for God, you will not live for money. If you live for money, you will not live for God.

Another comment on faithfulness in the use of money

• No honesty...no approval from God

God's day of reckoning will deal with openness to God

• A day of fulfilment and of new things

God's day of reckoning will deal with unfaithfulness in marriage

Luke 16:14–15 is another comment continuing the theme of faithfulness in the use of money. The Pharisees were so religious and pretended to be superior to others, but they were greedy for money. Their wealth was admired and envied by many but God knew the state of their hearts. Where there is no financial honesty, there is no approval from God.

God's day of reckoning will deal with other things besides the use of money.

God's day of reckoning will deal with openness to God. The Pharisees loved the law of Moses. They were not open to there ever coming a day when it would end. But the law and prophets were pointing to Jesus^{□1}. Once Jesus has come it is time to realise that a new day has arrived. It is time for aggressive faith^a in Jesus. But the Pharisees preferred to hold on to the old covenant of Moses. They loved the Mosaic law but were no longer open to God. The law cannot be pushed aside; it has to be fulfilled^{□2}. The Pharisees needed to see that Jesus was its fulfilment. But some people refused to believe it was a day of fulfilment, a day when God was doing new things.

God's day of reckoning will deal with unfaithfulness in marriage. Generally speaking – there may be exceptions – ending a marriage will bring down the anger of God^{□1}.

Luke's next parable will take up in fuller detail the form that the anger of God will take in His day of reckoning. It will speak of torment^{□1} and anguish^{□2}. And it will speak of one who was carried by angels to God's heaven. God's day of reckoning will have consequences that last forever.

Note

a. See, more fully, my exposition in *How To Enjoy God's Worldwide Church* (1995, re-issued by Paternoster), pp.23–25.

□1 16:16

□2 16:17

□1 16:18

□1 16:23

□2 16:24

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