

Luke 12:42

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season?

Analysis

And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward (εἶπεν δὲ ὁ κύριος, Τίς ἄρα ἐστὶν ὁ πιστὸς οἰκονόμος ὁ φρόνιμος, eipen de ho kyrios, Tis ara estin ho pistos oikonomos ho phronimos)—Instead of directly answering Peter's question, Jesus poses a rhetorical question that applies to both leaders and all believers. The interrogative tis (τίς, who) challenges hearers to self-examination. The adjectives pistos (πιστός, faithful, trustworthy) and phronimos (φρόνιμος, wise, prudent, sensible) describe the ideal steward. Oikonomos (οἰκονόμος) means household manager or steward—one entrusted with managing another's property.

Whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? (ὃν καταστήσει ὁ κύριος ἐπὶ τῆς θεραπείας αὐτοῦ τοῦ δίδοναι ἐν καιρῷ τὸ σιτομέτριον; hon katastēsei ho kyrios epi tēs therapeias autou tou didonai en kairō to sitometrion?)—The relative clause describes the steward's appointment and responsibility. The verb kathistēmi (καθίστημι, make ruler, appoint) indicates delegated authority. The noun therapeia (θεραπεία) means household servants or staff; sitometrion (σιτομέτριον) means food ration or portion of grain. The phrase en kairō (ἐν καιρῷ, in due season, at the proper time) emphasizes timely, appropriate provision. The steward's task: faithfully distribute resources at the right time to those under his care. This pictures Christian leaders feeding God's flock with spiritual truth (John 21:15-17, 1 Peter 5:2).

Historical Context

Large estates in the Roman world employed stewards (oikonomoi) who managed households, supervised servants, and distributed provisions. These stewards held significant authority and responsibility, though they themselves were servants accountable to the master. Paul uses this imagery repeatedly (1 Corinthians 4:1-2, Titus 1:7), describing Christian ministers as stewards of God's mysteries. The early church applied this teaching to pastoral oversight—elders were stewards responsible for feeding the flock with sound doctrine and ensuring each member received proper spiritual nourishment.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. What does faithful and wise stewardship look like for Christian leaders entrusted with feeding God's household?
2. How does the imagery of giving proper portions at proper times apply to pastoral teaching and care?
3. In what ways are all believers stewards of resources, gifts, and knowledge entrusted by God?

Interlinear Text

εἶπεν	δὲ	ὁ	κύριος	Τίς	ἄρα	ἐστὶν	ὁ	πιστὸς
said	And	G3588	his lord	Who	G687	is	G3588	that faithful
G2036	G1161		G2962	G5101		G2076		G4103
οἰκονόμος	καὶ	φρόνιμος	ὃν	καταστήσει	ὁ	κύριος	ἐπὶ	
steward	and	wise	whom	shall make ruler	G3588	his lord	over	
G3623	G2532	G5429	G3739	G2525		G2962	G1909	
τῆς	θεραπείας	αὐτοῦ	τοῦ	διδόναι	ἐν	καιρῷ	τὸ	
G3588	household	G846	G3588	to give	in	due season	G3588	
	G2322			G1325	G1722	G2540		
σιτομέτριον								
them their portion of meat								
G4620								

Additional Cross-References

Hebrews 13:17 (Parallel theme): Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.

Hebrews 13:7 (Faith): Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.

Acts 20:28 (Parallel theme): Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

Matthew 20:8 (References Lord): So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first.

1 Timothy 5:17 (Parallel theme): Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.

1 Peter 4:10 (Parallel theme): As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

Titus 1:7 (Parallel theme): For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre;

2 Timothy 4:2 (Parallel theme): Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.

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