

Luke 16:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods.

Analysis

And he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods. Jesus introduces the parable of the unjust steward, one of Scripture's most perplexing teachings. The phrase "said also unto his disciples" (ἔλεγεν δὲ καὶ πρὸς τοὺς μαθητάς, *elegen de kai pros tous mathētas*) indicates this parable follows the three parables of Luke 15 (lost sheep, lost coin, lost son) but shifts the audience from Pharisees and scribes to disciples—the teaching targets believers about kingdom economics and eschatological urgency.

The term "steward" (οἰκονόμος, *oikonomos*) means household manager or estate administrator—one entrusted with another's resources. The accusation that he "wasted" (διασκορπίζων, *diaskorpizōn*, "scattering" or "squandering") his master's goods uses the same verb describing the prodigal son's waste (15:13). This manager has been unfaithful, mismanaging resources not his own. The parable's shock comes not from condemning this behavior but from commending the steward's shrewd response (v. 8). Jesus is not endorsing dishonesty but illustrating decisive action in crisis—a lesson about using present resources strategically for eternal outcomes. Christians are stewards of God's resources (time, money, gifts, gospel) and will give account; the parable urges urgent, wise investment for eternity.

Historical Context

Stewards in the ancient world managed large estates for wealthy absentee landowners. They had significant autonomy—collecting rents, managing workers, extending credit, keeping accounts. This position offered opportunity for both legitimate profit-sharing and corrupt self-enrichment. Stewards typically charged commissions on debts, and the parable's ambiguity about whether the steward was forgiving his own commission or his master's principal reflects realistic first-century estate management practices. The rich man's commendation (v. 8) may acknowledge the steward's cleverness in using current resources to secure future favor, even while disapproving his earlier mismanagement.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. In what ways are all Christians stewards of God's resources, and how does this reality shape daily decision-making?
2. What does it mean to use 'unrighteous mammon' (v. 9) strategically for eternal purposes rather than temporal gain?
3. How should the certainty of future accountability before God create urgency in our present use of time, money, and opportunities?

Interlinear Text

Ἐλεγεν δὲ καὶ πρὸς τοὺς μαθητάς αὐτοῦ, Ἄνθρωπος
he said **And** **also** **unto** ^{G3588} **disciples** **his** **man**
G3004 G1161 G2532 G4314 G3101 G846 G444

τις ἦν πλούσιος ὃς εἶχεν οἰκονόμον καὶ
a certain **There was** **rich** **which** **had** **a steward** **also**
G5100 G2258 G4145 G3739 G2192 G3623 G2532

οὗτος διεβλήθη αὐτοῦ, ὥς διασκορπίζων τὰ ὑπάρχοντα
the same **was accused** **his** **that** **he had wasted** ^{G3588} **goods**
G3778 G1225 G846 G5613 G1287 G5224

αὐτοῦ,
his
G846

Additional Cross-References

Luke 12:42 (Parallel theme): 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?

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

James 4:3 (Parallel theme): Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.

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;

Luke 15:13 (Parallel theme): And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.

Luke 15:30 (Parallel theme): But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.

Proverbs 18:9 (Parallel theme): He also that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster.

Luke 19:20 (Parallel theme): And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin:

Luke 8:3 (Parallel theme): And Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance.

Luke 16:19 (Parallel theme): There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day:

From KJV Study • kjevstudy.org