

ESCHATOLOGY IN LUKE 16:1-13  
AN EXEGETICAL STUDY IN THE LIGHT OF VARIOUS  
EXEGETICAL APPROACHES

BY

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# DECLARATION

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## *Abbreviations*

<i>AB</i>	Anchor Bible
<i>AThANT</i>	Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments
<i>AusBR</i>	Australian Biblical Review
<i>Bib</i>	Biblica
<i>CBQ</i>	Catholic Biblical Quarterly
<i>CTM</i>	Concordia Theological Monthly
<i>ExpTim</i>	Expository Times
FBBS	Facet Books, Biblical Series
ICC	International Critical Commentary
<i>JAAR</i>	Journal of the American Academy of Religion
<i>JBL</i>	Journal of Biblical Literature
<i>JETS</i>	Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society
NCB	New Century Bible
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NIGTC	The New International Greek Testament Commentary
<i>NIV</i>	New International Version
<i>NovTSup</i>	Supplement to NovT
<i>NTS</i>	New Testament Studies
<i>RSV</i>	Revised Standard Version
<i>TDNT</i>	G. Kittel and G. Friedrich(eds.), Theological Dictionary of the New Testament
<i>TS</i>	Theological Studies
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
<i>WTJ</i>	Westminster Theological Journal

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1. Outline of this dissertation

#### 1.1. Research Problem

There is little question that the parable of the Unjust Steward in Luke 16:1–13 is one of the most difficult of all Jesus' parables to interpret. For this reason, there have been many interpretive approaches in an attempt to understand the parable so far.

Most scholars traditionally understood the parable as instruction concerning the use of material possessions. The focus on the use of material possessions is a feature of the traditional interpretation. Traditional interpreters divide the actions of Unjust Steward into two parts so that they may avoid the difficulty of the commendation in Lk16:8. In other words, while his actions in itself is fraud but his wisdom and prudence associated with the use of material possessions deserve to be accepted. Such a division has been emphasized and received by a numbers of interpreters.

Since Adolf Jülicher<sup>1</sup>, however, interpretive approaches to the parable were varied. Recent Interpretation tendencies fall into roughly four categories. They are as follows:

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<sup>1</sup> A. Jülicher, *Die Gleichnisreden Jesu* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1910)

### 1) Eschatological Approach

The most common interpretation is that the steward does act dishonestly, but he is commended for his quick thinking and action in the face of a crisis. The eschatological approach, therefore, claims that the steward's prudent use of material possessions is to be imitated by Jesus' disciples in the face of the coming eschatological kingdom.<sup>2</sup>

### 2) Economic Approach

J.D.M. Derrett<sup>3</sup> and Joseph A. Fitzmyer<sup>4</sup> provide variations on the theme by claiming that the steward does not actually cheat his master, according to the law of Agency, the law of Usury, and the nature of the original contracts at that time.

### 3) Literary Approach

Several attempts have been made to find literary parallels to the parable of the Unjust Steward and to read the text in light of these parallels. J.D. Crossan sees the story as belonging to a cycle of 'trickster-dupe' stories.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> C. H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1961), 17.

<sup>3</sup> J. D. M. Derrett, "Fresh Light on St. Luke XVI: The Parable of the Unjust Steward," *NTS* 7 (1960-61), 198-219.

<sup>4</sup> A. Fitzmyer, "The Story of the Dishonest Manager (Lk16:1-13)," *TS* 25 (1964), 23-42.

<sup>5</sup> J. D. Crossan, "Structuralist Analysis and the parables of Jesus" *Semeia* 1 (1974), 202. The cycle of trickster-dupe stories is as follows. 1. (a) A situation evolves that enables a Rascal to play a trick on a Dupe; (b) Dupe reveals his foolishness so that Rascal can utilize it; 2. Rascal plans a trick; 3. Rascal plays a trick; 4. Dupe reacts as Rascal wished him to do; 5. Dupe has lost/Rascal has won.



#### 4) Sociological Approach

Bruce Malina<sup>6</sup> and Kloppenborg<sup>7</sup> claim that fundamental to the proper understanding of ancient Mediterranean society is an appreciation for the importance of honour and shame. The world of the New Testament is one in which honour ultimately counted more than wealth. According to Kloppenborg, in the parable of the Unjust Steward, the master's honour has been threatened by the fact that word has leaked out to the public that he has in his household a steward who is at the very least incompetent, and perhaps even criminal.

#### 1.2. Research Hypothesis

Up until the middle of 20th century, then, interpretive approaches toward the parable of the Unjust Steward have viewed the steward's actions as dishonest or unjust. Nevertheless, many scholars have derived the positive instruction of 'prudence' or 'wisdom' from the behavior of the Unjust Steward in his use of monetary or material possessions. It is the most prominent feature that the traditional interpretation focuses on only the use of material possessions and it is the position in general which most interpreters take.

However, I believe that such viewpoints lack eschatological comprehension. In this case, there is no doubt that we might miss the

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<sup>6</sup> B. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1981) 25-50.

<sup>7</sup> J. S. Kloppenborg, "The Dishonoured Master (Luke 16:1-8a)," *Bib* 70 (1989), 474-494.

principal theological subject of eschatology in the parable. I believe that the whole teaching of the parable is eschatological in nature. Of course, there is instruction on the use of material possessions in the text. But I believe the ethical instruction also has an eschatological situation. In the parable, we should become aware of the importance of decisive and drastic action in the face of the eschatological crisis of the coming of the kingdom of God. I will deal with the parable in eschatological terms, and then I will propose that the parable is an eschatological crisis parable.

## **2. Research methodology**

In chapter 2, I will begin by focusing on tendencies in recent studies done so far concerning this parable. Through this, I will show and evaluate various exegetical tries to interpret the parable, that is, Eschatological Approach, Economic Approach, Literary Approach and Sociological Approach. In chapter 3, I will focus on the interpretation of the parable such as, ‘the limits of the parable,’ ‘the audiences of the parable’ and ‘the exegesis of each phrase and clause’. I intend to do an exegesis of the parable with the eschatological view, taking various interpretative points of view into account. In chapter 4, I will compare, evaluate and synthesize these results in chapter 3 and reinforce the eschatological characteristics in the parable. Eventually, I will emphasize that the eschatological approach is more important than others approaches to interpret the parable. Finally, in chapter 5, I will conclude

that we must become aware of the eschatological characteristics in the parable in order to understand rightly the parable.

### **3. Value of the study**

The Korean church has largely been interpreting the parable along the lines of how we use our material possessions. For this reason, they tend to overlook the eschatological instruction in the parable. Therefore, through my exegesis, I aim to gain a clearer understanding of the parable and its emphasis on the eschatological instruction. I hope this will give us a more correct, balanced view, and a clearer understanding.

## Chapter 2

### Tendencies in recent studies

First of all, in this chapter, I'd like to touch on the Traditional Interpretation to the parable in Luke 16:1-13. I will then deal with the recent interpretive tendencies of the parable. For this reason, I have organized this chapter on the basis of the interpretive approaches to the parable as follows.

1. Traditional Interpretation.
2. The recent Interpretative tendencies.
  - 2-1. Eschatological Approach.
  - 2-2. Economic Approach.
  - 2-3. Literary Approach.
  - 2-4. Sociological Approach.

#### 1. Traditional Interpretation

The most common interpretation of the parable of the Unjust Steward is that the steward's action is dishonest but there is in the steward's action a positive instruction of prudence and wisdom in the use of material possessions.<sup>1</sup> In order to avoid the difficulty of the praise in Luke 16:8a, traditional interpretation divides into two aspects of the steward's actions toward the debtors. The actions themselves are fraudulent, but the

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<sup>1</sup> According to Dennis J. Ireland, "Of the 140 or so interpreters of the parable whom I surveyed, at least 50 understand it in this way." D. J. Ireland, "A history of recent interpretation of the Parable of the Unjust Steward (Luke 16:1-13)" *WTJ* 51, (1989), 295.

underlying wisdom, prudence, or foresight exhibited in them is praiseworthy. A number of interpreters have emphasized this distinction.

T. W. Manson also supports this distinction. In his opinion, since ethical judgment on the steward's actions is passed in the epithet by which the steward is described in v 8 (the dishonest/unjust steward *τὸν οἰκονόμον τῆς ἀδικίας*), the praise in that verse does not necessarily constitute moral approval of the steward's plan or actions by either his master or Jesus. It is the astuteness of the plan, not the plan itself. In order to underline the distinction, Manson<sup>2</sup> insists that there is all the difference in the world between “I applaud the dishonest steward because he acted cleverly” (which is the case in our parable), and “I applaud the clever steward because he acted dishonestly.”

F. Godet says this as he applies instruction to the believers in the midst of conduct morally blamable. Godet<sup>3</sup> explains:

“in the midst of conduct morally blamable, the wicked often display remarkable qualities of activity, prudence, and perseverance, which may serve to humble and encourage believers. The parable of the unjust steward is the masterpiece of this sort of teaching.”

J. M. Creed sees the parable as an analogy that teaches spiritual

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<sup>2</sup> T. W. Manson, *The Sayings of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1949), 292.

<sup>3</sup> F. Godet, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 2* (Edinburgh: T&T. Clark, 1976), 160-61.

truth. Creed<sup>4</sup> says, it is a story from an ordinary life in the world which is showed to have a counterpart in the spiritual world. Creed points out that the emphasis falls upon the steward's 'prudence,' and an analogous 'prudence' in another sphere is enjoined upon the disciples.

He continues to say, that, in either case, when taken with the subsequent sayings (vv 9–13, especially v9), the parable is understood as a commendation of prudence of a specific kind: That is, prudence in the use of wealth.<sup>5</sup>

Perrin, even more specific, asserts that the parable is connected with almsgiving: That is, the steward rightly uses his master's possessions by forgiving the debts of the poor.<sup>6</sup> Williams<sup>7</sup> also see the main instruction of the parable as almsgiving. He notes: "the parable of the Unjust Steward was intended to recommend a positive course of action and that with regard to a specific matter, almsgiving." However, I believe that the steward is not praised for almsgiving by his master. In addition to that, the debtors in 16:4 are not poor.<sup>8</sup>

Thus, the emphasis on the use of possessions distinguishes this interpretation from others. I completely agree with their distinction

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<sup>4</sup> J. M. Creed, *The Gospel according to St. Luke* (London: Macmillan, 1930), 201.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> N. Perrin, *The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963), 115

<sup>7</sup> F. E. Williams, "Is almsgiving the point of the Unjust Steward?" *JBL* 83 (1964), 297.

<sup>8</sup> When it comes to this, Crossan's disputation is clearer: first, it is not almsgiving to help others with the possessions of other people, since all the steward's possessions belong to his master. Second, it is not relief to forgive enormous amounts of possessions. J. D. Crossan, *In Parables: The challenge of the historical Jesus* (New York: Harper John Knox, 1973), 109.

between the actions themselves and the underlying prudence, but I am disappointed that the traditional interpretation views this exclusively as ethical instruction, and does not derive a more momentous lesson, such as eschatological instruction. I will propose alternative ways to overcome the weaknesses of traditional interpretation later.

## 2. The recent interpretative tendencies

### 2-1. Eschatological Approach

Eschatological interpreters emphasize the eschatological background and teaching of the parable without relating it to the use of possessions. Instead of teaching about the use of possessions with eternity in view, they think that the parable calls for resolute action in the face of the eschatological crisis caused by the coming of the kingdom of God. A few of these interpreters do concede that the parable does concern the right use of possessions in verses 1 to 13. They, however, neutralize this note by separating vv 1-7/8 from vv 8/9-13. This is because they regard vv 8/9-13 as the interpretive additions of tradition, Luke, and the early church.

Dodd<sup>9</sup> argues that vv 1-7 constitute the parable and vv 8-13 a whole series of morals appended by the evangelist. He says, “we can almost see here notes for three separate sermons on the parable as text.” Dodd continues to suggest that v8a was added by the reporter of

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<sup>9</sup> Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom*, 17.

the parable, and was probably the application of the parable in the earliest form of tradition. The point of the parable is to urge Jesus' hearers to think strenuously and act boldly to meet their own momentous crisis much as the unscrupulous steward did to meet his.<sup>10</sup> For Jesus' hearers that crisis is precipitated by the inbreaking of the long-expected kingdom of God in the ministry of Jesus himself. Dodd<sup>11</sup> maintains: "the *eschaton* has moved from the future to the present, from the sphere of expectation into that of realized experience."

J. Jeremias claims that the Christian community added vv 8b-13 to the parable and thereby shifted the original emphasis of the parable from the eschatological to the hortatory. What was originally addressed to the unconverted, the hesitant, the waverers, and the crowd as a summons to resolute action in the eschatological crisis of the coming of the kingdom was thus transformed into a direction for the right use of wealth, and a warning against unfaithfulness.<sup>12</sup> The exhortation was implicit in the original form and the eschatological note has not been excised completely because the eschatological situation of the primitive church itself lent weight to its exhortations.<sup>13</sup>

K. E. Bailey also explains the parable in eschatological terms. Unlike the others so far considered, he does so on literary grounds. Bailey clearly draws a distinction between vv 1-8, which contains an eschatological warning, and vv 9-13, which contains a poem on the

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>12</sup> J. Jeremias, *The parables of Jesus* (New York: Scribner's, 1972) 46-47.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*



theme of God and mammon. He contends that both sets of verses should be read and interpreted independently of the other.<sup>14</sup> The purpose of Bailey's cultural argument is that as the dishonest steward risked everything on the quality of mercy he has already experienced from his master, so disciples need the same kind of wisdom in relying on God's mercy. The message for disciples is that if this dishonest steward solved his problems by relying on the mercy of his master to solve his crisis, how much more will God help you in your crisis when you trust his mercy.<sup>15</sup> Accordingly, the crisis is eschatological in nature.

Some scholars question to this reading. John Donahue<sup>16</sup> notes that if the steward does act dishonestly, then it makes no sense for him to hope that he will obtain future employment, since they might fear that the steward will cheat them as well. Kloppenber<sup>17</sup> claims that Jesus might not have used such an example to encourage his listeners, since it is out of accord with other teachings, such as abandoning self-interests in Luke 6:27-30, 14:26-27. He notes that the parable doesn't evoke an apocalyptic situation and any allegorizing, saying that the motif of the departing and returning master did not fit perfectly into the apocalyptic expectation of the coming Son of Man in the primitive community. Crossan<sup>18</sup> notes that the structure of this parable does not lend itself to an apocalyptic interpretation. As will be argued later, although there is not

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<sup>14</sup> K. E. Bailey, *Poet and Peasant and Through Peasant Eyes: A Literary-Cultural Approach to the Parables in Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1893) 86, 110-11, 118.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

<sup>16</sup> J. Donahue, *The Gospel in Parable* (Philadelphia: Portess, 1988) 164.

<sup>17</sup> Kloppenber, "The Dishonoured Master (Luke 16:1-8a)", 478.

<sup>18</sup> J. D. Crossan, "The Servant Parables of Jesus", *Semeia* 1 (1974) 46.

the motif of the departing and returning master in the parable, the parable is eschatological enough in the eschatological situation and terms.

## **2-2. Economic Approach.**

The economic assumptions of the parable in order to solve the dilemma of the master's praise have been proposed by J.D.M. Derrett and Joseph Fitzmyer. Both claim that the steward does not deceive his master. This is because the steward is not depriving his master of his own property when he reduces the debts in 16:5-7. Derrett<sup>19</sup> argues that the amounts reduced by the steward indicated the usurious loans charged by the steward and the amounts reduced were clearly against God's law. The steward decides to follow God's law rather than human law. After all, the steward not only makes his master a generous man but also saves his master from illegality against God's law. For this reason, he is commended by his master.

Fitzmyer's view, as opposed to Derrett, is somewhat of a variation. Fitzmyer<sup>20</sup> asserts that the amounts reduced were clearly the steward's commission. Hence the steward's action in no way injured his employer, since he gave up his own profits. For this reason, the master could afford to praise his actions, since they did not infringe on his own income. After all, the steward is going to get an ingratiation with prospective new

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<sup>19</sup> J. D. M. Derrett, *Law in the New Testament* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1970) 48-77; "Fresh Light on St Luke XVI: The Parable of the Unjust Steward," 198-219.

<sup>20</sup> J. A. Fitzmyer, "The Story of the Dishonest Manager (Lk 16:1-13)" *Essays on the Semitic Background of the New Testament* (Missoula, 1974) 167-168.

employers, as well as the commendation of his master. Moreover, Fitzmyer claims that the steward is called “unjust” in v.8a because of the prior actions referred to by the master in 16:1.

Their theory has not been widely supported. Many scholars have found a lot of weak points in connection with it. Kloppenborg<sup>21</sup> disputes that the steward is reducing his master’s profit and not his own on the basis of the question, “How much do you owe my master?” According to Jewish Law, if a steward either buys more cheaply or sells more expensively than the master’s fixed price, then the extra profits belong to the master not to the steward. Scott<sup>22</sup> also maintains that the debt is clearly owed to the master. According to Bruce J. Malina and Richard L. Rohrbaugh,<sup>23</sup> there is no basis for the assumption that an agent imposes 50% percent on a contract as his fee. Kloppenborg also points out that the amounts reduced do not correspond to the interest usually charged for loans. Moreover, there is no support in the text that the steward suddenly becomes aware of the fact that usury is wrong. Scott points out that the steward’s injustice is probably related to what he did in 16:5–7, and not to what he did prior to that time. William Loader<sup>24</sup> as opposed to the Derrett and Fitzmyer readings on the grounds that they are not surprising, says, “16:8a, far from being intolerable on the lips of the master, tells of a very natural sequence of events. Indeed it is all so

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<sup>21</sup> G. Horowitz, *The Spirit of Jewish Law* (New York:Central Book, 1953), 552

<sup>22</sup> B. B. Scott, “A Master’s Praise (Luke 16:1–8a),” *Bib* 64 (1983), 177.

<sup>23</sup> B. J. Malina and R. L. Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels* (Minneapolis:Fortress, 1992), 374.

<sup>24</sup> W. Loader, “Jesus and the Rogue in Luke 16:1–8a The Parable of the Unjust Steward,” *Revue Biblique* (1989) 523.

natural that it is almost bland and superfluous.” Finally, several scholars have pointed out that if the amounts reduced represented either the interest on a loan or the steward’s commission, this would have been made clear in the text. The readers at that time would not suppose that either usury or the manager’s commission was the focal point of the story. Moreover, the natural implication of the story is that the steward’s actions are injurious to the master’s interests.<sup>25</sup> Taking all that into consideration, I think the whole argument of the proponents of the economic approach is not as convincing as it appears.

### **2-3. Literary Approach.**

J. D. Crossan regards the parable as a cycle of trickster–dupe stories following a standard pattern. He follows Heda Jason's model for such stories.

1. (a) A situation evolves that enables a Rascal to play a trick on a Dupe;  
(b) Dupe reveals his foolishness so that Rascal can utilize it;
2. Rascal plans a trick;
3. Rascal plays a trick;
4. Dupe reacts as Rascal wished him to do;
5. Dupe has lost/Rascal has won.

J. D. Crossan views this parable as a trickster tale with steps 4 and 5 unused. This is because he does not regard 16:8a as part of the original parable.

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<sup>25</sup> Kloppenber, “The Dishonoured Master (Luke 16:1-8a)”, 487.

Scott<sup>26</sup> disputes Crossan's reading as oversimplification in two ways:

“First, the parable is not simply a trickster–dupe narrative.<sup>27</sup>

The trickster narrative is a subplot (or subnarrative) in what is initiated as an accounting story. The master's accounting is complete only in v. 8a. The trickster subplot is a response to the master's negative judgment in v. 2. Without v. 8a there is no closure of the main plot. Dan O. Via<sup>28</sup> also indicates that without 16:8a the parable has no express closure, denouement, or statement about whether the *actantiel* subject attained his object. Second, Crossan has confused the demands of a formal model with the actual story (the formal model's investment). A formal model (like Jason's) indicates how most stories of this type operate. But a chief characteristic of art is to vary or play on the model, to juxtapose the familiar against the unfamiliar.”

Scott also proposes a plausible literary solution as well as controversy with Crossan. Scott maintains that the parable portrays a

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<sup>26</sup> Scott, “A Master’s Praise, 178 and *Hear then the parable* (Augsburg: Fortress, 1989), 260.

<sup>27</sup> Du Plessis, as opposed to Scott, believes that “the trickster has not succeeded because in verse 8a the master is aware of the trickster’s plans.” As a result, he claims that “as long as verse 8a is part of the parable, the theory of a ‘trickster–dupe’ story as stereotype model has to be discarded.” I. J. Du Plessis, “Philanthropy or Sarcasm?—Another Look at the Parable of the Dishonest Manager (Luke 16:1–13).” *Neotestamentica* 24(1), 1990, 12.

<sup>28</sup> D. O. Via, “Parable and Example Story: A Literary–Structuralist Approach,” *Semeia* 1(1974), 124.

steward who is unjustly accused by his master and who gets even by cheating his master in the end. The steward becomes a successful rogue. Dan Via<sup>29</sup> also has argued that the actions of the steward belong to a picaresque comedy with the story of a successful rogue, and that the reader can appreciate his immoral behavior because the master has been portrayed in villainous terms.

Scott encounters some problems because he draws the terms of kingdom, justice, and vulnerability from the parable in order to solve the problem of the master's praise. Scott claims that the implied referent for the parable is the kingdom of God, and he further suggests that there is a sense of justice normally implied in the symbol "kingdom." Scott<sup>30</sup> argues:

"when the master's praise and the steward's behavior clash with the justice implied in the kingdom (i.e.. when story and kingdom expectations collide), the reader must reconsider what justice in the kingdom can mean. The parable does not redefine justice (so it can offer no new definition of justice in the kingdom) but it does suggest that justice is somehow to be seen or heard in the parable's contours."

The reader has had fun at the master's expense, but at the

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<sup>29</sup> D. O. Via, *The Parables*, 159. He explains the characteristic of a picaresque as follows: "A picaresque comedy tells the story of a successful rogue who makes conventional society look foolish but without establishing any positive alternative"

<sup>30</sup> Scott, "A Master's Praise," 187.

parable's conclusion the reader discovers that the price for going on a moral holiday was sanctioning a rogue's behavior. The parable presents a counter-world to the reader's normal world. In that normal world, power and justice are coordinates.<sup>31</sup> By its powerful questioning and juxtaposition the parable breaks loose the bond between power and justice and instead equates justice and vulnerability. The reader in the world of kingdom must establish new coordinates for power, vulnerability, and justice. Kingdom is for the vulnerable-, for masters and stewards who do not get even.<sup>32</sup>

As Dave L. Mathewson points out, there is nothing in the parable itself that suggests that justice is its main thrust.<sup>33</sup> Scott's interpretation as far as 16:7 has a great deal of merit, but when he arrives at 16:8a he loses sight of the text and engages in some fanciful interpretation.<sup>34</sup> As M. Dwaine Greene<sup>35</sup> rightly points out, I think that the parable itself does not include reference to the kingdom of God. Such a reference must derive from the wider text in Luke. In addition, expectations reconstructed by Scott are too idealistic for the parable's immediate context.

## 2-4. Sociological Approach

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> D. L. T. Mathewson, "Parable of the Unjust Steward (Luke 16:1-13): A Reexamination of the Traditional View in Light of Recent Challengers" *JETS* 38 (1995), 31.

<sup>34</sup> D. Landry and B. May, "Honor Restored: New light on the Parable of the Prudent Steward (Luke 16:1-8a)", *JBL* 119/2 (2000) 292.

<sup>35</sup> M. D. Greene, "The Parable of the Unjust Steward as question and challenge" *ExpTim* 112/3 (2000), 86.

John S. Kloppenborg and Hans J. B. Combrink show well the Sociological Approach to the parable. Kloppenborg agrees with the claim of Bruce Malina that fundamental to the proper understanding of ancient Mediterranean society is an appreciation for the importance of honour and shame. The world of New Testament is one in which “honour ultimately counted more than wealth.”<sup>36</sup>

In the Unjust Steward, the master’s honour has been threatened by the fact that word has leaked out into the public, that he has in his household a steward who is at the very least incompetent, and perhaps even a criminal. The paterfamilias was expected to exert complete control over his household, and any dishonourable action by a member of his household reflected badly on its master. Kloppenborg says, “This means that it is not the steward who is on trial, but the master, and the court is the court of the opinion of the public and his peers.”<sup>37</sup> To save face and recover a measure of his honour, the master resolves immediately to dismiss the steward. Thereby he acquits himself of the charge of the inability to control his inferiors and recovers some of the loss of face.<sup>38</sup> Eventually, from the master’s commendation of the steward, the master appears to ignore his own honour and his own endangered state. This, however, means that the parable makes a challenge to an operative cultural principle of the first century, laughing at the honour–shame codes with which the story has operated.

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<sup>36</sup> Kloppenborg, “Dishonoured Master,” 484.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 485.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*



Combrink, who tries the same Sociological Approach, in contrast to Kloppenborg, believes that the master commends the steward because he regards honour–shame as more valuable than the loss of possessions. Combrink<sup>39</sup> notes:

“if he retracts the actions of the manager, he risks serious alienation in the village, where they would have already been celebrating his astonishing generosity. If he allows the reductions to stand, he will be praised far and wide as a noble and generous man.”

Combrink too assumes the following like Bailey.<sup>40</sup> The steward looks forward to allowing the reductions from his master, because he has come to know the master as a merciful and generous man, through generous punishment that the master deprives his steward of only the stewardship in verse 2, and he knows that the master would rather receive honour from the tenants than money.<sup>41</sup>

There is a lot of truth in Combrink’s claim. However, I do not think that the master merely had no choice but to commend the steward because of his honour. That is because his master’s unexpected

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<sup>39</sup> H. J. B. Combrink, “A social–scientific perspective on the parable of the ‘unjust’ steward (Lk 16:1–8a),” *Neotestamentica* 30(2), 1996, 303. He too highlights the pivotal value of honour–shame in its Mediterranean context, and then reads the parable in terms of a first–century patronage system of generalized reciprocity between social unequals.

<sup>40</sup> See Bailey, *Poet and Peasant*, 98.

<sup>41</sup> Combrink, “A social–scientific perspective on the parable of the ‘unjust’ steward (Lk 16:1–8a),” 303.

commendation says more than the steward expected of his master's reaction, namely, it reflects his generous character. I believe that in the master's commendation is a blend of the 'honour-shame' code at that time, and his generous character.

Kloppenborg begins to go astray when he interprets the steward's actions in Luke 16:3-7 as outright fraud and understands his motives as strictly selfish. He looks to Crossan for support for his view that this action is ironic: "The cleverness of the steward consisted not only in solving his problem but in solving it by means of the very reason (low profits) that had created it in the first place."<sup>42</sup> Moreover, Kloppenborg does not even attempt to make sense of the fact that the master commends the steward for having defrauded him. Having argued that the parable is really about the master's honour, Kloppenborg fails to show how the master's honour (and a servant's obligation to preserve it) remains the central focus of the parable even after Luke 16:1-2.

I partly disagree with the claim of Kloppenborg that the master dismissed the steward because of his honour. This is because it is an extremely conjectured interpretation. Although it is considered shame that the master can't control his inferiors in an honour-shame code at that time, it is not a fatal thing, but a trifling matter. Therefore, the master's dismissal of the steward is not because of his honour, but only because of the steward's squandering. The social characteristic of the

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<sup>42</sup> Kloppenborg, "Dishonoured Master," 486.

'honour and shame' code is more prominent in the next event in Luke 16:5-7, rather than in Luke 16:1. The steward carries out reducing the amount of debt on the basis of his confidence that the master must be thinking his honour to be more important than money. Eventually, the master, as the steward anticipated, chooses his honour rather than a loss of possessions. Due to this, the steward dramatically eludes his crisis. Where the principle of 'honour and shame' can be applied is accurately in Luke 16:5-7. Kloppenberg's arguments are bold and insightful, but they falter on contextual grounds.

## Chapter 3

### Exegesis of Luke 16:1-13

#### 1. The demarcation of the parable

It is important to refer to the demarcation of the parable. This is because, depending on the demarcation of the parable, the interpretation of the parable varies. There is no unanimity on the demarcation of this parable so far. The views differ as follows, namely that the parable comprises verses 1-7, verses 1-8a or verses 1-8b.<sup>1</sup> Of these three views, only two, verses 1-7 and verses 1-8a, have seriously been suggested as forming the parable. I will mainly deal with these two views.

There are a few scholars who regard the ending of the parable as verse 7.<sup>2</sup> When it comes to this view, Jeremias is a representative scholar. He claims the view that the parable ends in verse 7 and holds verse 8a as the comment of Jesus. According to Scott, his argument is twofold. Scott<sup>3</sup> says,

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<sup>1</sup> J. A. Fitzmyer and H. J. B. Combrink falls the limits of the parable into four main views in more detail, namely, verses 1-7, verses 1-8a, verses 1-8b and verses 1-9. J. A. Fitzmyer, *Luke X-XXIV* AB (Garden City: Doubleday, 1985), 1096-1097. H. J. B. Combrink, "A social-scientific perspective on the parable of the 'unjust' steward (Lk 16:1-8a)," 290.

<sup>2</sup> The scholars adopting this point of view are as follows: J. Jeremias, W. Grundmann, A. Jülicher, H. Preisker, J. D. Crossan.

<sup>3</sup> Scott, "A Master's Praise Luke 16:1-8a" 174. In relation to this argument of Jeremias, Topel gives four reasons:

"(1) How could the owner praise the one who had cheated him? (Now this argument depends on verisimilitude, but the whole parable strains verisimilitude. How could the steward expect others to accept him as friend or employ him as steward when his very act of ingratiating himself was a betrayal of stewardship?); (2) The Lucan use of *ho kyrios* absolutely refers to Jesus; (3) there is a similar pattern in 18:6; (4) this usage would be following a literary form where a parable ends with a word of Jesus to the audience (cf. Lk

(1) It is not believable that a master would have praised the servant, therefore ὁ κύριος must refer to someone other than ‘the master’. (2) On analogy with Luke 18:6, ὁ κύριος is Luke's way of referring to Jesus. Jeremias’ arguments are forced and strained.

As Joseph Fitzmyer<sup>4</sup> has pointed out, I think that it is more natural to understand ὁ κύριος in verse 8a as the master of the story. This is because without verse 8a the story has no ending.

I also believe that Jeremias’ proposed parallel with Luke 18:6 is not a proper analogy, because in that parable, the conclusion to the story has already been made in verse 5. In addition to that, it is characteristic of Luke to provide clear clues to the reader for changing a subject. If a changing of subject had occurred, Luke would have provided clear clues to the reader for a change of subject, this being Luke’s characteristic<sup>5</sup>. We must pay attention to the narrative possibility and natural necessity of conclusion in the parable. Therefore, on the basis of internal stylistic evidence, I believe the parable originally

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14:11, 24).”

L. T. Topel, “On the Injustice of the Unjust Steward (Luke 16:1-13)” *CBQ* 37, (1975), 218.

<sup>4</sup> Fitzmyer, “The Story of the Dishonest Manager (Lk 16:1-13)”, 27. Fitzmyer notes that without the reaction of the owner in 8a the parable itself has no ending.

<sup>5</sup> Scott derives Luke’s characteristic from three parables such as Unjust Judge (Luke 18:1-8), the Pounds (Luke 19:12-28) and Watchful Servants (Luke 12:35-37). He notes that in all three cases where there is a *kyrios* in the story, Luke gives clear clues to the reader for a change of the subject. Scott, “A Master’s Praise (Luke 16:1-8a)”, 176.

concluded with the master praising the unjust steward in verse 8a. That is largely because the story ends too abruptly and without a conclusion when the parable is limited to verse 7. Most scholars are opposed to Jeremias' view and believe that the parable ends in verse 8a.<sup>6</sup>

With regard to verses 9-13, most commentators claim that these sayings were not originally part of the parable. Particularly, in connection with verses 10-13, it seems that commentators hold verses 10-13 as a secondary application of the parable. That is because it seems as if verses 10-13 have nothing to do with the parable. Concerning verses 9-13, Bailey's view is peculiar. He asserts that it should be read and interpreted apart from the parable that precedes it, since "Luke 16:9-13 is constructed poem with three stanzas on the single theme of mammon and God"<sup>7</sup>

Personally, I see verses 8b-13 as interpretations to the parable and I'd like to divide verses 8b-13 into three parts: generalization part in verse 8b, positive part in verse 9, negative part in verses 10-13.<sup>8</sup> All

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<sup>6</sup> The scholars adopting this point of view are as follows: G. Schneider, I. H. Marshall, D. O. Via, W. L. Liefeld, B. T. D. Smith, W. O. E. Oesterley, H. J. B. Combrink and so on.

<sup>7</sup> Bailey, *Poet and Peasant* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 110.

<sup>8</sup> In relation to this, Baergen firstly divides verses 8b-13 into two parts, and notes as follows:

"verses 8b and 9 make the steward's actions exemplary for the parable's audience ("make friends for yourselves by means of dishonest wealth"), but verses 10-13 appear to rebuke the steward's unfaithfulness ("whoever is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much")."

R. A. Baergen, "Servant, manager or slave? Reading the parable of the rich man his steward (Luke 16:1-8a) through the lens of ancient slavery" *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* 35/1 (2006), 26.

three parts give us instructions about material possessions. In this respect, there is a common point in the three parts. Even so, in the style of expression it seems that the three parts have quite clear differences such as positive expression in verse 9 , negative expression in verses 10-13.

In relation to the origin of verses 9-13, there are two main views: (1) It is Jesus' instruction whether it is connected to the parable or not.<sup>9</sup> (2) It is the interpretations of the early Church.<sup>10</sup> My own view of the matter is that verses 9-13 is Jesus' instruction extended to apply the parable to hearers. I am not going to deal with this problem in detail here, because these parts are very complicated and related to the larger question of the origin of the Gospels.

## 2. The Audience

Who is the audience of the parable? This argument has several forms depending on one's viewpoint concerning the point of the parable. Firstly, viewing the point of the parable as resolute action, Jeremias<sup>11</sup> notes that

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<sup>9</sup> Bailey sees verses 9-13 as Jesus' instruction unconnected with the parable. Bailey, *Poet & Peasant*, 110.

<sup>10</sup> Dodd says, "We can almost see here notes for the three separate sermons on the parable as test." Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom*, 26. In this connection, Jeremias asserts as follows: "the primitive Church applied the parable to the Christian community and drew from it a direction for the right use of wealth and a warning against unfaithfulness." Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, 47.

<sup>11</sup> Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, 47. He notes as follows:

"if, as, v8a suggests, it is a summons to resolute action in a crisis, it would hardly have been addressed to the disciples, but rather to the "unconverted," the hesitant, the waverers, the crowd. They must be told of the imminent crisis: they must be urged to deal with it courageously, wisely,

the audience of the parable are the unconverted, the hesitant, the waverers and the crowd. Jeremias maintains that “it would hardly have been addressed to the disciples.”<sup>12</sup> Secondly, A. T. Cadoux,<sup>13</sup> viewing the parable as a parable of conflict in contrast to Jeremias, claims that the audience of the parable are the high priests. Viewing the parable as a parable of conflict or argument, Dodd maintains that the audience of the parable are the Sadducees or the Pharisees.<sup>14</sup> In addition, Dan. O. Via and R. H. Stein<sup>15</sup> also claim that what was originally a parable for Jesus’ critics and a hostile audience has been turned by Luke into a disciple parable in Luke 16:1. Thirdly, if one takes the view that the parable is about the wise use of material possessions, the audience of the parable cannot be the disciples because they were not rich.<sup>16</sup>

I, however, believe that the parable is directed primarily to the disciples but is also addressed to the Pharisees. The main reason for this is because I believe that Luke 16:1–13 is the continuity of Luke 15. In other words, only the main object of the parable is changed from the Pharisees and the scribes in Luke 15 to the disciples in Luke 16:1–13, thus maintaining the scene of Luke 15 until Luke 16. I believe that a few indicators bear this out. The phrase, **Ἔλεγεν δὲ καὶ** in Luke 16:1

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and resolutely, to stake all on the future.”

<sup>12</sup> Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, 47.

<sup>13</sup> A. T. Cadoux, *The Parables of: Their Art and Use* (London: James Clarke, 1930), 116–137.

<sup>14</sup> Dodd, *Parables*, 27. He says that the Sadducees who represent the priest made a compromise with a Roman as the steward in the parable.

<sup>15</sup> D. O. Via, *The Parables*, 157. R. H. Stein, *An introduction to the parables of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1981), 110.

<sup>16</sup> H. J. Degenhardt, *Lukas-Evangelist der Armen* (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1965), 27–39 and 105–112.



expresses conceptual continuity between Luke 15 and 16.<sup>17</sup> Above all, the continuity is expressed in the word **καὶ**. According to Topel,<sup>18</sup> **Ἔλεγεν δὲ** also indicates continuity with what went before. Therefore, having addressed the three parables to the grumbling Pharisees and Scribes in Luke 15, Jesus directs his attention to his disciples in Luke 16:1. But what is addressed to his disciples in Luke 16:1–13, is also addressed to the Pharisees because of continuity between Luke 15 and 16. When we pay attention to Luke 16:14, it is more so.

The other reason why I think so is because whatever the point of the parable, it is passable enough to apply its point to the disciples. The argument that if the point of the parable is resolute action, the audience of the parable cannot be his disciples is opposed to the teaching of discipleship of Jesus in the Gospels. Rather Jesus demands to continuously take resolute action to his disciples in Luke 9:23<sup>19</sup> and 14:27. True discipleship necessitates a series of resolute responses. While, the claim that if the point of the parable is the wise use of material possessions, the audience of the parable cannot be his disciples since they were not rich, run counter to the fact that Jesus' disciple involves the rich, such as some women supporting Jesus from their possessions in Luke 8:1–3, a chief tax collector in Luke 19:1–10 and the tax collectors

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<sup>17</sup> Bailey, *Poet and Peasant*, 109. He says that “the phrase **δὲ καὶ** in 16:1 is a favorite transitional device for Luke. It is used to show that the parabolic discourse continues from the previous chapter,” citing M. Scharlemann.

<sup>18</sup> Topel, “On the Injustice of the Unjust Steward (Luke 16:1–13)” 222 n34. He claims continuity on the basis of a pattern of **Ἔλεγεν δε** including parable and audience in Luke and usages of the **Ἔλεγεν δε** in Luke.

<sup>19</sup> “Then he said to them all: If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.” (Luke 9:23)

mentioned in Luke 15:1. Taking all that into consideration, I believe that the main audience of the parable is the disciples, and that the scene in Luke 16 is the same as that of Luke 15.<sup>20</sup>

### 3. Verses 1-2

#### 3-1. A Rich man.

It is open to question whether the rich man is a member of the community. Does the rich man represent God? Do people at that time have animosity against the rich man?

Jeremias regards the master of the steward as a person with a large estate who lives overseas.<sup>21</sup> However, given the fact that the steward takes advantage of the reputation of his master in the community, it is highly probable that the master might be a member of the community, rather than an overseas resident.<sup>22</sup> I believe, therefore that the rich man who has a big estate might have been a member of the community.

Do people at that time have animosity against the rich man? Even though Scott assumes that the term ‘rich man’ must have raised animosity against the master,<sup>23</sup> it is an inordinate assumption and

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<sup>20</sup> N. Geldenhuys, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1951), 414 n.1. He claims that **καὶ** in Luke 16:1 indicates a change of persons addressed without a change of scene, citing T. Zahn.

<sup>21</sup> Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, 181. “The **πλούσιος** is probably to be regarded as the owner of a large estate who lives abroad and is represented by a steward.”

<sup>22</sup> With regard to this part, Bailey says as follows “The master is clearly a part of the community. The wealthy, distant, foreign, ruthless landowner is unknown in the synoptic parables.” Bailey, *Poet and Peasant*, 90.

<sup>23</sup> Scott, “A Master’s Praise: Luke 16:1-8a,” 180. Scott tries to search for troubles between classes and animosities to specific classes, so as to find out the expectation

generalization. It is nothing but presumption. Personally, I believe that the character of the rich is only needed for the constitution of this story, not for raising animosity against the master. In other words, the author did not intend to raise animosity toward the master by the ancient reader.

### 3-2. The Manager.

There have been arguments concerning the term ‘οἰκονόμος’ which is ‘slave’ or ‘manager’. Bailey<sup>24</sup> argues that the steward is not a slave because he is dismissed rather than sold, although in rabbinic literature the ‘οἰκονόμος’ becomes a kind of chief slave who supervises the household and even the whole property of his master. Mary Ann Beavis however, refutes Bailey’s claim, citing W. O. E. Oesterley to the effect that slaves were sometimes dismissed rather than sold and that dismissal could actually be seen as a worse punishment.<sup>25</sup> Accordingly, Beavis claims that a Greco-Roman reader would probably assume that the ‘οἰκονόμος’ of the parable was a slave.<sup>26</sup> But, I believe, taking into consideration that the manager has the ability to plan his own future in this text, it appears that the rich man’s manager is not a slave. In either

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and respons of the ancient reader to the parable. Furthermore, Scott introduces the social repertoire of the patron-client model into the parable, in order to understanding the parable.

<sup>24</sup> Bailey, *Poet and Peasant*, 92.

<sup>25</sup> W. O. E. Oesterley, *The Gospel Parallels in the Light of their Jewish Background* (London: SPCK, 1936) 194-95. Oesterley pointed out that dismissal of an incompetent slave, especially in a Jewish setting, meant that he was cast out into the world, without home, without friends, without occupation, and in grave danger of dying of starvation.

<sup>26</sup> M. A. Beavis, “Ancient slavery as an interpretive context for the New Testament servant Parables with special reference to the Unjust Steward (Luke16:1-8),” *JBL* 111/1 (1992), 49-50.

case, it doesn't definitively influence the interpretation of the parable.<sup>27</sup>

If the 'οἰκονόμος' of the parable was a manager, not a slave, what kind of work would the manager have engaged in? Derrett sees the steward as "moneylender" and regards the debts as "usurers." Having dismissed the possibility of the debtors being land renters, Derrett works out a very elaborate scheme, arguing that cash debts were liquidated and reinstated in agricultural produce in order to avoid the laws of usury.<sup>28</sup>

However, as Bailey and Manson rightly point out, I think that the steward is not a moneylender, but an estate manager. In regard to the profession of the steward, T. W. Manson lists three alternatives through the word 'οἰκονόμος':

1. an overseer or head-servant responsible for the welfare and discipline of the rest of the household staff (Luke 12:42);
2. a bailiff or estate-manager;
3. a civic official like a city treasurer (Romans 16:23).<sup>29</sup>

Manson prefers the second possibility.

Bailey' survey shows that the Greek word itself 'οἰκονόμος', along with its Hebrew, Aramaic, Syriac, and Arabic equivalents, points to "estate manager."<sup>30</sup> To synthesize, the steward is a legal "agent."<sup>31</sup> He is paid.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> D. Landry & B. May, "Honor restored: New Light on the parable of The Prudent Steward (Luke 16:1-8a)," 296. They note that although Beavis bases her entire interpretation on the claim that the steward is a slave, for the interpretation to follow it is not a decisive factor.

<sup>28</sup> Derrett, "Fresh Light on St Luke XVI: The Parable of the Unjust Steward," 214.

<sup>29</sup> T. W. Manson, *The Sayings of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1949), 291.

<sup>30</sup> Bailey, *Poet and peasant*, 92.

<sup>31</sup> Horowitz, *The Spirit of Jewish Law*, 538-568. Regarding "agency," Horowitz points out that there were three kinds of "agency.": (1) A general agent (*shaluah*) who labored either gratuitously or for a fee. (2) A *sarsor*, a broker or middle man who was always a

The rich man is a landowner, and thus the steward is an estate manager.

### 3-3. The Accusation.

I will begin with two questions: For what reason was the steward accused? And was the accusation just or not?

The Steward is accused of “squandering”(διασκορπίζων) his master’s property.<sup>33</sup> What exactly does this mean? With regard to this, various theories have been presented. Crossan adheres to the theory that the steward has not brought a sufficient return or profit on the assets with which the master has entrusted him. Kloppenborg also agrees to the theory, saying as follows: “even though the steward belongs to the master’s *oikos*, the matter of his alleged incompetence has entered the public forum.”<sup>34</sup> On the other hand, Jonn G. Lygre,<sup>35</sup> thinking that διασκορπίζων is likely to scatter seed in the agrarian context, sees the reason for the accusation as lack of attention to using the owner’s

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paid agent. (3) A *mursheh*, who was an attorney appointed by written instruction to recover property or a debt and authorized to bring suit.

<sup>32</sup> Gächter, as opposed to this, claims as follows:

“he, a rich man, did not pay the steward for his services, for the steward was supposed to be in a position to gain his livelihood from those who were under him. He hired out the different portions of the master’s property to cultivators. They had to pay revenues from which one part would go to the master, one part to the steward.”

P. Gächter, “The Parable of the Dishonest Steward after Oriental Conceptions,” *CBQ* 12 (1950), 127.

<sup>33</sup> The hearsay would not have come from at least the community, but from the trustable servants of household. That is because if the hearsay had been from the community, the debtors wouldn’t have acceded to the proposal of the steward to reduce their debts to the rich man.

<sup>34</sup> Kloppenborg, “The Dishonoured Master (Luke 16:1-8a),” 489.

<sup>35</sup> J. G. Lygre, “Of what charges?” *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 32 (2002), 24. He says, “the property or possessions may refer to the seeds themselves such as tools, records, transports to market and food and shelter for the works.”

resources responsibly.

However, as Landry and May have rightly pointed out,<sup>36</sup> I believe the idea that the steward's offense is "low profits" is refuted by three facts. First, if the master were concerned about his own profits, it is difficult to understand the commendation in 16:8a for having slashed profits even further when he reduces portions of the debts owed in 16:5-7. Second, **διασκορπίζν** is used in the parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32), and its meaning is "to squander." The younger son squanders (**διεσκορπισεν**) his inheritance in a distant country. Here there is no question of usury or insufficient return on one's investments. There is no doubt that the younger son uses his inheritance money for selfish and immoral activities. Its meaning helps illuminate its sense here. Finally, if the steward is accused of usury or a poor return on the master's investments, then presumably he could clear himself by showing the books to the master. Taking all that into consideration, the steward is probably engaged in similar types of behavior.

The matter related to my second question is whether the accusation is just or unjust. Scott claims that there are several good reasons in support of the negative sense, citing Walter Bauer<sup>37</sup> saying the term 'διεβλήθη' signifies to bring charges with hostile intent. Scott says, "first, it is the word's normal meaning. Second, Derrett has pointed out that a steward could only be punished by "the heaping up of reproaches, and

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<sup>36</sup> D. Landry & B. May, "Honor Restored: New Light on the Parable of the Prudent Steward (Luke 16:1-8a)," 297.

<sup>37</sup> *Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon* (abridged ed.; Oxford: Clarendon, impression of 1977) 159.

blackening of his character,”<sup>38</sup> and by a unilateral act of dismissal on the part of the master.”<sup>39</sup> In addition, Beavis notes that the accusation is unjust on the basis of the observation that the relations between masters and servants are often hostile, citing other servant parables and Greco-Roman slave stories.<sup>40</sup>

However, I believe that the accusation is just, for the following reasons: First, the master evaluates the character of the steward as being dishonest using the epithet ‘*ἀδικίας*’ in 16:8a. Afterwards, I will discuss this matter in detail: Whether the epithet ‘*ἀδικίας*’ is the expression related to a peculiar action of the steward or the expression related to the whole nature. Second, in connection with the accusation, the steward is silent. He does not try to defend himself against the accusation. This silence<sup>41</sup> might confess his guilt. With regard to this,

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<sup>38</sup> Derrett notes, citing the Torah, that although the master does not punish the steward, it is the punishment to blacken of his character due to the hearsay and to be dismissed by his master. Derrett, “Fresh Light on St Luke XVI: The Parable of the Unjust Steward,” 202–203.

<sup>39</sup> Scott, “A Master’s Praise (Luke 16:1–8a),” 180–181.

<sup>40</sup> Beavis claims as follows

“the notion that the steward is wrongfully dismissed is supported by the observation that, in other servant parables, the relations between masters and servants are often hostile (e.g., the wicked tenants; the talents/the pounds; the laborers in the vineyard). The Aesopic and Plautine material amply illustrates the motif of harsh, foolish, or vain masters who are quick to punish slaves for real or imagined faults (Aesop's first master, on the basis of a false accusation, casually orders his overseer to beat Aesop to death if he cannot be sold or given away).”

Beavis, “Ancient Slavery as an interpretive context for the New Testament servant Parables with special reference to the Unjust Steward (Luke 16:1–8),” 48.

<sup>41</sup> In this connection, Bailey suggests four possibilities: (1) I am guilty. (2) The master knows the truth; he knows I am guilty. (3) This master expects obedience; disobedience brings judgment. (4) I cannot get my job back by offering a series of excuses. Bailey, *Poet and Peasant*, 97.

Scott notes that the steward realizes the effort would be futile.<sup>42</sup> This is largely because Scott sees the rich man as a man capricious and unfair. However, there is no evidence that the master is unjust in the text. If this is so, it is difficult to explain the master's commendation in 16:8a. Moreover, Beavis disputes Fitzmyer's assertion that the failure of the steward to defend himself proves his guilt, since the master immediately dismisses the steward on the basis of hearsay without opportunity of defense.<sup>43</sup> If this had been so, the steward would very likely have reacted against the accusation subsequently, because of the matter of his subsistence. Finally, we never find out that the steward complained about the accusation of his master in his soliloquy. Taking all that into consideration, I believe the accusation is just.

### **3-4. The dismissal.**

We have to consider two questions in connection with the steward's dismissal here. First, is the steward fired now or later? Second, is the steward asked to surrender the account books or get the accounts in order?

Is the steward fired now or later? In relation to this question, first of all, it is important to observe grammatical factors in the dismissal command of the master and the steward's soliloquy. The difficult problem is that there is the conflicting content between the dismissal command of

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<sup>42</sup> B. B. Scott, *Re-Imagine the World: An Introduction to the Parables of Jesus* (Santa Rosa: Polebridge Press, 2001), 90.

<sup>43</sup> With respect to immediate dismissal without examination, Kloppenborg notes that this is because of violence of the rich man as capricious and unfair. Kloppenborg, "The Dishonoured Master (Luke 16:1-8a)," 488.



the master, and the steward's soliloquy.

In verses 3-4, the steward's soliloquy, the steward speaks as if he is not yet fired. (v 3, my master is taking the stewardship away from me: ὁ κύριός μου ἀφαιρείται τὴν οἰκονομίαν ἀπ' ἐμου. v 4, when I am put out of the stewardship: ἵνα ὅταν μετασταθῶ ἐκ τῆς οἰκονομίας). But the present tense of the verb in connection with the dismissal command of the master in 16:2, (v 2, you are no longer able: οὐ γὰρ δύνη ἔτι οἰκονομεῖν) indicates that he is fired on the spot.

I however, think that the steward is fired.<sup>44</sup> Nevertheless, he still has the opportunity to maneuver until he turns in the account books, because his dismissal is in progress.

In relation to the next question, 'is the steward asked to surrender the account books or get the accounts in order?' Bailey says, "in the modern village, a steward in such circumstances is always asked to surrender the books, never to balance the accounts."<sup>45</sup> He, according to Gächter<sup>46</sup> and Scharlemann<sup>47</sup>, claims that it can be argued that the phrase means surrender the account books.

As Bailey rightly has pointed out, I believe that the steward is asked to surrender the account books. If the accusation must have been

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<sup>44</sup> With regard to this, Manson notes that "the master takes immediate action. he orders the steward to hand over his accounts, and dismisses him from his post." Manson, *Sayings*, 291.

<sup>45</sup> Bailey, *Poet and Peasant*, 97.

<sup>46</sup> Gächter says as follows: ἀπόδος τὸν λόγον τῆς οἰκονομίας cannot mean "Give an account of your stewardship." And If used in that sense λόγος has no article (Mt 12:36: Acts 19:40: Rom 15:12: Hb 13:17: 1Pt 4:5). Gächter, "The Parable of the Dishonest Steward," 127.

<sup>47</sup> Scharlemann notes that λόγος is the official record or account kept by the manager for his master. M. Scharlemann, *Proclaiming the Parables* (St. Louis Concordia: Publishing House, 1963), 84.

associated with immoral or criminal acts of the steward, it is all the more so. The master would not have liked to give room to fabricate malicious things to the steward.

### **3-5. The reason of the dismissal.**

In view of an honour–shame culture of ancient Mediterranean society, Kloppenborg contends that the main reason for the dismissal is honour related to the master. Kloppenborg <sup>48</sup> says,

“Punishment of the offender is a secondary matter; recovery of honour is the central problem. His only course is to dismiss the steward and to do so quickly. Thereby he acquits himself of the charge of the inability to control his inferiors and recovers some of the loss of face.”

Many scholars have followed this view in recent years, since Kloppenborg claims that recovery of the master’s honour is the central problem in the parable on basis of survey of Bruce Malina. Landry and May also note that “he is being dismissed because he dishonoured his master.”<sup>49</sup>

I, however, think that the main reason of the dismissal is not because the steward dishonoured his master, but because the steward squandered his master’s property as a deed of immorality. The master’s dishonour

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<sup>48</sup> Kloppenborg, “The Dishonoured Master (Luke 16:1–8a),” 489–490.

<sup>49</sup> Landry and May, “The Prudent Steward (Luke 16:1–8a),” 300.

brought about by his steward, of course, might be one reason why he dismisses his steward. Even so, I do not think that it is as fatal as the master must dismiss his steward, because the hearsay might have come from his household, not from the outside.<sup>50</sup>

#### 4. Verses 3-4

##### 4-1. My master is taking away my job.

As I have pointed out above, the steward is soliloquizing as if he is not dismissed, because his dismissal is still in progress. Although the steward is dismissed on the spot when his master says, “Give an account of your management, because you cannot be manager any longer,” his dismissal is incomplete until he gives the accounts books to his master. Otherwise, the steward would not have had any room to find a way out of his situation.

The steward is thinking more of his job being taken away by his master than repenting and being ashamed of his squandering. Moreover, the steward does not thank his master for tolerant punishment<sup>51</sup> of his

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<sup>50</sup> With regard to the hearsay, Lygre assumes that the hearsay comes from tenants who have animosity against the steward in the agrarian society at that time. Lyger, “Of what charges (Luke 16:1-2)?”, 23. I however, believe that Lyger’s presumption is plausible only in the agrarian society system at that time, but not in the story. If it has been so, the steward would not have made a plan in verses 5-7 because the debtors might have already heard the hearsay. In addition, the master who knew well the animosity between tenants and the steward might not have considered and suspected their accusation.

<sup>51</sup> Is the steward’s dismissal by his master suitable, violent or tolerant punishment? This depends on prescribing the steward’s action related to squandering, namely, is it a mistake in his managements or criminal action or innocence?

squandering. Bailey argues that the steward exploits his master's tolerant character in order to secure his future. He says, "it is our understanding of the parable that the steward's plan is to risk everything on the quality of mercy he has already experienced from his master."<sup>52</sup>

He thinks it is justified for the following reason;

"the Mishna makes quite clear that an agent was expected to pay for any loss of goods for which he was responsible. The steward can be tried and jailed. Rather, he is not even scolded. The master, under the circumstances, has been unusually merciful toward him."<sup>53</sup>

I think that the steward, as opposed to Bailey's claim, does not thank his master for tolerant punishment about his squandering. On the contrary, he has slight complaints. For this reason, Bailey's viewpoint is incorrect. I believe that not only is the steward wicked but he is also shrewd. If we compare it with the prodigal son's soliloquy in Luke 15:17-19, the prodigal son admits that he has sinned and is no longer worthy. The steward, on the other hand, acknowledges no wrongdoing.

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<sup>52</sup> Bailey, *Poet and Peasant*, 98.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.

#### 4-2. I am not strong enough to dig and I am ashamed to beg.

According to Beavis, the steward is demoted to the hard labor of digging, such as a quarryman, because he is a slave. Therefore, if he doesn't want to do this job, he has no choice but to run away. Eventually he will be a beggar.<sup>1</sup> This interpretation of Beavis results from the assumption that the steward is a slave.

However, the fact that the steward is demoted is not in the text. The steward merely imagines the job he might do when he lose his stewardship. If the steward is dismissed due to squandering, he would not be able to get a stewardship any longer in the community. His situation is desperate as much as considering digging and begging now. Digging is hard work. Though its social status is low, the steward doesn't think so much of the work, about being ashamed. The only reason why he doesn't choose the digging work is that he isn't strong. Now, the steward has no choice but to beg. But he decides not to beg because of the shame associated with it. The quotation from Sirach makes clear that begging is also a condemnation to death.<sup>2</sup> Digging and begging are only

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<sup>1</sup> With regard to this verse, Beavis notes as follows:

“The use of the verb **σκάπτειν** (to dig, v3) suggests that the slave is in danger of being sent off to hard labor in the quarries, a form of imprisonment—the worst fate imaginable for a slave. The steward's only alternative would be to run away and “beg” (v. 3)—another miserable fate. The **οἰκονόμος** is being demoted from a position of responsibility to the status of a common drudge.”

Beavis, “Slavery as an Interpretive Context for Servant Parables,” 49.

<sup>2</sup> Sirach 40:28-30, Begging,

“My child, do not lead the life of a begger; it is better to die than to beg. when one looks to the table of another, one's way of life cannot be

images of his desperation.

Scott argues that the steward's confession that he is too weak to dig and ashamed to beg distances the reader from the steward, thus preparing the picaresque actions of vv. 5-7.<sup>3</sup>

I think that the steward's words in *16:4* do not necessarily mean that the steward is lazy or that he thinks he is too good to do the work of common peasants. The focus of the steward's soliloquy is his position. Since he is losing his position, he wonders what he will do in the future for employment. The purpose of including this speech is to help the hearer understand the steward's subsequent actions.<sup>4</sup> As Donahue has rightly pointed out about this, I think that the audience would not expect a person of his status either to dig or to beg.<sup>5</sup> Rather, the statement evokes sympathy in readers rather than contempt.

#### **4-3. I know what I'll do.**

Here, it is important to know what the purpose of this plan is. Scott notes that the purpose of the plan is to get even with the master. He argues that the parable portrays a steward who is unjustly accused by his master and who gets even by cheating his master in the end. Landry and May as opposed to Scott, claim that the steward plans to restore the honour of his master. Therefore, "the steward must do something to

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considered a life. One loses self-respect with another person's food, but one who is intelligent and well instructed guards against that. In the mouth of the shameless beggist is sweet, but it kindles a fire inside him."

<sup>3</sup> Scott, "A Master's Praise," 183.

<sup>4</sup> Landry and May, "The Prudent Steward (Luke 16:1-8a)," 300.

<sup>5</sup> Donahue, *The Gospel in Parable*, 164.

prove that he is not the kind of manager who dishonours his master.”<sup>6</sup>

However, in view of the steward’s soliloquy in verse 4, I believe that Scott’s, Landry and May’s claims are not correct. That is because the steward is only thinking of his living of future, by saying “I know what I’ll do so that, when I lose my job here, people will welcome me into their houses.” It is nowhere alluded to that the steward either wants to get even with the master or restore the honour of his master.

We must ask what the motive of the steward’s plan is. Bailey notes that the motive of the steward’s plan is based on mercy of the master which he experienced. According to Bailey, the steward can be tried and jailed according to regulations of Mishna, yet the master only fires the steward, just then the steward experiences the mercy of his master.<sup>7</sup>

Considering the steward’s soliloquy, “My master is taking away my job.” in verse 3, the steward appears not to be thankful for his master’s treatment in connection with his dismissal. Accordingly, I believe that the steward didn’t feel mercy for his master, nor would he have exploited the mercy of his master.

While Breech claims that the steward exploits the master’s trust toward the steward, he says as follows;

“he is reckoning on having some time to turn the situation to his own advantage because he has not yet turned in his account.

When he will be put out of the stewardship still lies in the future,

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<sup>6</sup> Landry and May, “The Prudent Steward (Luke 16:1-8a),” 300.

<sup>7</sup> Bailey, *Poet and Peasant*, 98.

his master still trusts him to be honest, and has asked for an account of his stewardship. There is still time to exploit the master's trust in him that he is honest, because he is still steward.”<sup>8</sup>

I, in contrast to Breech's claim, think that it is merely a procedure of the dismissal, not trust in the steward that the master asks for an account of his stewardship. It also means to deprive him of the steward's core right on the spot. The steward would have an actual feeling of dismissal as he was giving over the account's books to the master. I believe that the steward exploits his master's honour here, even though his master has mercy. The steward makes the plan that he reduces the debts of the debtors to his master, having confidence that when the hearsay gets back to the master of what has happened, the master will not repudiate his dismissed steward's action. However, if the master repudiates his dismissed steward's action, this would involve severe loss of face on the master's part. When those whose debts have been so generously reduced begin to praise the master, it's unlikely he will risk owning up to what has happened. The steward's clever plan binds the master's hands when exploiting his master's honour.

#### **4-4. The steward's wish.**

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<sup>8</sup> J. Breech, *The Silence of Jesus* (Philadelphia: First Fortress, 1983), 106.



Through this plan, what does the steward get? Breech<sup>9</sup> notes that the steward wants to be a sponger.

“He does not envisage himself being hired as a steward by other people because he speaks of people receiving him into their houses, rather than of someone hiring him as his steward. In other words, he envisages himself existing as a sponger. He won't work, but people will house and feed him because he will have made them indebted to him in some still unspecified way.”

In relation to this, Kloppenborg disputes as follows; “Breech’s view presupposes a too restrictive interpretation of *oikos* in v. 4, which should be construed as “household” in the socio-economic sense rather than the purely locative sense of house.”<sup>10</sup> I believe that the steward would not have expected to be a sponger for his lifelong by doing one a favour. The steward wants to get a job rather than be a sponger. In other words, he wants to be welcomed into people’s home as a steward.

## 5. Verses 5–7

### 5-1. Sit down quickly

The steward’s plan is proceeding secretly and rapidly. In order to

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

<sup>10</sup> Kloppenborg, “The Dishonoured Master (Luke 16:1–8a),” 491.

proceed secretly, the steward calls in each one of his master's debtors. We have to understand that there are quite a lot of debtors and those called by the steward are just two examples. The debtors do not know that the steward has been dismissed by his master. Had they known the fact that the steward has been dismissed by his master, not only would they not have complied with reducing the debts, but they would also not have responded to the steward's call. As long as they do not know about the steward's dismissal, the steward could launch and succeed in his plan. Furthermore, the steward also asks the debtors "how much do you owe my master?"<sup>11</sup> as if he has not been dismissed and has had the right of stewardship all along. He also urges them in some haste to alter the account books, according to the expression "sit down quickly."<sup>12</sup> All this points to the fact that the steward is proceeding with his plan secretly and quickly.

## 5-2. The debtors

With regard to the debtors, we need to answer two questions: What kind of work do the debtors engage in? Are the debtors accomplices of the steward in reducing the debts?

Firstly, what kind of work do the debtors engage in? We can consider three possibilities in connection with this question, such as

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<sup>11</sup> The question might also ask for the agreement that the debtors' debts on the account books are correct.

<sup>12</sup> The word "quickly" at the same time, adds to the reader's suspicion that this act is not just. Du Plessis, "Philanthropy or Sarcasm?-Another Look at the Parable of the Dishonest Manager (Luke 16:1-13)." 8.

merchants, usurers or tenants. Jeremias<sup>13</sup> notes that the debtors might be not only wholesale merchants but also tenants. However, I believe if they were merchants, it does not seem appropriate that the steward asks the debtors “how much do you owe my master?” For merchants the question is too blunt. When the balance happens to be against merchants, merchants might not have responded to an agent's summons in this fashion.<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, Derrett<sup>15</sup> says that the contracts were usurious and the debtors were usurers because their very large amounts show that something suspicious was afoot. However, I believe that if the debtors were usurers, the author must have alluded and referred to that fact for understanding of the audience. It is peculiar in an agricultural setting that the debtors were usurers.

I, as opposed to Jeremias and Derrett's claim, believe that the debtors were tenants, because it seems natural in the parable that we see the debtors as tenants. If the debtors were associated with a specific work, obviously the author would have alluded to it for understanding of the audience. There is no need to postulate such a complicated supposition that the parable itself gives no hint of. I believe that in view of the large amounts of the debtors' debts and the

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<sup>13</sup> Jeremias, *Parables*, 181. Jeremias notes: “the debtors are either tenants, who have to deliver a specified portion (a half, a third, or a quarter) of the yield of their land in lieu of rent or wholesale merchants, who have given promissory notes for goods received.”

<sup>14</sup> Derrett, “Fresh Light on St Luke XVI,” 213. Derrett says: “Because merchants do not normally respond to an agent's summons in this fashion when the balance happens to be against them; they do not expect to be asked bluntly, ‘What do you owe?’; and are not kept standing while being questioned. The last point is conclusive.”

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

steward's expectation of hospitality, the debtors are the tenants who can afford to hire a steward.<sup>16</sup>

Our second question says: Are the debtors accomplices of the steward in reducing the debts? The key to the solution of this problem depends on whether the debtors knew about the steward's dismissal or not. I think it is justified to assume that the debtors are not accomplices, because in my view, the debtors have no knowledge of the steward's dismissal. If the debtors had known of the steward's dismissal, they would not have cooperated with the steward's plan. If they had known of the steward's dismissal, and still cooperate, then they stand to create a very serious rift in the friendship with their master, and in all likelihood will no longer rent land from him.<sup>17</sup> Rather it appears that the debtors would have believed that the steward is still the legal agent of the master, and so cooperated with him without suspicion.

### **5-3. The reducing**

These reductions come, as it were, abruptly and unexpectedly, but are accepted naturally by the debtors. This is because such cases were not unusual. The remission of debt had been put into effect due to damage from harmful insects, a bad harvest, a natural disaster, and war at that time.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Moxnes notes that the debtors are not the tenants, because the tenants do not need a steward. H. Moxnes, *Economy of kingdom: Social Conflict and Economic Relation in Luke's Gospel* (Philadelphia: Overtures to biblical Theology, 1988), 141.

<sup>17</sup> Bailey, *Poet and Peasant*, 99.

<sup>18</sup> J. Nolland, *Luke 9:21-18:34, WBC* (Dallas Texas: Word Books, Publisher, 1993), 640.

In that case, we can go on to the next question. Are the debts that the steward reduces the component pieces of interest? In connection with this, there are two main opinions represented. First, the steward reduced the interest<sup>19</sup> on the principal that belongs to his master. This opinion has been proposed by Derrett. Derrett assumes on the basis of the Jewish law of agency and usury that the steward is perhaps making usuries that his master does not sanction.

Regarding the steward as a usurer, Derrett explains how to evade the law relating to biblical usury. The quantities of oil and wheat are not the rental quantities from the rich man in reality, but the increased amount shrewdly, without transgressing the law relating to biblical usury (Deut 15:7-8;23:20-21, Exod 22:24, Lev 25:36-37). For example, in case someone borrows fifty gallons of olive oil from others, if the creditor makes the debtor write “the borrowed principal=fifty gallons of olive oil, interest=fifty gallons of olive oil, repayment=the principal, fifty gallons of olive oil + interest, fifty gallons of olive oil=a hundred gallons of olive oil” on the contract, it is to disobey the law relating to biblical usury. But if the same contents are written on the contract as follows: “borrowed money=a hundred

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<sup>19</sup> Derrett, “Fresh Light on St Luke XVI,” 215. Derrett’s survey shows that the rate of interest was decided depending on the order of risk: “the order of risk, for which the borrower pays, is from lowest to highest, (i) jewels, gold and silver, fruits (perishables), silk, and wool; (ii) base metals; (iii) oils, wines, clarified butter (even now notoriously subject to adulteration), raw sugar, salt, and soil.” On the basis of the Indian law, Derrett says that the interest on oils would be 100 per cent per annum at that time and the interest on wheat 25-30 per cent per annum. But Kloppenborg notes that according to the loan documents of Egypt, the standard rate for wheat and barley was 50 per cent. Kloppenborg, “The Dishonoured Master (Luke 16:1-8a)” 483.

gallons of olive oil, repayment=a hundred gallons of olive oil”, it is not to disobey the law relating to biblical usury.

In addition, Derrett claims that the creditor, the rich man in the parable, is repaid monetary debts of the debtors in the parable and then has the debtors repay in crops, in order not to transgress the law relating to biblical usury.

Under these circumstances, when the steward found himself being about to be dismissed, he rebated the interest component of the loans to the debtors. Even though the steward deprived his master of his property, the usurious component violated God’s law and was thus tainted. Accordingly, the steward’s action in reducing the usurious component saves his master from dishonour to violate God’s law.

I do not agree with Derrett’s claims for three reasons. First, it is unlikely that materials in the 3rd century AD apply to the 1st century AD. We have no choice but to admit that it is impossible to reconstruct the social and economic situation in the times of Jesus times with much confidence, since information about Jesus’ time that we can get is very little. Even though cultural and social customs are shaped over a long period of time, it contains limits and elements of risk. Second, it is not obvious that the parable portrays the situation of a loan. Derrett argues, in connection with the reason that the debtors are usurers, not renters, that tenancy is not in view, since “the vital point is that under any such agreement the obligee owes nothing at all until the time for payment (for

example, the harvest) arrives.”<sup>20</sup> But as Bailey<sup>21</sup> rightly points out, Derrett fails to notice that the steward is not collecting the amounts. The amounts are not due to be repaid until harvest, but they are owing from the day the agreement is signed. Moreover, in view of Luke 19:23, not only do loans not violate the law relating to biblical usury but loans were also common at that time. Accordingly, it is unreasonable that a loan applies to the usury the Bible prohibits. Therefore, the parable is most likely to depict the situation of a rent rather than that of a loan. Finally, the audiences would not have assumed that the steward is reducing the interest component of the debts. If the amounts reduced represented the interest component, this would have been made clear in the text, in order to make the audience aware of the fact.

The second main opinion regarding the reducing of the debts proposes that the steward reduces his own profit. This opinion has been proposed by Fitzmyer. He notes that the steward was making usurious loans and the interest component belonged to him. This is how the steward’s action in no way damages his master. For this reason, the master could afford to praise his steward, while the steward could gain favours from the debtors.

I entirely disagree with Fitzmyer’s opinion, for two reasons. First, it is an exorbitant amount to view the reduced debts as commission of the steward. According to Jeremias<sup>22</sup>, the amounts that each of the two

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<sup>20</sup> Derrett, “Fresh Light on St Luke XVI,” 213, n. 8.

<sup>21</sup> Bailey, *Poet and Peasant*, 92–93.

<sup>22</sup> Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, 181.

debtors were reduced was approximately five hundred denarii which correspond to wages of two years in that time. In addition, the number of men connected with the obligation was more than two men. This is obvious when we see “ἕνα ἕκαστον (one by one)” in verse 5 and “ἑτέρω (to another)” in verse 7. Taking all that into consideration, it is an excessively large amount as commission of the steward. Second, verses 5 and 7 make clear (how much do you owe my master?), that the debtors owed the master. Bailey<sup>23</sup> notes that none of commissions that the steward receives appears in the accounts and the steward is likely to receive a little something ‘under the table’ from most of his master’s renters.

Above all, in view of the steward’s soliloquy in verse 4, decisive reason to oppose Derrett and Fitzmyer’s claims is that the motive of reducing debts is not what keeps the law relating to biblical usury. The steward’s wish is only to gain favours for himself and a safe future from the debtors by reducing the debts.

## 6. Verse 8a

### 6-1. Who is ὁ κύριος?

Scholars have been arguing the problem of ‘who is ὁ κύριος’ for a long time. The reason scholars concentrate on the problem is because the parable’s meaning changes largely depending on whether ὁ κύριος is the

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<sup>23</sup> Bailey, *Poet and Peasant*, 89.



master in the parable of Jesus.

With regard to the problem, Jeremias<sup>24</sup> claims that **ὁ κύριος** is Jesus on the basis of the following two reasons:

- (1) “how could he have praised his deceitful steward?” namely, **ὁ κύριος** presents another person, not the master of the parable, since the master of the parable can not praise his unjust steward.
- (2) compared with Luke 18:6, the word **ὁ κύριος** is the way of Luke presenting Jesus, namely, “the designation of Jesus as **ὁ κύριος** in the narrative, which occurs a further seventeen times in Luke, is almost a characteristic feature of the Third Gospel. All instances derive from the pre-Lucan tradition.”

I completely disagree with Jeremias’ claims for the following reasons. First of all, with regard to Jeremias’ first question, “how could a master who dismisses a steward for wasting his goods in verse 2 praise him in verse 8?”, I believe that it is possible to support the view that the steward’s actions have an aspect of praise. It is possible that the master praises his steward, because the epithet **ἀδικίας** (dishonest) and the clause **ὅτι φρονίμως ἐποίησεν** (because he had acted shrewdly) distinguish the actions of the steward and restrict the master’s commendation.<sup>25</sup> Even though the steward’s actions are unjust, it is worth praising that his

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<sup>24</sup> Jeremias, *Parables*, 45.

<sup>25</sup> Godet also notes that the master’s commendation is restricted by the **ἀδικίας** epithet (dishonest) and the **ὅτι** clause. Godet, *A Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke*, 381.

actions are shrewd in the face of a crisis. Second, in connection with the absolute use of **κύριος** in Luke's gospel, as Bailey<sup>26</sup> rightly points out, within the parabolic material this possibility that **κύριος** in Luke's gospel refers to Jesus vanishes. Third, in relation to the analogy between Luke 16:8 and Luke 18:6<sup>27</sup>, I believe that the parables differ from each other in the situation. In the parable of the unjust judge the story of the parable actually ends with verse 5. In addition to that, there is no problem in seeing that **ὁ κύριος** in verse 6 indicates Jesus because the word **κύριος** does not appear throughout the parable. The parable of the unjust steward however, has already been using **ὁ κύριος** in verse 3 and 5. Moreover, in the case of the parable of the unjust steward, the first person in verse 9 which obviously points to Jesus shows a clear difference from the third person in verse 8. A clear indication which informs a new beginning exists in verse 9. Accordingly, it is natural to see **ὁ κύριος** in verse 8 as the master. Finally, as Jeremias' claims, if we see **ὁ κύριος** as Jesus, the parable ends without a conclusion. In other words, the parable ends in smoke without the answer to how the master dealt with the dishonest steward. All things considered, I believe that it should be natural that **ὁ κύριος** in Luke 16:8a relates to **ὁ κύριος** in verses

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<sup>26</sup> Bailey, *Poet and Peasant*, 103. His survey shows that of the five cases in the parabolic material three cases present the master of the story and two cases Jesus.

<sup>27</sup> In relation to the analogy between Luke 16:8 and Luke 18:6, Fitzmyer asserts: "however, the situation in chap. 16 is not the same as that in chap. 18. There is an earlier mention of *kyrios* in 16:3, 5, whereas there is nothing similar in Lk 18. Moreover, in Lk 12:42, although the first instance of the absolute use of *ho kyrios* refers to Jesus, the second one is generic and does not refer to Him at all."

Fitzmyer, "The Story of the Dishonest Manager," 27f., n8.

3 and 5. As most scholars<sup>28</sup> claim, therefore, it is reasonable to include verse 8a in the parable rather than exclude it.

## 6-2. The dishonest steward

First of all, with regard to τὸν οἰκονόμον τῆς ἀδικίας, I'd like to mention that ἀδικίας in the genitive is an instance of the use of the genitive for an adjective as in Hebrew. Kosmala<sup>29</sup> insists τῆς ἀδικίας is a genitival expression, not the equivalent of an adjective and so τῆς ἀδικίας belongs to a certain category of people. I partly agree with his claim, but I disagree with his denial of the adjectival force of the genitive here. According to Zerwick,<sup>30</sup> the genitive is grammatically a 'Hebrew genitive' standing for the adjective ἀδικίας. The words, τῆς ἀδικίας therefore, are translated as an adjective such as "the unjust steward" or "the dishonest steward."

What we should consider next is why the steward was called a "dishonest steward"? As I have pointed out, it is not clear whether the

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<sup>28</sup> Bailey, *Poet and Peasant*, 102-103; Fitzmyer, "The Story of the Dishonest Manager," 170-175; Topel, "On the Injustice," 218; M. Barth, "The Dishonest Steward and his Lord, Reflections on Luke 16:1-13," *In From Faith to Faith* (Pittsburgh: Pickwick, 1979), 64-65; Scott, *Hear then the Parable*, 258; Donahue, *The Gospel in Parable*, 163; M. A. Tolbert, *Perspectives on Parable: An Approach to Multiple Interpretation* (Association of Baptist Professors of Religion/T. & T. Clark, 1978), 84; D. M. Parrott, "Dishonest Steward (Luke 16:1-8a)," *NTS* 37 (1991) 502; Marshall, *Luke*, 620; Robert H. Stein, *An Introduction to the Parables of Jesus*, 107.

<sup>29</sup> H. Kosmala, "The Parable of the Unjust Steward in the Light of Qumran," *Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute* 3 (1964) 114.

<sup>30</sup> M. Zerwick, *Biblical Greek*, (Rome: Pontifical Institute, 1963) 40. He says that "it is due to the fact that its scope and use in Biblical Greek is extended, owing to Semitic influence, to many expressions in which the Greeks used not a genitive but an adjective." He cites τὸν οἰκονόμον τῆς ἀδικίας and τοῦ μαμωνᾶ τῆς ἀδικίας in verses 8 and 9 as the best-known examples of this usage.

steward is called “dishonest” because of his previous action before his dismissal in verses 1-2 or his action in reducing the debts in verses 3-5.

We notice too that the steward is called “dishonest” not when he receives the notice of the dismissal but only when the master becomes aware of the fact that he reduced the debts of the debtors. Even though the master did not call the steward “dishonest” before the notice of dismissal, he does not allude to the fact that the steward’s action is not unjust. Rather verses 1-2 allude to the fact that the steward’s action is unjust, and not only the steward but also the master admits the fact. Because had the steward’s action not been unjust, the master would not have dismissed his steward and the steward himself would obviously have complained and excused himself. The steward tries to search for the way of his own life instead of an excuse. In this respect, the steward acknowledges that he was unjust in service of his master. The participle *διασκοπίζων* supports well the fact that the steward is unjust.

I believe that on the basis of Lukan general usage, the epithet *ἀδικίας* was used in relation to the whole character of the steward including the past and present action rather than his specific action. Luke used *ἀδικίας* four times in his Gospel (13:27; 16:8,9; 18:6)<sup>31</sup>, and it is always used in connection with a whole character rather than a specific action. Particularly what arouses our interest is the word ‘dishonest’ in Luke 18:6 that describes the unjust judge. The word ‘dishonest’ is added to describe the unjust judge when he grants the request of the widow.

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<sup>31</sup> Bailey, *Poet and Peasant*, 96-97.

This shows us that the word ‘dishonest’ is connected with the judge’s general character rather than a specific action. It can be confirmed that Luke uses the word ‘dishonest’ as a common meaning when in verses 10–11 the word **ἄδικός** is used in relation to a general person and possessions. If my opinion is right, I do not think it matters whether it is before the dismissal that the word **ἀδικίας** is added to the steward or after the dismissal. According to Luke’s usage, the word **ἀδικίας** is used in connection with the steward’s general and whole character including his past and present action.<sup>32</sup>

### **6-3. The master’s praise**

In order to solve the problem of the master’s praise, many solutions to the problem have been proposed by several scholars. Here I will deal only with the Irony solution of many solutions to the problem of the master’s praise, because I have already previously dealt with the others in chapter 2. On the basic premise that the master in no way praises the steward, the Irony solution has been proposed by P. G. Bretscher, D. R. Fletcher, F. E. Williams and I. J. Du Plessis.

P. G. Bretscher and D. R. Fletcher attempt to solve the problem of the master’s praise with the Irony approach to the parable. Bretscher

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<sup>32</sup> H. Kosmala, “The Parable of the Unjust Steward in the Light of Qumran,” 114. He claims as follows: “this is not a description of his particular character or of his particular deed, but an expression which assigns him to a certain group or category of people.” He also claims that the steward is not the unrighteous steward, but the steward of unrighteousness, contending in the light of Qumran, namely, those who live in this world where the unjust principal dominates. Accordingly, the words “the steward of unrighteousness” is the eschatological term which refers to the world under evil authority.

contends that Jesus conveys his warning message by means of irony, especially in verses 8-9. Bretscher<sup>33</sup> says:

“You are surely clever!” he (Jesus) might say. “You have displayed real ingenuity, yes, the very highest wisdom this world knows—the wisdom of disguising your sin, pretending righteousness, shrugging off the anger of God, quieting a guilty conscience by gaining the approval of men, showing off a few good works to cover a heart full of evil.”

Bretscher contends that we must see not only verses 8b-9 but also verse 8a as an ironical expression which has a negative meaning. In this case, the meaning of verse 9 is as follows:

“Go ahead, then!: Use all God's gifts to you for your own unholy and ungodly purposes! Use them to make friends of the sinners of this world! ... Let them be your judges, let them open the gates of everlasting habitations to you!”<sup>34</sup>

In conclusion, Bretscher notes that the lesson of the parable is the folly of sinners who avoid repentance by wisdom.

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<sup>33</sup> P. G. Bretscher, “The Parable of the Unjust Steward—A New Approach to Luke 16:1-9,” *CTM* 22 (1951) 757.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 759.

Fletcher<sup>35</sup> notes that a straight reading of verse 9 does not fit the general tenor of Jesus' teaching about a radical distinction between his disciples and the world, contending that irony is the key which unlocks the riddle of the Unjust Steward. Fletcher believes that it is in the contrast between mammon in verse 9 and the kingdom of God that the clue to the presence of irony is found:

“Make friends for yourselves,” he seems to taunt; “imitate the example of the steward; use the unrighteous mammon; surround yourselves with the type of insincere, self-interested friendship it can buy; how far will this carry you when the end comes and you are finally dismissed ?”<sup>36</sup>

Fletcher<sup>37</sup> concludes that the theme of the parable is a demand for faithfulness and obedience, particularly in the face of the corrosive influence of unrighteous mammon.

Williams<sup>38</sup> and Du Plessis also see the parable as ironically. Particularly, Du Plessis<sup>39</sup> notes that **φρονίμως** in verse 8a is used ironically, showing Paul's usages to it in 2 Corinthians 11:9 and Romans

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<sup>35</sup> D. R. Fletcher, “The Riddle of the Unjust Steward: Is Irony the Key?” *JBL* 82 (1963) 23.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 30

<sup>38</sup> F. E. Williams, “Is almsgiving the point of the Unjust Steward?” *JBL* 83, 1964, 293–297.

<sup>39</sup> Du Plessis, “Philanthropy or Sarcasm?—Another Look at the Parable of the Dishonest Manager (Luke 16:1–13).” 10, 13. He says that “the shrewdness of the manager is used ironically to encourage the disciples to show the same enthusiasm for their eternal interests.”

11:25 and 12:16. In the light of the irony in verse 9 the meaning is as follows:

“Make friends by applying your money or worldly possessions and find out whether it can earn you eternal life! See if these ‘friends’ (=money and possessions) will receive you in their ‘eternal home’.”

Du Plessis<sup>40</sup> concludes that what the narrator wants to say is not the correct application of money but a call for the utmost zeal for true discipleship, refuting the exegetes to try to interpret the parable in the light of the pronouncements in verses 9 and 10–13.

However, I believe that the ironical understanding of verse 8–9 distorts the natural flow of the story and seem to be a conclusion attached by force. It is particularly doubtful that the audiences could have understood the ironical meaning of the parable, especially in the light of the fact that the parable has no allusion to irony. The master’s praise is not irony but commendation.

If that is the case, then what is it that the master praises? This problem is a difficult one and can be a cause for embarrassment. Yet, it is not a problem that can not be explained. In connection to the master’s praise, verse 8a says, using a cause conjunction “because he had acted shrewdly.” Written like this, the text itself connects the master’s praise to the shrewd steward’s action, not to his faithfulness and loyalty.

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<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.



Accordingly, we can not think that the master is ethically sanctioning and commending the steward's action. Rather he conversely stipulates that the steward's action is 'dishonest'. We are left with the dilemma of how a person who cannot be ethically approved can nevertheless be commended in other aspects. This problem is not impossible to resolve in actuality. Even though we cannot ethically approve of someone's action, we can commend someone's action.<sup>41</sup> The master treats a certain aspect of the steward's action as shrewdness and so it is the object of praise. The actions themselves are fraudulent and dishonest, but the wisdom underlying them is praiseworthy.<sup>42</sup>

It is not that the master has no choice but to accept the result because of his honour, it is just that he can accept the result and praise the steward for his generosity. After all, the master responds generously more than the steward expected, and the steward must have been surprised at the master's generous respond.

#### 6-4. The meaning of the key word φρονίμως and ἐποίησεν

The word corresponding to φρονίμως in the Old Testament is חָכְמָה, and In LXX the word חָכְמָה is translated into φρονησις and σοφια. The word in the Old Testament is used for a nonmoral cleverness and skill deployed in

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<sup>41</sup> A. J. Hultgren, *The Parables of Jesus, A Comentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 147. He shows examples which occasionally happened in the ancient world.

<sup>42</sup> Many scholars agree with the distinction between dishonesty and wisdom of actions: W. Grundmann, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1969) 320; Manson, *Sayings*, 292; A. A. Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. Luke, ICC* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1922), 384; Stein, *Parables*, 111; R. C. Trench, *Notes on the Parables of our Lord* (London: Macmillan, 1882), 441.

self-preservation. Accordingly, the meaning of this word in the parable is the cleverness and skill deployed in self-preservation. More importantly, I believe that the word has eschatological overtones. Jeremias<sup>43</sup> claims that **φρονίμως** is the same as he who has grasped the eschatological situation, citing H. Preisker's definition of **φρονίμως**. Fitzmyer<sup>44</sup> who agrees with Jeremias, notes as follows:

“the adverb is used precisely in this eschatological sense in the parable. The manager stands for the Christian confronted with the crises that the kingdom brings in the lives of men.”

In relation to the meaning of **ἐπόλησεν**, as Preisker<sup>45</sup> notes, in the New Testament **ἔπαινος** signifies the acceptance or approval of the righteous by God alone in the last judgment. Particularly the idea that at the last judgment the conduct of believers, in contrast to that of the wicked, will be approved and vindicated by God, also lies in Mt 25:21, 34ff.

In the light of theological views on the words, I believe that these words have eschatological overtones. To sum up, confronting the great catastrophe, the steward's decisive decision is his wisdom. In other words, decisive action in the face of the coming of the kingdom of God, is wisdom.

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<sup>43</sup> Jeremias, *Parables*, 46, n83.

<sup>44</sup> Fitzmyer, “Manager,” 32, n. 21.

<sup>45</sup> H. Preisker, *TDNT*, 2.587.

## 7. Verse 8b

### 7-1. Is verse 8b part of the parable?

Is verse 8b part of the parable? With regard to this question, several proposals have been presented by scholars, such as an addition by the early Church, Lukan redaction, and an independent logion of Jesus appended by Luke or his source.

Jeremias<sup>46</sup> argues that verse 8b is a part of the series of additional interpretations that stretches from verse 8b to verse 13, and that verse 8b was added by the primitive church in order to explain the surprising praise of Jesus. He continues to argue that the parable would have been addressed to the unconverted but the primitive Church shifted not only the emphasis of the parable from the eschatological to the hortatory application but also the target of application from the unconverted to the disciples, so that the instruction of the parable applied to the primitive Church.<sup>47</sup>

C. H. Dodd<sup>48</sup> argues that the evangelist has appended a whole series of morals to the very difficult parable of the Unjust Steward (Lk 16:1-7):

“(1) the sons of this age are more prudent in relation to their own time than the sons of light, (2) make friends by means of

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<sup>46</sup> Jeremias, *Parables*, 46-47, 108.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>48</sup> Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom*, 26.

unrighteous wealth, (3) if you have not been honest with unrighteous wealth, who will entrust you with the true riches.”

I. J. Du Plessis maintains that verse 8b is not a part of the parable but Lukan redaction, citing Herbert Braun’s suggestion that “the expressions were not part of the general Palestinian intellectual climate of the first century.”<sup>49</sup> John Nolland<sup>50</sup> also maintains that verse 8b is the redaction of Luke. He claims that there must be a transposition into a different frame of reference in order to challenge us to follow the steward’s model. For this reason, he notes that verse 8b was redacted by Luke. In Luke the sons of light become aware of the future judgment through the knowledge of God. Luke derives instruction from the parable that in spite of such knowledge, the Christian is less effective in coping with a crisis than the children of this world. The challenge here is that it takes shrewdness to be aware of and capture an opportunity in the midst of a crisis.

Fitzmyer<sup>51</sup> in contrast to Jeremias and Dodd, sees verse 8b as an independent logion of Jesus, because it follows strangely on the parable itself and generalizes its meaning. He claims as follows:

“the saying preserved here represents an independent logion of Jesus which has been joined to the parable (either by Luke or

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<sup>49</sup> Du Plessis, “Philanthropy or Sarcasm?—Another look at the Parable of the Dishonest Manager (Luke 16:1–13),” 11.

<sup>50</sup> John Nolland, *Luke 9:21–18:34*, 801.

<sup>51</sup> Fitzmyer, “Manager,” 28f.

his source). For it follows strangely on verse 8a, and indeed on the whole preceding parable.”

I, however, believe that verse 8b is original and Jesus is the speaker for the following reasons. First and foremost, we have to inquire whether verse 8b is the saying of Jesus. The phraseology of 8b is distinctively Palestinian according to the survey of Qumran texts,<sup>52</sup> and the Palestinian Church would have understood the parable and would not have been nervous about it. The fact that the thought here is Palestinian and not Hellenistic favours Jesus as the speaker. Second, there is nothing strange about the presence of this comment at this place in the text. This comment not only challenges the children of light to outdo the children of this world in wisdom, but also provides a vivid and apt illustration of the very quality in which the sons of this age surpass the sons of light, showing generally how shrewd the people of this world are. Verse 8b is Jesus' own commentary on the parable. He explains the master's praise in verse 8a.<sup>53</sup> Verse 8 makes it clear that Jesus endorses the master's

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<sup>52</sup> Kloppenborg, “The Dishonoured Master,” 476. He is doubtful whether the phraseology of 8b was used at the times of Jesus: “the saying evokes a social division – Christians versus outsiders–which, in spite of the occurrence of the term children of light at Qumran, is imaginable only in a post-Easter setting.” Marshall, however, stressed this point on the basis of the usage of the expression the sons of light in the Qumran literature, seeing the expression in verse 8b as the developed expression from the Jewish expression. I. H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*. NIGTC (Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1978) 621.

<sup>53</sup> As most interpreters understand, the sense of *hoti* in verse 8b is explicative. Even though Wellhausen contends that the second *hoti* in verse 8 is equivalent to the Hebrew *lemor*, introducing direct speech. As Creed rightly points out, it is very hard not to translate *hoti* as ‘for’ or ‘because’ in this context. J. Wellhausen, *Das Evangelium Lucae übersetzt und erklärt* (Berlin: Reimer, 1904), 86.

praise.

## 7-2. The Meaning of the Comparison.

According to Marshall, the noun οἱ υἱοὶ with the genitive is the common Semitic expression for “people belonging to a particular class.”<sup>54</sup> I, therefore, believe that the class of people of which the steward, the master and the debtors are members, belongs to “this age.” This age denotes the present world with its transitoriness, imperfection, sin, and death. It is characterized by *adikia* in verse 8a, and contrasted with those who look for the age to come.<sup>55</sup> On the other hand, the other class of people mentioned by Jesus in verse 8b is “the sons of the light.” As Marshall<sup>56</sup> points out, the phrase “the sons of the light” has been used by the Qumranians as a self-designation. Jesus also used the phrase in order to distinguish the class of people who belong to the age to come from the class of people who belong to the present age. The sons of light are those that believe the gospel of the kingdom preached by Jesus, and that belong to the age to come at the same time. The sons of light, as opposed to the sons of this age, are no longer worldly in their goals, methods and values.

I believe that verse 8b has two meanings and two functions on the basis of above exegesis. The two meanings which verse 8b has are a rebuke and a challenge. Worldly people, the sons of this age are wiser in

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<sup>54</sup> Marshall, *Luke*, 621.

<sup>55</sup> Creed, *Luke*, 204.

<sup>56</sup> Marshall, *Luke*, 621.

dealing with their own kind but Jesus' disciples, the sons of light are not wiser to their eschatological situation which come from Jesus' preaching. Jesus therefore, rebukes his disciples for being less alert to their eschatological situation than the dishonest, worldly steward who faced the prospect of dismissal. At the same time, Jesus challenges them not only to outdo the wisdom of the sons of this age but also to have greater wisdom or foresight in their affairs on grounds of becoming aware of the eschatological crisis.

Verse 8b then has two functions: first, a sanction of the master's praise, and second, it functions as the transition from verse 8b to verse 9. Verse 8b makes it clear that Jesus sanctions the master's praise. At the same time, Jesus begins to apply the point of the parable to the disciples in verse 8b. The specific form the disciples' wisdom is to take is not indicated in verse 8b, but in verse 9-13. In this respect, verse 8b functions as the transition from verse 8b to verse 9.

## **8. Verse 9**

### **8-1. Is verse 9 an original part of the parable?**

This verse is probably the most difficult one in the parable, and so special care should be taken with verse 9. First of all, in dealing with this verse, we have to consider whether verse 9 is an original part of the parable or not. Most interpreters agree that verse 9 deals with the use of material possessions and money, but over its origin, the opinions vary

from interpreter to interpreter, such as the origin from primitive church,<sup>57</sup> or Lukan redaction that put together Jesus' words from other contexts,<sup>58</sup> or Pre-Lucan tradition,<sup>59</sup> or Luke's own conclusion.<sup>60</sup> The grounds of these claims are as follows:

Jeremias<sup>61</sup> claims that the primitive church applied the parable to the Christian community and shifted the emphasis from the eschatological to the hortatory application, noting the abrupt transition from the third person in verse 8 to the first in verse 9 and an entirely different application from verse 8a<sup>62</sup>. He mentions that the primitive church also shifted the object of application from the unconverted to the disciples.

Bailey<sup>63</sup> claims that verses 9–13 are Jesus' words put together from other contexts by Lukan redaction, noting an unusual word order, **ὑμῖν λέγω**<sup>64</sup> which indicates a transition to a new subject and a break in thought. He asserts that it should be read and interpreted apart from the parable in verses 1–8 because Luke 16:9–13 has its own integrity.

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<sup>57</sup> Jeremias, *Parables*, 45–46.

<sup>58</sup> Bailey, *Poet and Peasant*, 116–117; Grundmann, *Lukas*, 319; Via, *Parables*, 156.

<sup>59</sup> E. E. Ellis, *The Gospel of Luke*, NCB (Grand Rapids/London: Eerdmans/Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1974), 198; Fitzmyer, *Luke X–XXIV*, 1105.

<sup>60</sup> Topel, “The Injustice of the Unjust Steward (Luke 16:1–8),” 220.

<sup>61</sup> Jeremias, *Parables*, 45–46.

<sup>62</sup> Jeremias see verse 8a as the beginning of Jesus' application. He mentions that the point of Jesus' application in verse 8a is eschatological as opposed to the hortatory of the wise use of money in verse 9. Jeremias, *Parables*, 46–47.

<sup>63</sup> Bailey, *Poet and Peasant*, 116–117.

<sup>64</sup> Jeremias points out that this unusual expression, **ὑμῖν λέγω** is characteristic of Luke's style. Jeremias, *Parables*, 45, but Bailey says that **ὑμῖν λέγω** has Semitic features with non-Semitic construction, viewing non-Lucan as verse 9. Bailey, *Poet and Peasant*, 110, n105. According to Tople, of the forty-two uses of **ὑμῖν λέγω** in Luke only two have **έγω** (Luke 11:9 and here). Topel, “The Injustice of the Unjust Steward (Luke 16:1–8),” 220, n 11.



Fitzmyer<sup>65</sup> claims that verse 9 has been fashioned in the pre-Lucan tradition in imitation of verse 4, seeing verse 9 as pre-Lucan expression. He notes that verse 9 was joined to the parable because of the catchword bonds in “manager of dishonesty” in verse 8a and “mammon of dishonesty” in verse 9 as well as in “prudently” in verse 8a and “more prudent” in verse 8b, along the same lines of Michaelis and Via.<sup>66</sup>

Topel<sup>67</sup> views verse 9 as Luke’s own conclusion, refuting Hiers’ claim that views verse 9 as indications that verse 9 is originally part of the parable through parallels between verses 8 and 9. Rather he views verse 9 as a sign of artistic editing, seeing *hymḗn* before *lego* as Lucan.

Here we could divide the characteristics common to their contentions into two categories such as a change in person and the unusual word order of *ὑμῖν λέγω*, and a break and a transition in thought. I intend to show that verse 9 is the original connection to the parable by refuting the two categories of their contentions.

First, I view the opening words of verse 9 as a solemn conclusion, with a transition toward application. In this case, the changing of person indicates an emphatic change of person, and indicates a conclusion for the purpose of summary and application, rather than a change of subject.<sup>68</sup> The person’s transition from third person to first person in verse 9, is an indication of concrete application that Jesus compares his

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<sup>65</sup> Fitzmyer, *Luke X–XXIV*, 1105.

<sup>66</sup> Via, *The Parables*, 156, He sees Luke 16:9, 16:10–12 and 16:13 as not being connected either with the parable or with each other, assuming they first were linked together by Luke on the basis of the catchword “mammon.”

<sup>67</sup> Topel, “The Injustice of the Unjust Steward (Luke 16:1–8),” 220, n20.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid*, 218, n 11. Topel points out the case without a change of subject in Luke 11:9.

disciples to the steward rather than of evidence of editing. Second, I believe that verse 9 is not a break and a transition in thought, but a continuation of thought. The parallels between verse 4 and verse 9, as well as verse 8 and verse 9, indicate a continuation of thought and not evidence of editing. Jesus uses the concepts and the words in verses 1-8 as it is to verse 9 in order to apply the parable to the audience. Third, I believe that there is no other context in the New Testament where verse 9 fits better than here. The parallels between verse 4 and verse 9 bear out argument that verse 9 fits here as well as a continuation of thought. In the parable, the steward attempts to secure friends by means of the material goods. Jesus similarly says that the audience should make friends by means of the unrighteous mammon in verse 9. The steward also hopes that the friends will receive him into their homes when he is dismissed. In verse 9, Jesus says that “so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.” Verse 9 therefore, is closely aligned to the parable. Fourth, I believe that such a difficult parable cannot have ended at verse 8 without any application. If the parable does not have verse 9, the prudent action as the point of the parable remains vague. Taking all that into consideration, I believe that verse 9 was originally a part of the parable.

## **8-2. Make friends for yourselves**

With regard to the friends, interpreters view it roughly as reference to

the following: Angels, personified almsgiving and the poor. Jeremias<sup>69</sup> argues that the “friends” in verse 9a may mean the angels, and “they may receive” in verse 9b is a circumlocution for God on the basis of the fact that the third person plural alludes to the angels as a circumlocution for God.<sup>70</sup> In other words, the “friends” are most likely to be God. While, Williams<sup>71</sup> suggests that the friends are “a personification of the almsdeeds which are performed with the mammon of unrighteousness,” citing Rabbinic saying which term almsdeeds or other good works in the second century AD.

But I identify the friends as the poor<sup>72</sup> who are helped by charity. Verse 9 continues the imagery of the parable of the dishonest steward making friends for himself. This view is also borne out by the wider context in Luke Gospel which emphasizes a concern for the poor. The scope of charitable activity and object are certainly not restricted to almsgiving and Christians alone. The sphere of charitable activity and object include all works of mercy and charity to those in need.

### 8-3. By means of unrighteous mammon

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<sup>69</sup> Jeremias, *Parables*, 46, n85. According to Manson, “in the Rabbinical writings it is a common way of avoiding the mention of the divine name to use the verb in the third person plural, just as in this verse.” Manson, *Sayings*, 293.

<sup>70</sup> Zerwick, *Biblical Greek*, 236. Zerwick explains as follows: “the theological passive is a name given to the passive used in order to avoid directly naming God as agent.”

<sup>71</sup> Williams, “Is Almsgiving the Point of the Unjust Steward?” 295.

<sup>72</sup> Most interpreters view the friends in verse 9 as the poor. E.g., Plummer, *Luke*, 385; Grundmann, *Lukas*, 321; Marshall, *Luke*, 621; L. Morris, *The Gospel according to St. Luke, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 249; R. H. Hiers, “Friends By Unrighteous Mammon: The Eschatological Proletariat (Luke 16:9),” *JAAR* 38 (1970), 34-36.

The noun **μαμμωνᾶς** which is from either Hebrew *māmmôn* or Aramaic *māmmônā* is Semitic. Although the noun **μαμμωνᾶς** does not appear in the Old Testament, it emerges in Qumran literature both in Hebrew and in Aramaic. It is also found in later targumic and rabbinic traditions. In the New Testament, the noun **μαμμωνᾶς** occurs only four times (Luke 16: 9, 11, 13 and Matt 6:24). Even though the etymology<sup>73</sup> of the word is uncertain, its use in the literature of the rabbis and of Qumran makes clear that it has the standard meanings of wealth, money, or property. Mammon means money in the widest sense, all kinds of possessions, wealth in any form.<sup>74</sup> This phrase, likewise, preceding verse 8 with **τῆς ἀδικίας** is an instance of Hebrew genitive.<sup>75</sup> This phrase can be translated “unrighteous mammon.”

What we have to consider next is what “unrighteous mammon” means precisely? In relation to answers to this question, we can divide it into three categories. First, unrighteous mammon emphasizes the unrighteousness and injustice often associated with the acquisition of wealth.<sup>76</sup> Second, this expression focuses more on the way wealth is used than on the way it is acquired, that is, it is often used for the wrong purposes.<sup>77</sup> Third, this expression is a reference to the deceptive and

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<sup>73</sup> D. E. Oakman, “The Radical Jesus: You Cannot Serve God and Mammon,” *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 34 (2004), 123. He suggests four roots for the etymological root of the word mammon and prefers the fourth: “(1) *MNH* or *MÔN*, to count or apportion, (2) *HMH*, to roar, hence in noun form, to represent a crowd or metaphorically abundance, (3) *TMN* to conceal, lay up, and (4) *’MN* to confirm, support, or trust.”

<sup>74</sup> Kosmala, “The Unjust Steward in the light of Qumran,” 116.

<sup>75</sup> Zerwick, *Biblical Greek*, 40.

<sup>76</sup> Grundmann, *Lukas*, 321; F. Hauck, “*mamōnas*,” *TDNT* 4.390; Morris, *Luke*, 249; Manson, *Sayings*, 293.

<sup>77</sup> W. F. Arndt, *The Gospel according to St. Luke* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1965), 458; J. J.

transitory nature of wealth. It cannot provide true happiness.<sup>78</sup>

However, I view *mamōnas tēs adikia* as having an eschatological nuance, much like *adikia* in verse 8a. The phrase, *mamōnas tēs adikia* is wealth which belongs to this evil world. It is part and parcel of this world and worldly wealth.<sup>79</sup> Although wealth is not inherently evil, wealth shares in the unrighteousness of this age as one of the influences of this age and is one of the main driving forces of a world antagonistic to God. At the same time, wealth can be connected to unrighteousness and injustice in how it is acquired and used. Furthermore, wealth is transitory because wealth will one day come to an end. Therefore, Jesus urges his disciples to use wealth for the kingdom of God.<sup>80</sup>

#### 8-4. So that when it fails

Most interpreters agree that the subject here is τοῦ μαμωνᾶ τῆς ἀδικίας in verse 9a, but there is substantial difference of opinion as to the meaning of ὅταν ἐκλίπη. Opinions include: it refers to the hour of death when money is no longer of any value,<sup>81</sup> the loss or giving away of riches in

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van. Oosterzee, *The Gospel according to Luke*. In J. P. Lange's Commentary on the Holy Scriptures Critical, Doctrinal and Homiletical (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1960), 247.

<sup>78</sup> Trench, *Parables*, 447; G. Schrenk, "adikia," *TDNT* 1.157.

<sup>79</sup> Kosmala, "The Unjust Steward in the light of Qumran," 116. He shows that it is equivalent to hon in the Qumran texts and *tēs adikia* points to the Qumran phrase *hōn hārīšāh* (the wealth of evil) rather than to the rabbinic *māmmōn šel šeqer* (possessions acquired dishonestly). Jeremias also views the unrighteous mammon as mammon that belongs to this evil world. Jeremias, *Parables*, 46, n86.

<sup>80</sup> E. Scheffler, *Suffering in Luke's Gospel*. *ATHANT* 81 (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1993). 65. He rightly says as follows: "making friends with mammon does not mean gathering more riches, but using riches as a means of service."

<sup>81</sup> Geldenhuys, *Luke*, 414 n16; Grundmann, *Lukas*, 321; Morris, *Luke*, 249.

the lifetime of the owner<sup>82</sup> or an allusion to the parousia.<sup>83</sup>

I believe that the phrase is an allusion to the parousia for the following reason. Although the phrase is implicated in both an individual death and the parousia, the phrase ὅταν ἐκλίπη alludes largely to the eschatological end of the present age. Moreover, this expression connected to the phrase τὰς αἰωνίους σκηνάς in verse 9, carries even more eschatological significance. Jesus, therefore, seems to be referring to the time when worldly wealth itself comes to an end or when the value of worldly wealth ceases. Jesus' exhortation here is that the disciples must use it wisely while they can.

#### 8-5. You will be welcomed

With respect to the subject of the verb δέξονται, there are two main viewpoints. First, the subject of the verb is God alone, as already mentioned above, because the third person plural here is a circumlocution for God's name.<sup>84</sup> Second, the subject is the friends of verse 9a who are the beneficiaries of Christian love and mercy.<sup>85</sup>

If the subject of δέξονται is God, it opens the question of how the action exhorted in verse 9a relates to God's receiving. Can the good works, the charitable use of wealth play an important role in gaining

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<sup>82</sup> H. Olshausen, *Biblical Commentary on the New Testament*. (New York: Sheldon, 1862). 63-70.

<sup>83</sup> Jeremias, *Parables*, 46; Kosmala, "The Unjust Steward in the light of Qumran," 118.

<sup>84</sup> Creed, *Luke*, 205; Geldenhuys, *Luke*, 414 n.17; Jeremias, *Parables*, 46 n.85; Manson, *Sayings*, 293; Marshall, *Luke*, 622; Morris, *Luke*, 249; Oesterley, *The Gospel Parables in the Light of the Jewish Background* (New York: MacMillan, 1936), 200.

<sup>85</sup> Arndt, *Luke*, 357; Godet, *Luke*, 2.165; B. T. D. Smith, *The Parables of the Synoptic Gospels. A Critical Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1939), 112.

salvation? Strictly speaking, good works are not sufficient grounds for salvation.<sup>86</sup> Good works, that is, the charitable use of wealth here demonstrate true faith and are not grounds for salvation. Nevertheless, God will reward those who use their wealth charitably, likewise other good works.

Personally, I believe that the subject is the friends, that is, the beneficiaries. My view is that the recipients of charity will testify to the genuineness of their benefactors' faith.<sup>87</sup> In view of Matt 25:31-46,<sup>88</sup> the benefactors will act only in conjunction with God.

## 8-6. Into the eternal habitations

What is the meaning of this phrase? Most interpreters understand the phrase εἰς τὰς αἰωνίους σκηνάς<sup>89</sup> as a reference to eternal life. The reception is into heaven or the consummated kingdom of God. In view of

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<sup>86</sup> Jesus clearly repudiates the idea that man's standing before God is determined on the basis of merit. The child of God can only say "we are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty" (Luke 17:10b, *NIV*). On the other hand, Jesus clearly says that forgiveness of sin is not merited but granted in Luke 18:9-14. Accordingly, with regard to reward, we should not read it into the notion of merit. The reward itself wholly belongs to grace. According to Jeremias, what the believer receives from God for faithful service is not merited pay but the gracious blessing of his heavenly Father which is meant to encourage him in his pilgrimage. Jeremias, *New Testament Theology* (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1971), 217. G. E. Ladd, *The Presence of the Future: The Eschatology of Biblical Realism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 300-302.

<sup>87</sup> Geldenhuys, *Luke*, 416.

<sup>88</sup> In relation to this, many interpreters point to Matt 25:31-46 as the best explanation of Luke 16:9. Godet, *Luke*, 2.165; B. A. Hooley and A. J. Mason, "Some Thoughts on the Parable of the Unjust Steward (Luke 16:1-9)," *AusBR* 6 (1958), 56; Plummer, *Luke*, 385; Trench, *Parable*, 449.

<sup>89</sup> The phrase occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, Old Testament or rabbinic literature. According to Michaelis, the word *skēnai* has the eschatological character. Michaelis, "*skēnē*," *TDNT* 7.378. The word σκηνάς describes the imagery of the tents of Abraham or of the wilderness wanderings which is being transferred here to the life to come like Canaan.

the eschatological character of the rest of verse 9 and of the parable as a whole, I believe that the reception is into the consummated kingdom of God. C. Edward Bowen, in contrast to this, views eternal tents as an ironic oxymoron.<sup>90</sup> I, however, believe that Jesus' emphasis on the word αἰώνιους is not an ironic oxymoron, but only contrasts the uncertain and transitory houses of the debtors in verse 4. Jesus thus makes it clear that his disciples are to act in a different manner and with different goals than the steward of the parable did, through the contrast between verses 4 and 9.<sup>91</sup>

As Plummer points out,<sup>92</sup> verse 9 is the key to the meaning of the parable. Jesus here gives his disciples positive and practical application. True wisdom is to use wealth in the service of love and with eternity in view.

## 9. Verses 10–13

### 9–1. The relationship between verses 10–13 and 1–9

First of all, we may question whether verses 10–13 are the words of

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<sup>90</sup> C. E. Bowen, "The Parable of the Unjust Steward: *Oikos* as the Interpretive Key," *ExpTim* 112, (2001), 315. Having studied *oikos* in the three parables in Luke 15 and of the parable of the Unjust Steward in 16:1–13, He says as follows:

"the steward failed to obtain for himself what he sought to earn, and instead obtained only a temporary, perishable abode. "Eternal tents" is intended to be an ironic oxymoron. Accordingly, Entrance into God's kingdom cannot be earned. Such entrance is obtained only by means of God's gracious welcome."

<sup>91</sup> The contrast between verses 4 and 9 has been noted by many interpreters. Hiers, "Friends," 32; S. J. Kistemaker, *The Parables of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 233; Michaelis, "skēnē," *TDNT* 7.379 n.62; Plummer, *Luke*, 386.

<sup>92</sup> Plummer, *Luke*, 380.



Jesus. Most interpreters believe that it is most likely that verses 10–13 are the authentic words of Jesus. Even many who view verses 10–13 as secondary agree with the fact that verses 10–13 are the authentic words of Jesus in many respects.<sup>93</sup> I believe that the terse style being characteristic of Jesus’ teaching and the parallels with the undisputed sayings of Jesus in Matt 25:21, 23 and Luke 19:17, indicate that these verses were not composed by Luke or someone else in the church.

Second, if this is so, are these verses original to the parable? In connection with the relationship of verses 10–13 and 1–9, there are two main opinions. One opinion is that verses 10–13 are original to the parable of the unjust steward.<sup>94</sup> The other opinion is that verses 10–13 are secondary.<sup>95</sup> It is quite likely that Luke or the pre-Lucan tradition has here appended words of Jesus from another context in order to elucidate this parable.<sup>96</sup> I, however, believe that these verses are original to the parable and are a negative secondary application, as have pointed out, to the preceding parable. That is because verbal connections exist between verses 1–9 and 10–13 such as, *mamōnas*, *adikia*, *adikias*. What is more, logical relationships exist between verses 1–9 and 10–13.

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<sup>93</sup> Bailey asserts that the author of verses 9–13 is Jesus, viewing it as a poem of one unit becoming independent of the preceding parable. With regard to why it is placed directly after the parable, he answers to this question as two reasons such as corrective function for the Non-Oriental and the close word associations with the parable. Bailey, *Poet and Peasant*, 110, 118, 116.

<sup>94</sup> Geldenhuys, *Luke*, 417; Godet, *Luke* 2.168; Plummer, *Luke*, 384–85.

<sup>95</sup> Fitzmyer, “Manager,” 29–30, and *Luke* 2.1105–6; Gächter, “The Parable of the Dishonest Steward after Oriental Conceptions” 131 n.40; Jeremias, *Parables*, 46, 110–11; Marshall, *Luke*, 623.

<sup>96</sup> Marshall contends that these verses have been appended to the parable by a compiler “on the basis of a broad community of theme.” Marshall, *Luke*, 622.

Although it appears as if verse 10 is unrelated to verses 1–9 because of the general nature of this principle, I believe that such a view is dispelled by verses 11–12, where verse 10 is applied to the use of worldly wealth.

## 9–2. A general principle and its application (vv. 10–12)

As a number of interpreters' claim,<sup>97</sup> I too believe that these verses show us the application of a negative example for disciples, contrasting the unfaithfulness of the steward and the faithfulness which disciples are to exhibit. If the point of verse 9 is that the charitable use of worldly wealth has some positive bearing on one's eternal destiny, the point of verses 10–12 is that unfaithfulness has a negative bearing. Although the positive side is implicit here, Jesus focuses on the consequence of unfaithfulness, on the negative side regarding the principle in verse 10. In view of verse 14, Jesus' exhortations of the negative aspects in verses 10–12 might serve to warn the disciples of the influence of Pharisees' unfaithfulness.

In addition, I believe that verses 10–13 have a logical relationship: there are a general principle in verse 10, the application of a general principle in verses 11–12 and an ultimate conclusion in verse 13. Moreover, verses 10–13 also have a bearing on the preceding parable.

Jesus, as Marshall maintains,<sup>98</sup> gives a general principle from human

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<sup>97</sup> Ellis, *Luke*, 198; Fletcher, "Riddle," 21; L. W. Friedel, "The Parable of the Unjust Steward (Luke 16:1–13)" *CBQ* 3 (1941) 347, Grundmann, *Lukas*, 319; Marshall, *Luke*, 622.

<sup>98</sup> Marshall, *Luke*, 623. He notes that "the saying is a good example of a secular truth being used as a basis for a religious lesson."

experience in verse 10. “He who is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and he who is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much”(RSV). Jesus continually applies the general principle to the disciples in verses 11–12 through a rhetorical question. They have no choice but to infer that no one would do so. In order to come to such a conclusion, as Bailey’s claims,<sup>99</sup> Jesus uses an antithesis and a parallelism as follows:

ὁ πιστὸς ἐν ἐλαχίστῳ/καὶ/ἐν πολλῷ πιστὸς ἐστίν,(v. 10a)  
καὶ/ ὁ ἐν ἐλαχίστῳ ἄδικος/καὶ/ἐν πολλῷ ἄδικός ἐστίν.(v. 10b)  
εἰ οὖν/ ἐν τῷ ἀδίκῳ μαμωνᾷ/πιστοὶ/οὐκ ἐγένεσθε,(v. 11a)  
τὸ ἀληθινὸν/τίς ὑμῖν/πιστεύσει;(v. 11b)  
καὶ εἰ/ ἐν τῷ ἀλλοτρίῳ/πιστοὶ/οὐκ ἐγένεσθε,(v. 12a)  
τὸ ὑμέτερον/τίς ὑμῖν/δώσει;(v. 12b)

Through this observation, we find that the parallel members of each side of the antitheses (ἐν ἐλαχίστῳ, ἐν τῷ ἀδίκῳ μαμωνᾷ, ἐν τῷ ἀλλοτρίῳ and ἐν πολλῷ, τὸ ἀληθινὸν, τὸ ὑμέτερον) are synonyms. In other words, in view of the unrighteous mammon in verse 11 with regard to that of verse 9a, “a very little”<sup>100</sup>, “the unrighteous mammon”<sup>101</sup> and “someone else's

<sup>99</sup> Bailey, *Poet and Peasant*, 110. Bailey claims that the inversion principle is used in verses 10–12 and 13 as well as in verse 9.

<sup>100</sup> Geldenhuys, *Luke*, 414 n. 18. Geldenhuys mentions that this description warns the disciples against overrating their value.

<sup>101</sup> The word, ἀδίκῳ in verse 11, in contrast to verse 9a is here an adjective. But the meaning can be translated as “unrighteous mammon,” as verse 9a.

property”<sup>102</sup> appear to be worldly wealth. In the same way, if the unrighteous mammon in verse 11 presents worldly wealth, true riches in antithesis of the unrighteous mammon in verse 11 properly appear to be “heavenly treasures” in contrast to “worldly wealth”. Accordingly, “in much”, “true riches”<sup>103</sup> and “property of your own”<sup>104</sup> indicate heavenly treasures. A striking feature of verses 10–12 is that one’s use of worldly wealth has a bearing on the heavenly things of the coming age.<sup>105</sup> The antithetical nature in verses 10–12 is eschatological, contrasting this age and the next, the earthly and the heavenly, the temporal and the eternal.<sup>106</sup> Jesus’ disciples, therefore, must use faithfully their worldly wealth in eschatological expectation. If they are not faithful with worldly wealth, they will not be entrusted with true riches.

### 9–3. The ultimate conclusion (v. 13)

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<sup>102</sup> In relation to this word, there are two opinions. First, *to allotrion* in verse 12 refer to man’s role as a steward of material possessions. Second, *to allotrion* emphasizes the foreign or alien nature of worldly wealth when seen from the perspective of a citizen of heaven.

<sup>103</sup> The word, τὸ ἀληθινὸν means that which is of true value and of permanent quality. According to Marshall, “behind the τίς of the rhetorical question lies the figure of God.” Marshall, *Luke*, 623. Nolland also claims that “God is clearly lurking beneath the surface of these words.” Nolland, *Luke*, 807.

<sup>104</sup> Marshall, *Luke*, 624. Marshall maintains that this word, *hymeteron* which depicts treasures of heaven will be the disciples own inalienable possession, contrasting between what does not belong to the disciples and what will really belong to them.

<sup>105</sup> H. A. W. Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, Luke* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1880), 228. Meyer view true riches as the salvation of the kingdom of Messiah.

<sup>106</sup> Kosmala, “The Unjust Steward in the light of Qumran,” 119. Kosmala contends that the words, πιστὸς and ἄδικος in verse 10 are essentially eschatological terms and then verse 10 has an entirely eschatological content that “if you are ἄδικος, if you have the smallest share in the ἀδικία of this world, you will have no share in the coming Kingdom.”

Is this verse original to the parable? In relation to the originality of verse 13, Jeremias<sup>107</sup> regards verse 13 as an originally isolated logion. Fitzmyer,<sup>108</sup> as opposed to Jeremias, views verse 13 as an earlier Christian tradition and says that verse 13 has nothing to do with the parable. However, I believe that the solution to the question, as have mentioned, can be given by a logical connection between verse 13 and the preceding parable. In addition, if we compare verse 13 and Matt 6:24,<sup>109</sup> as Plummer shows,<sup>110</sup> we will find that the saying fits well here.

The contents of this verse are well recapitulated in the last sentence, that is, “You cannot serve both God and Mammon.” The closing saying may be a warning against being unfaithful in God’s service and a warning against being enslaved by mammon.<sup>111</sup> The pursuit of wealth and wholehearted allegiance to God are mutually exclusive. Verse 13 makes it clear that unfaithfulness in the use of worldly wealth reveals ultimate loyalties and heart attitudes.<sup>112</sup> If the disciples use their worldly wealth faithfully, it is to express that they serve God with wholehearted love. While if the disciples use their worldly wealth unfaithfully, it is to

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<sup>107</sup> Jeremias, *Parables*, 46.

<sup>108</sup> Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1107.

<sup>109</sup> The only difference between verse 13 and Matt 6:24 is that Luke’s has an added **οἰκέτης**, “house slave”.

<sup>110</sup> Plummer claims that “If it was uttered only once, we may believe that this is its original position, rather than in the Sermon on the Mount, where it is placed by Mt.” Plummer, *Luke*, 387.

<sup>111</sup> Marshall, *Luke*, 624.

<sup>112</sup> Talbert, *Reading Luke. A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Third Gospel* (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 155. Talbert, in connection with this, says that “one’s use of wealth points to whom one serves” and Johnson notes that “the way one handles possessions expresses concretely the quality of one’s response to God.” L. T. Johnson, *The Literary Function of Possession in Luke-Acts* (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1977), 158.

express that they do not serve God. In conclusion, the disciples' use of wealth is tied to their future in heaven. Given this, the disciples must manifest their own position in the eschatological perspective<sup>113</sup> without hesitation.

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<sup>113</sup> This verse, with regard to the service of God, reminds us of Matt 25:31-46. "And the King will answer them, Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me."(Matt 25:40, *RSV*)

## Chapter 4

### Importance of Eschatology on the parable of the Unjust Steward

Personally, I believe that special care should be taken regarding eschatology in dealing with the parable. That is largely because the underlying idea of the parable is eschatological. Therefore, after dividing the parable into three parts, I will explain the importance of eschatology in the parable. The parable can be divided into three parts: verses 1-8, verse 9, and verses 10-13.

First of all, the message of verses 1-8 is that the audience should be prudent like the unjust steward and prepare themselves now in the light of this judgment which is imminent and already dawning through the ministry of Jesus. As Jeremias<sup>1</sup> rightly points out, it calls for resolute action. Jeremias,<sup>2</sup> with regard to message of verses 1-8, says as follows:

“It is very well for you to be indignant, but you should apply the lesson to yourselves. You are in the same position as this

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<sup>1</sup> Jeremias, *Parables*, 180.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 182. Stein also agrees to Jeremias' claim and quotes this paragraph for supporting one's own claim. Stein, *An introduction to the parables of Jesus*, 111. Bailey also adopts the same line as Jeremias, emphasizing entrustment to the mercy of God rather than resolute action. Bailey says as follows:

“God (the master) is a God of judgment and mercy. Because of his evil, man (the steward) is caught in the crisis of the coming of the kingdom. Excuses will avail the steward nothing. Man's only option is to entrust everything to the unfailing mercy of his generous master who, he can be confident, will accept to pay the price for man's salvation. This clever rascal was wise enough to place his total trust in the quality of mercy experienced at the beginning of the story. That trust was vindicated. Disciples need the same kind of wisdom.” Bailey, *Poet and Peasant*, 107.

steward who saw the imminent disaster threatening him with ruin, but the crisis which threatens you, in which, indeed, you are already involved, is incomparably more terrible. This man was **φρόνιμος** (v. 8a), i.e. he recognized the critical nature of the situation. He did not let things take their course, he acted, unscrupulously no doubt (**τῆς ἀδικίας** v. 8), Jesus did not excuse his action, though we are not concerned with that here, but boldly, resolutely, and prudently, with the purpose of making a new life for himself. For you, too, the challenge of the hour demands prudence, everything is at stake!”

The parable depicts the image of eschatological judgment in the accounting the steward is called to give in verse 2, in the master’s commendation of the steward for having acted shrewdly in verse 8a and as I have pointed out the eschatological characteristic of the terms, in the contrast between the sons of this age and the sons of light in verse 8b. The kingdom of God has already come through Jesus’ ministry. According to Luke 3:9, it is a critical moment. “Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”(Luke 3:9) Therefore, the audience must be aware of the fact that now the eschatological situation has arisen and they must take resolute action immediately for their safe future as the steward does. Jesus urges his audiences to be prudent too. For the followers of Jesus there is also a need to act prudently.



In relation to verses 9–13, as I have noted in the preceding chapter, I view verses 9–13 as a secondary application on the parable by Jesus, with an eschatological situation.<sup>3</sup> On the basis of this view, the message of verse 9 is the positive exhortation on the use of material possessions in the eschatological perspective and that of verses 10–13 is the negative exhortation on the use of material possessions in the eschatological perspective.<sup>4</sup>

In verse 9, Jesus derives the positive exhortation from the steward's action. Jesus exhorts his disciples to use possessions wisely as the steward used possessions wisely for his own future. It would appear that possessions are good and have great power, but in the light of the eschatological view, possessions are unrighteous and transitory. In addition, Jesus stimulates his audience to do so much more by drawing out the contrast between the debtors' houses in verse 4 and the eternal habitations in the light of the eschatological perspective.

In verses 10–13, Jesus derives the negative exhortation from the

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<sup>3</sup> The summary of the whole point of this parable by C. L. Blomberg fits with the meaning of verses 9–13:

“(1) All of God's people will be called to give a reckoning of the nature of their service to him. (2) Preparation for that reckoning should involve a prudent use of all our resources, especially in the area of finances. (3) Such prudence, demonstrating a life of true discipleship, will be rewarded with eternal life and joy.”

C. L. Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables*, (Downers Grove: Inter Varsity Press, 1990), 245–246.

<sup>4</sup> It seems as if the teaching of the use of the material possessions in verses 9–13 has nothing to do with the parable, but I believe that the teaching in verses 9–13 by Jesus is natural to the parable. The reasons why I think so are first, that the parable has an bearing on the use of the material possessions, “wasting his possessions” in verse 1, in particular. Second, that this scene include “the tax collectors” in Luke 15:1 and “the Pharisees” in Luke 16:14 who loved money. Taking all that into consideration, the teaching of the use of the material possessions in verses 9–13 from the parable by Jesus is natural rather than has no bearing on the parable.

steward's action. The steward is not faithful to his master's possessions in verse 1, in particular. The steward's actions are like serving both masters, that is, God and Money in the line of concept of verse 10. And so, in the light of the eschatological view, Jesus exhorts his disciples to be faithful in their use of possessions, as opposed to the steward, through an antithesis in verses 10-12. In the light of the kingdom of God, worldly wealth become "a very little", "the unrighteous mammon" and "someone else's property", while heavenly treasures become "in much", "true riches" and "property of your own". Such an antithesis in an eschatological view makes the disciples rightly become aware of the value of worldly wealth and its position as well as stimulate them to be faithful to worldly wealth. Faithfulness in worldly wealth eventually is to express one's own ultimate loyalties in verse 13. The disciples ought to prove themselves as sons of God, as members of the kingdom and reveal true discipleship not only by being faithful in the use of worldly wealth, in particular but also by doing good works.

Jesus here does not teach general ethics on the use of material possessions to the disciples, but ethics of the kingdom of God. Jesus' ethical teaching cannot be isolated from his teaching on the kingdom of God.<sup>5</sup> Accordingly, "the ethics of Jesus are Kingdom ethics, the ethics of

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<sup>5</sup> R. H. Stein, *The Method and Message of Jesus' Teachings* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978), 106. Ladd also claims that "it is impossible to detach them from the total context of Jesus' message and mission." Ladd, *The Presence of the Future*, 290. For eschatological characteristics of Luke, see the following books: J. T. Carroll, *Response to the End of History: Eschatology and Situation in Luke-Acts* (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1988); E. E. Ellis, *Eschatology in Luke*. FBBS (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972); H. Conzelmann, *The Theology of Saint Luke* (New York: Harper, 1960)

the reign of God.”<sup>6</sup> Both aspect of the kingdom,<sup>7</sup> that is, the future aspect and the present aspect, have an important bearing on ethics, in general, and the wise use of possessions, in particular. The future aspect gives hope and incentive to Jesus’ ethical teaching through reward and warning of judgment.<sup>8</sup> While, the present aspect makes a difference to the ethical standards of its members. Through this, people of the kingdom of God indicate their membership and express to be under the reign of God. Further, in verses 9–13, stimulated by the reward and warning of judgment, the disciples of Jesus must show their membership of the kingdom of God by living with different ethical standards in connection with the use of material possessions, in particular.

Taking all that into consideration, I believe that as far as this parable is concerned, it is important to look into the parable with an eschatological view. In addition, I believe that the most proper way to understand the parable is an eschatological view because the parable has eschatological situations and characteristics.

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<sup>6</sup> Ladd, *The Presence of the Future*, 290.

<sup>7</sup> The distinctive feature of Jesus’ teaching on the kingdom of God is that it is present and future in his person and ministry. In relation to both aspects of the kingdom of God, scholars do not seem to be in discord.

<sup>8</sup> Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, New Creation; A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1996), 129. He claims that Luke emphasizes on the theme of eschatological judgment as a warrant of present moral behavior.

## Chapter 5

### Conclusions

While studying the parable of the unjust steward, I encountered much difficulty. However, in the process of wrestling with the parable, I have gained an enhanced understanding and a satisfactory result.

On the basis of the detailed exegesis, I argued for the originality of 8b, 9 and 10-13, and derived eschatological nuances from the parable in the chapter three. It has been borne out that each of 8b, 9 and 10-13 are original parts of the parable. The parable reveals to us an eschatological situation: an eschatological crisis and resolute action as seen in the steward's dismissal and the steward's wise actions when he faced his dismissal from his master in verses 1-8a. In addition, through eschatological terms and their antithesis in verses 8b-13, we uncovered an eschatological situation.

Though the steward of the parable acted dishonestly, he nonetheless acted wisely in providing for his future. Jesus' audiences can learn a lesson from the steward at this point: the resolute action in facing the eschatological crisis brought on by Jesus' ministry. In addition, Jesus' disciples must learn wisely to make use of material possessions in the positive and negative aspect. Jesus urges his disciples to use wisely their possessions against the backdrop of the eschatological threat.

In chapter four, I argued that although the parable has a literary

structure, an economic background and an honour-shame social background, the whole imagery of the parable is eschatological. Our parable depicts an eschatological situation in verses 1-8, in particular and the eschatological nuances in verses 9-13 provide the incentive for wise use of material possessions. To return to chapter 2, I came to the conclusion that of the various interpretative approaches to the parable, the eschatological approach is the most proper.

As I have pointed out in the introduction of this dissertation, Korean churches have emphasized generally only the ethical aspects of the parable, that is, wise use of material possessions, with the lack of eschatological consideration when they preached the parable. In this respect, this dissertation may contribute a little to Korean churches. With regard to the teaching of the parable, we must focus on the eschatological characteristics in order to not only realize one's existence facing the eschatological crisis, but also grasp the true identity and wise use of material possessions in the light of the eschatological view. In relation to verses 1-8, we must cry out that "the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel." (Mark 1:15 RSV), and at the same time, on the basis of the eschatological view, we must urge each other to make charitable use of material possessions.

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## *Abstract*

The main aim of this study is not only to emphasize the importance of the eschatological approach in interpreting the parable of the unjust steward, but also to highlight the eschatological meanings in the parable.

In chapter 2, I begin with research on the tendency of recent studies done concerning this parable. Through this, I show and evaluate various exegetical approaches to the parable, that is, Eschatological Approach, Economic Approach, Literary Approach and Sociological Approach.

In chapter 3, I focus on the exegesis of the parable as follows: ‘the demarcation of the parable,’ the audience of the parable and ‘the exegesis of each phrase and clause.’ Taking various exegetical opinions into consideration, I interpret the parable in the eschatological view in particular.

In chapter 4, I come to a conclusion that the main point of the parable is the urging of resolute action in the face of the eschatological crisis and the secondary point of the parable is the wise use of material possessions in view of the eschatological perspective. In any case, I propose that it is important to become aware of the fact that the whole parable contains the eschatological situation. On the basis of such an exegetical conclusion, I emphasize that the eschatological approach is more important than other approaches in interpreting the parable.

Finally, in chapter 5, I conclude that we must become aware of the eschatological characteristics in the parable in order to understand the parable correctly, and at the same time we must use the eschatological

characteristics in the parable in order to realize one's existence in the eschatological crisis, and also grasp the true identity and wise use of material possessions in the light of the eschatological view when we preach the parable.

## *Abstrak*

Die hoofdoel van hierdie studie is nie net om die belangrikheid van die eskatologiese benadering in die gelykenis van die onregverdige bestuurder te beklemtoon nie, maar ook om die eskatologiese betekenis in die gelykenis uit te lig.

In hoofstuk 2 begin ek met navorsing oor die tendense in onlangse studies oor hierdie gelykenis. Hierdeur, toon ek aan, en evalueer ek, verskeie eksegetiese verklarings van die gelykenis, naamlik die Eskatologiese, Ekonomiese, Letterkundige en die Sosiologiese benadering.

In hoofstuk 3 fokus ek op die uitleg van die gelykenis as volg: ‘Die afbakening van die gelykenis’; ‘Die gehoor van die gelykenis’; en ‘Die eksegeese van elke frase en bysin’. Ek interpreteer die gelykenis veral uit ‘n eskatologiese oogpunt, terwyl ek verskeie eksegetiese opinies in ag neem.

In hoofstuk 4 konkludeer ek dat die sentrale gedagte van die gelykenis is om aan te spoor tot vasberade aksie te neem ten aansien van die komende eskatologiese krisis, en die sekondêre punt van die gelykenis is die bekwame en verantwoordelike rentmeesterskap van materiële besittings, ten opsigte van die eskatologiese perspektief. Ek is van mening dat dit van deurslaggewende belang is dat die hele gelykenis vanuit ‘n eskatologiese perspektief verklaar moet word. Op die basis van hierdie eksegetiese konklusie, stel ek voor dat dié benadering meer belangrik is as enige ander.

Laastens, in hoofstuk 5 konkludeer ek dat ons bewus moet wees van die eskatologiese kenmerke in die gelykenis, sodat ons dit reg kan verstaan. Ek stel dus voor dat wanneer die gelykenis gepreek word ons daarvan bewus moet wees dat ons sêlf die eskatologiese krisis in die oë moet kyk, en in die lig hiervan moet ons leer hoe om ons materiële besittings wys te bestuur.