

# Bible Studies

## The Shrewd Manager

Most of Jesus Parables are fairly clear to us. Even parables like the 10 Virgins, although we may never conclusively work out it's details it's meaning is abundantly clear. This parable is one that even gives preachers headaches. What is Jesus saying?

**Read Luke 16v1-9**

**What's the story?**

**What was the managers problem?**

**What solution did he come to?**

The manager was dishonest! But Jesus uses him as an example for us! Compare verse 8 in the KJV and the NIV. **Who Commended him?**

The word is Kyrios, Lord. The Question is, where does the parable end and the explanation start? Is the Kyrios of verse 8 the master (also Kyrios) of verse 3. Or is it the Lord Jesus, the way Luke normally uses it?

It looks like the manager was not guilty of incompetence but of embezzlement. He was a dishonest manager not an incapable one. The act for which he is commended may not have been dishonest. Two explanations have been given.

- 1 He made up the amount of the cancelled debt from his own pocket. This requires us to add something to the parable before we can understand it.
- 2 Usury was the issue. The OT outlaws the practice of charging interest, but we know it still happened. The amount cancelled could have been the interest that either the Master or the Manager had illegally charged. The reason the debts were in commodities, not cash, may have been to hide the interest.

If the master had charged the interest, there was nothing he could do or say. He had been caught at his crooked deal. He commended the manager, because he recognised someone as shrewd as himself.

Perhaps the masters acquisition of his wealth was just as illegal as the managers own fraud.

If it was the master that had charged the interest, then he was only making up for what he had done wrong, and at the same time turning it to his advantage. The master could commend him because he was at last doing the right thing.

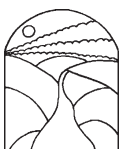
**What do you think Jesus is actually commending him for?**

It seems to me Jesus is commending the way he used his money to ensure his future, his perspicacity, his forward thinking. Jesus then says that this is too often lacking among believers. Elsewhere he calls us to be, *Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves.* Matthew 10:16.

*Brothers, stop thinking like children. In regard to evil be infants, but in your thinking be adults. 1 Corinthians 14:20*

*I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings. Luke 16:9*

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**What does Jesus want us to do?**

**More specifically what does he want us to do with our money?**

**What is our eternal dwelling?**

**How will using money now effect our future?**

**Whose friendship will you 'buy' by giving to the poor?** Prov 19:17

*Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. 34 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Luke 12:33-34*

**Is it clear what Jesus wanted to achieve when he told this parable?**

**What will happen when you "loose your job" here?**

**What is our "calling to account"?**

**What must you do to prepare?**

**Is this parable only about money?**

So now you understand the parable, who the "master" was is not important, nor the debts involved, what matters is how Jesus wants us to act. He is not commending dishonesty, but his is recommending wise use of money. Jesus is not yet satisfied that he has got the point across, so he gives three more bits of teaching to hammer the nail home.

### **Read Luke 16v10-12**

This also helps to make it clear that the manager is not being commended for his bad management.

**What do you think "true riches" is?**

**What do you think the "someone else's property" is?**

To me this sounds very similar to the conclusion of the parable of talents (Matthew 25). ie. How you act now in light of your future Hope.

### **Luke 16:13**

*"No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money." Luke 16:13*

The word *Mammon* could be translated finance, rather than money. It is the same word translated earlier as 'worldly wealth'.

**If the debt canceled was the illegal interest could the manager have manager have kept it for himself?**

The Last teaching Jesus gives is the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus, Luke 16v19-31. We do not normally associate this with Jesus teaching about money. Instead we take what it says about the afterlife and it's comments about repentance. But think about it, **what connection does this have with the shrewd manager?**

This is the story of someone who did **exactly the wrong thing with his money**. The rich man, during his life, had no compassion for the beggar at his gate. He was untrustworthy with worldly wealth, he served Money not God, and he certainly did not store up treasure in heaven.