

## No Excuses

### a. The Parable of the Unjust Steward (16:1-13)

**16:1,2 What is Christ compelling His disciples to think upon? (12:35-48)**

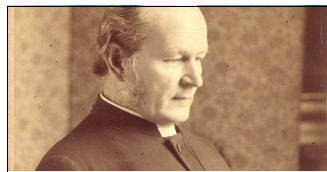
[1] The passage we have now read is a difficult one. There are knots in it which perhaps will never be untied, until the Lord comes again. We might reasonably expect that a book written by inspiration, as the Bible is, would contain things hard to be understood. The fault lies not in the Book, but in our own feeble understandings. If we learn nothing else from the passage before us, let us learn humility. **J.C. Ryle** *Luke* Vol.2 p. 196

**16:3-7 What is the steward's strategy?**

**16:8,9 What could the Lord mean by this contrast?**

[2] [16:9] We turn mammon into a friend, and make ourselves friends by its means, when we use riches not as our own to squander, but as God's to employ in deeds of usefulness and mercy. **F.W. Farrar** *Luke* (CGT) p.314

[3] [16:9] Jesus' followers must use their money for their spiritual purposes just as wisely as the children of this world do for their material aims. As our goal is 'treasure in heaven', we should use money for purposes such as almsgiving. This will gain us friends



**Frederick William Farrar**  
Making mammon into a friend – when we turn wealth into a means of mercy

and it will stand us in good stead when money *fails*, i.e. when we die and money is of no more use. The meaning of *they may receive you into the eternal habitations* (cf. Jn. 14:2) may be that the friends thus made will welcome us in heaven. More probably we have a common Jewish use of the plural to mean 'God' in accordance with a tendency to avoid use of the divine name (SB). It is God who receives men into heaven. **L. Morris** *Luke* p.249

**16:10-12 What then is the right use of 'unrighteous mammon'?**

[4] [16:12] The lesson of the verse is that nothing which we possess on earth is our own; it is entrusted to us for temporary use (1 Chron. 29:14), which shall be rewarded by real and eternal *possessions* (1 Pet. 1:4). **F.W. Farrar** *Luke* (CGT) p.315

**16:13 How conceivably could 'mammon' become a rival to God? (Eccl.5:10-6:2; 7:11,12)**

[5] [16:1-13] We *cannot* be wrong if we seize as the *main* lesson of the parable, the one which Christ Himself attached to it (8-12), namely the use of earthly gifts of wealth and opportunity for heavenly and not for earthly aims. **F.W. Farrar** *Luke* (CGT) p.312

### b. The Rich Man and Lazarus (16:14-31)

**16:14,15 What does God know about the Pharisees (generally)? (Matt.23:14)**

**16:16-18 What is the relation of the Law and the kingdom?**

[6] [16:16,17] Jesus may mean that those pressing into the kingdom must be at least as much in earnest as the violent men of Palestine who tried to bring in the kingdom by force of arms. In the context we may think of men like the astute steward. When they see the value of entrance to God's kingdom they are ready to force their way in, in contrast to the Pharisees who did not make use of their opportunity. Knox translates, 'all who will, press their way into it'. **L. Morris** *Luke* p.251

[7] [16:18] They professed to reverence the Law and the Prophets, yet divorce (so alien to the primitive institution of marriage) was so shamefully lax among them that great Rabbis in the Talmud practically abolished *all* the sacredness of marriage in direct contradiction to Mal. 2:15,16. Even Hillel said a man might divorce his wife if she over-salted his soup. ... Besides this shameful laxity the Pharisees had never had the courage to denounce the adulterous marriage and disgraceful divorce of which Herod Antipas had been guilty. **F.W. Farrar** *Luke* (CGT) p.316

**16:19-21 What are the ONLY facts we know about the lives of these 2 men?**

[8] [16:19] This man had all he asked in life and lived a life of enjoyable ease. He is not said to have committed any grave sin, but he lived only for himself. In that lay his condemnation. **L. Morris** *Luke* p.252

[9] [16:19-31] In a country where the common people were fortunate if they ate meat once in the week and where they toiled for six days of the week. Dives is a figure of indolent self-indulgence. Lazarus was waiting for them crumbs that fell from Dives's table. In that time there were no knives, forks or napkins. Food was eaten with the hands and, in very wealthy houses, the hands were cleansed by wiping them on hunks of bread, which were then thrown away. That was what Lazarus was waiting for. **W. Barclay** *Luke* p.213



**16:22-24 What is the intermediate condition of both after death, and why?**

[10] [16:22] The burial of Lazarus is not mentioned, for it took place without ceremony, or perhaps not at all. The body, claimed by no one, was thrown to the dunghill. The contrast to the rich man is evident. No angels to transport his soul; but for his body, on the

contrary, a splendid funeral procession. **Frederic Godet** *Luke* p.393

[11] [16:22] The general principle is maintained that bliss and misery after death are determined by conduct previous to death; but the details of the picture are taken from Jewish beliefs as to the condition of souls in Sheol, and must not be understood as confirming those beliefs. The properties of bodies are attributed to souls in order to enable us to realize the picture. **Alfred Plummer** *Luke* p.393

[12] *Scheol* (Heb.), *Hades* (Gr.), the *Inferi* or *infernal regions* (Lat.), simply denote the abode of the dead, without distinguishing the different conditions which it may include, in opposition to the land of the living. *Paradise* (23:43) as well as *Gehenna* (12:5) forms part of it. **Frederic Godet** *Luke* p.394

[13] [16:23] "In Hades," the receptacle of *all* the departed until the time of final judgment, and including both paradise and Gehenna. That Hades does not mean "hell" as a place of punishment is manifest from Acts 2:27,31; Gen. 37:35, 42:38, 44:29; Job 14:13, 17:13, etc. That Hades includes a place of punishment is equally clear from this passage. **Alfred Plummer** *Luke* p.393

### 16:25,26 What then is the cause of the 'immense gulf' which separates the two destinies?

[14] [16:25] It is only in the mythological Hades that there is a river of Lethe, drowning the memory of the past. **A. Plummer** *Luke* p.395

[15] [16:26] The Rabbis conceived of the two divisions of Hades as separated only by a wall, a palm breadth or a finger breadth ... [*hopos*] implies that the cleft is there for the purpose of preventing transit either way; location fixed and final. **A.B. Bruce** *Expositor's Greek Testament* Vol. 1 p.589

[16] [16:27-31] As to the rich man, from the beginning he represents not the rich in general, but the rich man hardened by well-being, the Pharisee, whose heart, puffed up with pride, is closed to sympathy with the suffering. **Frederic Godet** *Luke* p.395

[17] [16:19-31] What was the sin of Dives? He had not ordered Lazarus to be removed from his gate. He had made no objections to his receiving the bread that was flung away from his table. He

did not kick him in passing. He was not deliberately cruel to him. The sin of Dives was that he never noticed Lazarus, that he accepted him as part of the landscape and simply thought it perfectly natural and inevitable that Lazarus should lie in pain and hunger while he wallowed in luxury. **W. Barclay** *Luke* p.214

[18] [16:19-31] ... it marks the contrast with the attitude inculcated in the parable of the unrighteous steward. Perhaps we can go further back and say that this chapter challenges the elder son of the previous parable and with him all the respectable to act in the spirit of the unrighteous steward. They should repent and then help others with their money. The alternative is to use their money in such a way as to secure eternal condemnation. **L. Morris** *Luke* p.252

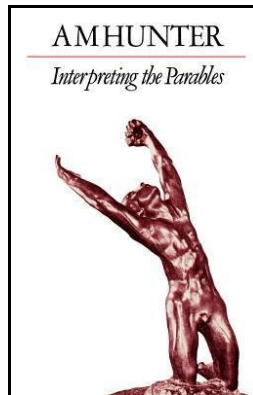
### 16:27-31 How should these be frightening words – even for those who exalt 'family values'? (14:26; 9:59-62; 8:19-21)

[19] [16:27,28] For the first time in the story the rich man shows some interest in others (though still not of the poor; he sticks to his own). He asks that his *five brothers* may be warned of what awaits them. Once again he assumes that Lazarus may be despatched on his errand: his deep-seated sense of superiority remains. He also

implies that he had not been treated fairly. If he had really been given all the information he needed, he would have acted differently. In contrast is Lazarus's impressive silence throughout the parable. He does not speak at all. He neither complains of his hard lot on earth, nor gloats over the rich man after death, nor expresses resentment at the latter's endeavours to have him sent on errands. Throughout he accepts what God sent him. **L. Morris** *Luke* p.254

[20] [16:30] Saul was not led to repentance when he saw Samuel at Endor, nor were the Pharisees when they saw Lazarus come forth from the tomb. The Pharisees tried to put Lazarus to death and to explain away the resurrection of Jesus. **A. Plummer** *Luke* p.397

[21] [16:29-31] If a man (says Jesus) cannot be humane with the Old Testament in his hand and Lazarus on his doorstep, nothing – neither a visitant from the other world nor a revelation of the horrors of Hell – will teach him otherwise. **A.M. Hunter** *Interpreting the Parables* p.84



## What is the eternal purpose of social gulfs?

[22] [16:29-31] There is an implication that the rich man's unpleasant situation was due not to his riches (after all, Abraham had been rich), but to his neglect of Scripture and its teaching. But the rich man does not agree. He knows how he had reacted to the possession of the Bible. So he says that *if some one goes to them from the dead* things will be different. That will bring them to repentance. Such is the fallacy of the natural man. The parable concludes with Abraham's solemn affirmation that the appearance of one risen from the dead will bring no conviction to those who refuse to accept Scripture. **L. Morris** *Luke* p.254

[23] [16:19-31] Every social contrast between the more and the less, either in respect of fortune, or strength, or acquirement, or even piety, is permitted and willed by God only with a view to its being neutralized by man's free agency. This is a task assigned from on high, the means of forming those bonds of love which are our treasure in heaven (12:33,34). To neglect this offer is to procure for one's self an analogous contrast in the other life – a contrast which shall be capable of being sweetened for us no more than we have ourselves sweetened it in the life below. **Frederic Godet** *Luke* p.393