

Luke 16:1-9

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/luke/luke-16/luke-161-9/>

Jesus tells His disciples the Parable of the Unrighteous Steward. It is about a manager of a rich man's estate who is fired for bad stewardship. Unsure of how he'll live, he comes up with a shrewd plan. He summons his former employer's debtors and ingratiates himself to them by greatly reducing their debts. Because they will have a social obligation to repay him, his future is secure. The master commends him for the way he cleverly used the master's wealth to benefit himself. This ends the parable, highlighting that the point is to "be shrewd."

Jesus then makes the observation that the sons of this age are more shrewd in using reciprocity to advance their temporal ambitions than the sons of light are in regard to their eternal ambitions. He exhorts the disciples to be shrewd by using their stewardship of earthly assets to make eternal friends.

This parable has no apparent parallel in the other gospel accounts.

After Luke records Jesus's parables of "The Lost Sheep" (Luke 15:4-7), "The Lost Coin" (Luke 15:8-10), and "The Prodigal Son" (Luke 15:11-32), the gospel writer included another of Jesus's parables. It is called "The Parable of the *Unrighteous Steward*."

The previous trio of parables was directed at the Pharisees and scribes (Luke 15:2-3) and apparently was told publicly in the presence of tax collectors and sinners (Luke 15:1). The Parable of the *Unrighteous Steward* was told by Jesus to the disciples. Luke makes this distinction when he inserted a brief remark between the end of the parable about the Prodigal Son and the beginning parable about the *Unrighteous Steward*.

Now He [Jesus] was also saying to the disciples. This detail is significant because it lets the readers know that this parable has a direct application for His followers.

Jesus tells the parable first (Luke 16:1-8a) before explaining its point (Luke 16:8b-9). This commentary will be sub-divided according to this outline:

1. **THE STORY OF THE PARABLE**
2. **THE POINT OF THE PARABLE**

1. **THE STORY OF THE PARABLE**

Jesus introduces His parable by describing its two main figures and a recent development that threatens to dissolve their relationship.

The two main figures are a *rich man* and his *manager*. The *rich man* apparently owned an estate that generated its income from agricultural production, such as *wheat* and *olive oil*. The *manager* was a trusted steward. *He* managed the business affairs of the estate for the *rich man*. It appears

that a part of the trusted steward's job was to make and collect loans of produce from *the rich man's* crops. Perhaps *he* managed a number of customers that would pay out their purchases in installments.

This manager was reported to the rich man as squandering his possessions. The parable does not necessarily imply that *the manager* was guilty of stealing or embezzling his *master's* wealth. Apparently, the report was serious, and if confirmed would result in *the rich man* making the decision to fire *his manager*. It also appears that the steward was given the benefit of the doubt, since he was not fired immediately. An audit is implied.

And, so the rich man called in his manager, and said, "What is this I hear about you? Give an accounting of your management, for you can no longer be manager."

The rich man demanded an accounting of his manager, giving the steward an opportunity to clear himself of the charges. And he told him to give an account of your management. The rich man wanted to audit the books, and see if the allegation was true. He made it clear that if the allegation was true, the manager would have his stewardship terminated.

It is inferred in the story that there was a period of time that lapsed which allowed the audit of the books. It is during this gap of time that the action critical to the point of the story takes place. *The manager* knows the allegation is true, and therefore knows *he* is about to lose *his* job.

Soon after *the master* left, *the manager* naturally thought to *himself* about *what he* should do. *He* already knows the outcome of the audit. *He* knows *he* is going to be dismissed for *squandering his master's* possessions.

The story now lets the reader into *the manager's* deliberation as to what *he* should do in order to provide a living for himself.

The manager said to himself, 'What shall I do, since my master is taking the management away from me?' The bleakness of *his* future was foremost on *his* mind. Because of *his* bad or perhaps even corrupt management, *he* had proved himself unfit to manage for anyone else. No one would hire a *manager* who was fired for squandering *his master's* possessions.

And so, *he* began to consider *his* options.

First, *he* considered manual labor and working the fields. This was a respectable line of work. But *he* decided against this option because it was too physically demanding and *he said to himself, "I am not strong enough to dig."* So far, we have to admire the steward's willingness to face reality. *He* has a firm view of the facts, and is not kidding himself. Not only does he recognize that is *he* not fit to be hired as a steward, after being dismissed for squandering. *He* also recognizes that *he* is not fit for manual labor.

Next, *he* considered begging. As a former *manager*, *he* likely had connections to wealthy people. And asking them for money would not be strenuous work that required strength or stamina. But

he decided against this option because it was personally degrading and *he said to himself, "I am too ashamed to beg."*

Then the *manager* came up with a *shrewd* solution. *He* hatches a plan, and immediately puts it into action. *He* says to himself *I know what I shall do, so that when I am removed from the management people will welcome me into their homes.* This is the key to understanding the parable: to recognize that the unscrupulous but *shrewd manager's* calculation was that *his* plan would cause people to *welcome him into their homes.*

This means *he* expected *his* planned actions would cause people to take care of *his* lodging and food needs for the rest of *his* days. So this is a bold plan with a huge payoff. What we will see is that the basic plan will be to create a major forgiveness of debts, which will obligate people to reciprocate to *the unrighteous* steward by providing for *his* needs. The steward is going to leverage the social obligation of reciprocity to his benefit.

The desire to reciprocate is a part of the human design. We naturally smile back when smiled at, and hit back when punched. Reciprocity was a deeply-held social value in the near east of the first century. This story infers that, due to the social norms of that time period, *the manager's* plan would obligate people to take care of *him* for the rest of *his* days. It would be so substantial and significant, that it would take *his* lifetime to repay. In making this calculation, the steward was extremely *shrewd.*

To be *shrewd* means to be wise and cunning—a step ahead of everyone else. It is the ability to understand what is happening and to take the necessary steps to be prepared and not caught off guard when the situation changes. The steward's plan is going to create a soft landing for *him* once *he* is, inevitably, found wanting as a steward and accordingly dismissed from service.

His plan was to benefit *his master's debtors* at the expense of *his master.* This benefit was going to be so substantial that his *master's debtors* would *welcome him into their homes.* So, *the manager summoned each* and every *one* who owed *his master* money. The fact that *he summoned each* debtor shows that the steward had great authority, and is continuing to project his authority by summoning *each* debtor to himself.

He began saying to the first, "How much do you owe my master?" The first debtor told the manager an amount. "A hundred measures of oil." The amount the debtor told him may have been accurate or it may have been reduced. But *the manager* did not dispute his claim. He simply accepted it at face value. Then surprisingly, *the manager* told *the first* debtor to reduce it: *"Take your bill, and sit down and quickly write that you owe only fifty measures of oil".*

We now know the steward's plan. The steward is going to reduce the amount owed *his master* by a large sum, a sum substantial enough to cause the debtors to owe *him* hospitality for the balance of *his* days.

Then the manager said to another debtor, 'And how much do you owe?' The debtor replied, *'A hundred measures of wheat.'* Again, *the manager* accepted the debtor's claim and reduced it. *'Take your bill, and write eighty.'*

Note that *the manager* acted promptly. *He* knew *he* had only a brief time, so *he* acted in earnest.

The parable does not explicitly describe *each* encounter. It simply implies that *the manager* followed this pattern of significantly reducing *the debtors'* claims with *each of his master's* debtors. Due to this forgiveness, the debtors would have been indebted to him for his generosity. *The manager* shrewdly made *his former master's debtors* indebted to himself. And his collection, through the social obligation of reciprocity, would be for these *people to welcome him into their homes* once *he* was no longer employed.

The manager cleverly acquired a handsome severance package for himself with *his master's debtors* at no expense to himself—though at great loss to *his master's* wealth.

Why did the steward only forgive a part of the debt, and not all? We are not told. Perhaps the steward had the discretion to determine the profit margin for *his master's* products. Then in forgiving a portion, *he* would only be reducing the profit margin, perhaps to zero, which was within *his* authority. That way, *he* would not be pilfering *his* master's goods. *He* would be acting within *his* authority. It could also be that the steward was allowed to include a profit for himself. By forgiving a profit that *he* was about to lose anyway, the steward could ingratiate himself, and collect hospitality in reciprocity for *his* actions.

Jesus ended His parable by describing what happened once *the master* discovered what *his unrighteous manager* had done. Even though the *rich man* discovered that, in fact, the steward had squandered *his* goods, and therefore would be dismissed, the *rich man* also saw how *his* fired *manager* had engaged in forgiving debts owed to *his debtors* prior to being fired. At this point we might expect the rich man to explode in anger, and seek to reverse the steward's actions. But that that is not what *he* does. And that is not the point of the parable. *The rich man* praises *his manager's* shrewdness. The point of the parable therefore is to elevate the value God places on His people by making shrewd investments.

The rich man praised his *unrighteous manager*. The Greek term for praise in this verse is the word “epainō.” It means to “commend,” or “recognize,” or “applaud.” The reason *the master* praised his ex-*manager* was not for his fairness, or *his* tenure of performance while managing *the rich man's* estate. *He* praised him because *he* had acted shrewdly.

The rich man recognized and commended the *shrewd* and crafty plan *his* fired *manager* pulled off to not end up homeless or in the fields. *The master* knew *he'd* been taken advantage of. But apparently the steward acted within *his* authority, so *the master* applauds *his* shrewdness. *The master* had to hand it to *his ex-manager* for *his* skillful maneuvering. The steward had found a way to endear or attach himself to others. He landed on *his* feet, after *he* was fired. This action by the steward was not merely transactional, it was transformational. The steward has set up a reciprocity without end.

This now ends the parable Jesus told to His *disciples*. At this point we can imagine the disciples might have been confused. Jesus anticipates this, and immediately explains to His *disciples* the meaning He intends them to gain from this story.

2. THE POINT OF THE PARABLE

After the *master praised the unrighteous manager* for acting *shrewdly*, Jesus then began to explain the point of this parable *to the disciples*.

Jesus said, *For the sons of this age are more shrewd in relation to their own kind than the sons of light. And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by means of the wealth of unrighteousness, so that when it fails, they will receive you into the eternal dwellings.*

His explanation consists of an Observation and an Exhortation with a Promise. The observation is that the world understands well how to benefit themselves through leveraging reciprocity while the sons of the kingdom of God do not. The exhortation is for His disciples to gain eyes that understand, and begin using our material goods to benefit others in this life, so that we gain a transformational benefit of reciprocity in heaven, a reciprocity that is without end.

The Main Terms

The two classifications of people in this passage are *the sons of this age* and *the sons of light*.

The *sons of this age* likely refers to anyone who follows the ways of the world rather than the ways of Jesus—i.e. anyone who does not walk in the *light* (1 John 1:5-6). This could include both unbelievers who have no hope of heaven as well as believers who are more interested in their earthly affairs than seeking God's kingdom and harmony with Christ.

In any event, Jesus's observation that *the sons of this age are more shrewd [than the sons of light are]* emphasizes the world's system of the use of the law of reciprocity to accomplish their respective ambitions. Jesus's main admonition to *make eternal friends by means of wealth of unrighteousness* shifts the application from prioritizing earthly gain to prioritizing heavenly gain.

It is interesting that most of Jesus' parables are about believers who are either faithful or unfaithful. However, in this parable Jesus is encouraging those who are faithful, the *sons of light*, to maximize their opportunities, to fully seek Him, to seek *eternal* treasure and not become distracted by the soon-failing illusion of worldly *wealth*. He exhorts the faithful *disciples* to gain the most for themselves from this life by living it for the next.

Further, Jesus admonishes *the sons of light* for not being sufficiently *shrewd* through the use of the principle of reciprocity. It might seem strange that He would do this if *the sons of light* were already taking up their cross (Luke 9:23-24) and striving to enter by the narrow gate (Matthew 7:13-14). However, this parable seems to be a course in making the shrewdest possible *eternal* investments; it is a course in optimizing our use of time and resources.

Jesus's point was to inform believers that unless they were *shrewd*, they would not gain the full benefit of being in the *light*. They weren't taking advantage of the law of reciprocity that can be observed in the world.

The Observation

The observation is that *the sons of this age are more shrewd in relation to their own kind than the sons of light*.

The primary point of this parable is to understand how to apply the principle of reciprocity. The *sons of this age* understand reciprocity, and consistently use it to their advantage. To use contemporary examples, salesmen give gifts and trips to those from whom they hope to gain business. Special interest groups give campaign donations to politicians from whom they hope to gain favors. Men spend money on women hoping for a return of romantic favors. The world system is full of manipulations based on reciprocity. The *sons of this age* understand and use this principle to great effect.

However, while *the sons of this age* understand well how to employ the principle of reciprocity, *the sons of light* do not. Jesus uses this parable to instruct the *disciples* on how to be *shrewd*, and benefit themselves by using this principle in a spiritual way. A way that God desires. The bottom line will be this: God wants His people to use all the material goods he has entrusted us to steward in order to benefit His people. When we do so, we will be creating an enormous benefit for ourselves, which we will experience in the next life. *The shrewd steward* got people to receive him into earthly homes for his few remaining years. But Jesus implored the disciples to serve people in so great a manner that they could not pay them back in this life. They would therefore *receive you into the eternal dwellings*.

When believers use the material assets entrusted to them in order to serve others, looking to God to reward them, we gain a surprising benefit: reciprocity in heaven from those whom we aided. It seems there will be an *eternal* memory of those who we helped, and an *eternal* benefit that stems from having helped them.

In this passage, the term, *the sons of light*, refer to those who believe in Jesus. They are part of God's family. They have everlasting life because they believe in Jesus (John 3:16).

To learn more about how to become *a son of light*, see the Tough Topics Article: "[What is Eternal Life? How to gain the Gift of Eternal Life.](#)"

As members of God's eternal family, *the sons of light* should follow Jesus and seek His kingdom and righteousness (Matthew 6:33; Luke 12:31). They should take up their cross daily to follow Him (Luke 9:23). They should walk by faith and not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7). Some of *the sons of light* are *shrewd* and do these things. Why? Because it is *shrewd*. It is in our true self-interest to do so. If we have the proper understanding we will see this. It is this proper understanding, a true perspective of reality that Jesus is seeking to convey to His followers. When we fail to do this, we miss out on an enormous benefit.

As a part of following the ways of God, *the sons of light* should recognize that they are stewards, with God as their *Master*. All of our material possessions belong to God. We will not take any material possessions into the next world. But God desires that we "squander" our possessions on others. He wants us to use His material possessions, which He entrusted to our stewardship, in order to benefit others. In doing so, we will be *shrewd* in an *eternal* way, and gain enormous

eternal benefits. When we get to heaven, those whom we benefitted in this life *will receive us into their eternal homes*.

To choose this perspective, and accordingly be able to see this benefit, requires a number of shifts in attitude:

- We must acknowledge that everything belongs to God.
- We must acknowledge that all that is in our possession is His.
- We must acknowledge that our fundamental choice in stewardship is to decide who to serve.
- We must recognize the fleeting nature of our material possessions. Like *the shrewd manager*, we must have a sense of urgency, knowing the time of our earthly stewardship is brief (James 4:14).
- We must decide that an *eternal*, transformative benefit is better than a temporal, transactional benefit.

Unfortunately, it seems this understanding is rare. It seems that typically *sons of light* are not *shrewd* and do not do these things. Many *sons of light* miss the kingdom and walk by the broad road and enter by the wide gate that leads to destruction (Matthew 7:13-14; Luke 13:24). Many *sons of light* are like the seeds that fall beside the road, the rocky soil, and among the thorns and produce little to no fruit (Matthew 13:3-7; Mark 4:3-7; Luke 8:5-7). Despite receiving the gift of *eternal* life and being members of God's eternal family, many *sons of light* do not follow Jesus. They foolishly seek to establish their own kingdom, as *the sons of this age* do, instead of building for God's kingdom. Jesus implores His *disciples* to be *shrewd*, and see how to benefit in a manner that is real, lasting, and transformational. This comes through seeing our material goods as temporal and belonging to God, and to use those goods in order to benefit others.

A part of missing the true benefits of the kingdom is to misunderstand how best to steward our material possessions. When we use our material possessions to help others, we are piling up a huge reward in heaven. Jesus referred to this principle many times in the gospel accounts (Matthew 6:19-20, 19:21; Mark 10:21; Luke 12:33, 18:22). Here, however, Jesus discloses that a part of that treasure will be the heavenly reciprocity we gain from those whom we served. This is a reciprocity without end! It is transformational, rather than merely transactional.

Jesus was making the observation that *the sons of this age are more clever at leveraging reciprocity to attain their own kind of treasures than the sons of light are at attaining their own kind of treasures*.

The *kind* of treasures that *the sons of this age* seek are temporal and earthly—money, power, status, privilege, etc. The *kind* of treasures that *the sons of light* seek are eternal and heavenly—treasure in heaven, positions of authority in the New Heaven and Earth, Divine approval, eternal glory, true significance, everlasting community, etc.

The sons of this age are shrewd at winning their own kind of treasures but the sons of light lack shrewdness at winning their own kind of treasures.

The sons of this age are more shrewd because they deliberately and strategically seek out *their own kind* of treasures. They understand what they must do to win them. They pay attention. They maneuver. They take carefully considered steps to win.

The sons of light are less shrewd because they lack 1. Faith; 2. Knowledge; or 3. Perseverance.

1. They do not believe God owns all things. They think they own what they own.
2. They do not know or believe God's word or understand the incredible opportunity before them.
3. They lose heart and do not have the patience to continue seeking *eternal* treasure when temporal treasures are right in front of them.

Jesus constantly taught and encouraged *the disciples* and other *sons of light* to seek *eternal* treasure. One example of this is Matthew 6:20: "But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal." Others include: Matthew 13:44; Luke 12:33; Luke 12:43-44; Luke 18:22; Luke 18:29; Revelation 3:18.

Paul also imparts something very similar to those teachings,

"For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."
(2 Corinthians 4:17-18)

Many *sons of light* lack shrewdness because they do not have faith and believe what Jesus is offering. Or they do not understand the incredible meaning of these and other teachings. Or they simply become distracted or grow weary in doing good and become conformed to the ways of this world.

When we get distracted, we can lose sight of the immense rewards available in heaven.

Unless they become *more shrewd*, they are likely to lose their full reward because of ignorance or apathy and they won't know it until their judgement. They risk ending up like the bridesmaids who missed the wedding feast because they had no oil (Matthew 25:1-13). They risk being among the sons of the kingdom who miss the banquet and are instead cast into the outer darkness (Matthew 8:11-12). They risk becoming the man who watches everything he has lived for burn up at the Judgement Seat of Christ, but is himself saved so as through fire (1 Corinthians 3:15). But then it will be too late.

Jesus did not state this observation to admonish *the sons of this age* to seek better treasure. He was speaking to His *disciples*, not unbelievers. And Jesus was not telling His *disciples* to seek the earthly treasures that *the sons of this age* sought. In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus repeatedly told them not to seek temporal treasures (Matthew 6:1; 6:2; 6: 5; 6:16; 6:19-20).

The reason Jesus made this observation about *the sons of this age* and *the sons of light*, was because He was exhorting His followers to become *more shrewd* in their ambitions like *the sons*

of this age were shrewd. He wanted His *disciples* to gain treasures that lasted. Here Jesus exhorts the disciples to view their material assets as God's, and "squander" it to benefit others, in order that the recipients of their service would *receive you into the eternal dwellings*.

The Exhortation with a Promise

After Jesus made the observation that *the sons of this age are more shrewd in relation to their own ambitions than the sons of light are in relation to their ambitions*, He exhorted them.

Implicitly He exhorted them to become *shrewd* like *the sons of this age were shrewd*. He wanted them to use the principle of reciprocity, but for a lasting benefit in heaven. Jesus wanted them to see their material assets as belonging to God, and something they can steward. But He wanted them to see that God likes them to "squander" His assets by benefitting and serving others.

Explicitly, Jesus exhorted *the sons of light to make friends for yourselves by means of the wealth of unrighteousness*. Jesus wants His *disciples* to bless others. To invest in others. To serve others. Any use of material wealth is a use of God's wealth, since everything belongs to Him.

Jesus made this exhortation upon the assurance of His divine authority.

The expression, *And I say to you*, was a way that Jewish Rabbis added weight to what they taught. But instead of saying *I say to you*, they said, "as Rabbi so-and-so says." By citing a known and venerated Rabbi, it showed how what the teacher was explaining was in harmony with a great Rabbi and should also be accepted and applied. Jesus rarely taught this way. Instead He often referred to His own authority (Matthew 5:18; 5:20; 5:22; 5:28; 5:32; 5:34; 5:39; 5:44; 6:2; 6:5; 6:16; 6:29; 8:10; 8:11; 10:15; 10:23; 10:42; 11:24; 12:6; 12:31; 12:36; 13:17; 16:18; 16:28; 17:12; 17:20; 18:3; 18:10; 18:13; 18:18; 18:19; 18:22; 19:9; 19:23; 19:24; 19:28; 21:43; 23:36; 23:39; 24:2; 24:25; 24:34; 24:47; 26:13; 26:21; 26:34).

This way of teaching astonished the people (Matthew 7:28-29) because it was bold and seemed to be presumptuous. Because Jesus was the Messiah and God, there was no higher authority to which He could appeal. It was therefore appropriate for Him to teach this way. And every time Jesus did, it highlights His divine seal and guarantee to what He taught. When this divine guarantee preceded a promise (as it does in this passage) it functions as like a signature does at the end of a contract.

What Jesus meant by His explicit exhortation to *the sons of light to make friends for yourselves by means of the wealth of unrighteousness* was for them to shrewdly use their material *wealth* of *this* world to bless and serve other people. It is God's wealth, and He wants us to use it to benefit others. In doing so we will be benefitting ourselves. In this case, the reward God focuses on comes from those whom we bless and serve with our material assets, that they will *receive us into the eternal dwellings*. They will host and grant hospitality to us not just for our short life remaining on earth, but forever.

The term *wealth of the unrighteous* simply means *the wealth* of this world. It is the temporal goods that those who care little or nothing for God seek and crave. This includes money, and

other material *wealth* such as houses, food, or belongings. It also may include social status, power, or influence. This *wealth* is described as *unrighteous*, not because it is inherently evil or because it is attained by ill-gotten means. It isn't. (The love of money is evil—1 Timothy 6:10). This *wealth* is described as *unrighteous* because it has no *eternal* value. *It* may have some value in *this age*, but one day *it* will fail. And *when it fails*, *it* will be worthless.

Jesus was exhorting His followers to *shrewdly* make *eternal* use of temporal things before they lose their value.

The reason this is *shrewd* is because it takes advantage of wealth that has limited and short-lived value and uses it in such a way that it yields *eternal* benefit and blessing.

This was akin to what *the unrighteous manager* did in the parable. *The manager* took advantage of the debts owed to *his master*—debts which had no inherent or lasting value to *the manager*—and *he* made *friends* with those debtors in the short window of time that *he* could.

Jesus was exhorting His *disciples* to be like this *unrighteous manager* in this respect: to *shrewdly* use their earthly treasures that have no *eternal* value and use them to generously bless others to *make* everlasting *friends* who *will receive you into their eternal homes*.

The exhortation came with a reward: *so that they will receive you into their eternal homes*.

The phrase, *receive you into their eternal homes* could be a figure of speech from the parable or it could be a literal application of what life is like in the New Heaven and the New Earth.

In the parable, *the unrighteous manager* wrote off much of the debts owed to *his master* as a way to *make friends* with *his master's* debtors, so that they would *welcome* and *receive him into their homes when he* was no longer employed.

It seems likely that this was not simply a figure of speech and that there is something specific and concrete to Jesus's analogy. It appears that a part of the treasure we can lay up in heaven through good deeds done on earth is to receive the gratitude of those whom we served in the next life.

Consider what Jesus and the Biblical writers say about life to come in the new heaven and the new earth.

Dwelling Places

Elsewhere Jesus promised *the disciples* that where His Father lived that there are many dwelling places (John 14:2). And part of the reason Jesus was going to heaven was to prepare places for them so they could be with Him for eternity (John 14:3). Apparently, there will be actual dwelling places in the New Heaven and New Earth where people will live. It stands to reason that people will enjoy hosting others in these dwelling places. It seems that those who helped us in our life on earth will be prominent on guest lists.

New Jerusalem

The New Heaven and New Earth will also be a place of commerce and community. There will be a New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:10) where the kings and queens will enter in and out of bringing their glory and the fruit of their labors with them (Revelation 21:24-25). There will be redeemed cultures and nations in the New Earth and they will all work in harmony with God and share their cultural glory with His people (Revelation 21:26).

The picture this passage in Revelation presents is a multi-cultural, international community of nations all living under the unity of God's perfect order, with people co-reigning with God. There seems to be a fair bit of travel occurring. And when people travel far from their homes, they need a place to stay. The New Heaven and Earth does not seem to be different from our world in this respect. It also seems reasonable that a part of the glory of these kingdoms will involve events, and people being welcomed into dwellings.

Everlasting Relationships

The Bible also teaches that in the life to come we will remember one another from our time on earth (2 Samuel 12:23; Luke 16:19-25). We will have redeemed relationships (1 Corinthians 13:12; Hebrews 12:22-23). All hurts and offenses will be forgiven and we will be reconciled through Christ—all our pain will pass away (Isaiah 65:16-17; Revelation 21:4). It seems that our earthly memories will be redeemed (1 Corinthians 3:14). Believers will know one another in the new Heaven and the New Earth (Matthew 26:29). Believers such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and Elijah are and will be recognizable in the life to come (Matthew 8:11; Luke 13:28-29; Mark 9:4-5). So it will be with all believers.

Taken together, these passages and others mentioned below strongly suggest that we will be able to recall memories of our time together on earth. People in the New Heaven and New Earth will remember the kindness we did for them. And apparently, in the life to come they will be eager to reciprocate that kindness back to us. One of the ways they can do this is to *receive* us into their heavenly homes (*eternal dwellings*) as Jesus teaches in this parable.

This remarkable thought is a specific example which Jesus taught His disciples in Luke 14 about treating the poor and the overlooked—people who had no earthly means to materially repay your kindness.

“But when you give a reception, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, since they do not have the means to repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”
(Luke 14:13-14)

If we are a blessing to those who cannot pay us back in this life, Jesus teaches that they will be glad to repay us in the life to come. And according to Jesus's teaching about the Parable of the *Unrighteous Manager*, one of the ways they can repay us is by receiving us into their heavenly dwelling places. This also could be a part of laying “a good foundation for the future” that Paul teaches Timothy when he urged him to “instruct those who are rich in this present world... to be

generous and ready to share” (1 Timothy 6:17-18). This kind of reward is not transactional, but transformational.

One easy-to-miss point that is fascinating from Jesus’s teachings in the parable of *the Unrighteous Manager* and Luke 14:13-14 is that the *sons of light* can bless and reward one another in Heaven. Not every reward and blessing given in the life to come is directly from God’s hand. As is the case in this life, believers will still be able to bless each other with their gifts and possessions as they choose.

We would do well to remember that many of those who are last in this life shall be first in the next (Luke 13:30). This could include faithful widows, orphans, and the poor who are members of God’s royal family—those whom *this age* considers “the least of these” (Matthew 25:40).

We cannot take our earthly *wealth* with us to heaven. Earthly treasure is not *eternal*. But we can use the *wealth of this age to make eternal* friends. If we are *shrewd*, we will take Jesus’s exhortation to heart and use our *unrighteous wealth to make eternal friends*.

People are more important than money. And the way we use our *unrighteous wealth* is a significant way we value, love, and serve others. Paul commands the Ephesians to work so that they can have something to give as a blessing to others (Ephesians 4:28).

Jesus’s exhortation is related to both the “golden rule” (Matthew 7:12) and the second greatest commandment (Matthew 22:39; Mark 12:31). And it is another way we can go the extra mile (Matthew 5:41) or give a person suing for our shirt our coat also (Matthew 5:40).

Our generosity should not only be for doing the often-perceived “unpleasant” things. We can (and should) also be generous in our hospitality, service, and play. We can share the produce of our vineyards. We can invite people to stay in our homes. We can serve them meals. We can throw parties to celebrate their successes and blessings of life.

Big hearts and generosity *make friends* (Proverbs 11:24-25; 28:27). This is true, even if someone is not particularly “rich” in *the failing wealth of this age*. We know that it is not the amount given, but the heart behind it which matters (Luke 21:1-4, 2 Corinthians 9:6-7). However much or little we have, we can give it graciously to others, building fellowship and cultivating harmonious relationships with each other.

We should *shrewdly* use what we have to be kind to other people and to *make friends* with them. And Jesus tells us that one of the reasons we should is because they will reward us from their eternal treasures and possessions in the New Heaven and the New Earth.

Biblical Text

Now He was also saying to the disciples, “There was a rich man who had a manager, and this *manager* was reported to him as squandering his possessions. ² And he called him and said to him, ‘What is this I hear about you? Give an accounting of your management, for you can no longer be manager.’ ³ The manager said to himself, ‘What shall I do, since

my master is taking the management away from me? I am not strong enough to dig; I am ashamed to beg.⁴ I know what I shall do, so that when I am removed from the management people will welcome me into their homes.’⁵ And he summoned each one of his master’s debtors, and he *began* saying to the first, ‘How much do you owe my master?’⁶ And he said, ‘A hundred measures of oil.’ And he said to him, ‘Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.’⁷ Then he said to another, ‘And how much do you owe?’ And he said, ‘A hundred measures of wheat.’ He said to him, ‘Take your bill, and write eighty.’⁸ And his master praised the unrighteous manager because he had acted shrewdly; for the sons of this age are more shrewd in relation to their own kind than the sons of light.⁹ And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by means of the wealth of unrighteousness, so that when it fails, they will receive you into the eternal dwellings.