

***Lu 16:9 And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.***

Briefly, by the grace of God, I'd like to try to explain the text of Luke 16:9. The parable, of which this verse is a part, should be called the Parable of the Great Commission because it illustrates a time when the disciples should come into the nations, among the Gentiles.

Verse 9 is set in the context of the illustration which our Lord Jesus cites to His disciples concerning the unjust steward. There is communicated in this illustration a sense of urgency with the words, *sit down quickly*. Christ's disciples are to be diligent about this matter. So what is the matter under consideration?

Chapter 16 is built upon a number of events which have unfolded in the preceding chapters. Those events are: that Israel failed to discern the day of the coming of the Messiah (12.56); that their house is left to them desolate (13.35), and that the disciples, especially his core little flock, the church, are being tenderly taught that they shall come into the nations (14.23, 24) because of Israel's resolute impenitence (15.28). On the heels of these events chapter 16 reveals that there is coming a change in stewardship. Because of the disciples' relationship as Jews to Israel, they are, along with the whole, unfaithful nation, about to be cast out of their present stewardship. ... *thou mayest no longer be steward* (v.2) So, the implication is that the disciples are to seek other places where the stewardship is to come. The illustration of unjust steward sets an example for the disciples so that they may begin preparing for the time when the stewardship of God removes from Israel and comes into the nations. Notice that the steward's actions were such with his lord's debtor's that *they may receive [him] into their houses* (v.4). So the disciples are commanded something which parallels the steward's efforts so that *they* might be received *into everlasting habitations* (v.9).

The disciples, in preparation against that time are commanded by Christ to *make friends of the mammon of unrighteousness*. *Mammon* simply means *riches*. *Unrighteous mammon* would be a reference to their earthly possessions. In effect

Christ commands His Jewish disciples to make friends by the use legitimate means with those to whom the stewardship comes. And what is that stewardship but that which God has entrusted to Israel? Israel had His word, His worship, and His service. The stewardship is transferring into the care of the churches of Jesus Christ, which in the days ahead will become predominately Gentile. With this in mind it should be obvious that there must come a change in the thinking of the Jewish disciples concerning the Gentiles. The apostle Paul provides an excellent example of this new thinking toward the Gentiles. And his beneficent dealings with them are an exact reduplication of what the illustration of the unjust steward is all about.

*1Co 9:22 To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.*

What the unjust steward did by calling to him his lord's debtors and dealing so beneficently with them was a work of reconciliation. Whatever else we might think about the actions of this unjust steward, the point is that he was reconciling his lord's debtors. So, Christ was commanding his disciples, that when the time came, to do the same to *others*, which were among the Gentiles, that were *also* His debtors. Christ paid the sin-debt for many of the Gentiles and they were His debtors. The Jewish disciples were to bring the gospel of *reconciliation* to them. In this way, these disciples, being rejected by their countrymen, and Israel being dispersed and losing the stewardship of God, would be received *into their houses* (v.4), or *into everlasting habitations*. (v.9) That the Gentiles received the stewardship of God, Peter wrote to the Gentiles in His first epistle:

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

That God had entrusted to the Gentiles the witness of Jesus Christ is incontestable. It was not long after the days of Christ that the stewardship of God was found within a predominately Gentile church. And so it has been ever since. This stewardship has, for this time, become a distinct and disassociated entity

from national Israel. This transition was step by step. In the beginning the gospel of Christ was only preached to the Jews.

*Ac 11:19 Now they (of the Jerusalem church) which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, **preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only.***

But not too long afterwards Peter was led of the Lord to preach Christ to the Gentiles. (cf. Acts chapter 10, Cornelius and his house) After that, the Lord called Paul and Barnabas to preach Christ among the nations. From this time forward the churches increased more and more until they were, in the main, Gentiles churches. Now let's consider the phrase *everlasting habitations*.

The phrase, *everlasting habitations*, is greatly misunderstood. It is a kind of oxymoron. Its terms, *everlasting* and *habitations* seem to be contradictory. The word *habitation* is derived from a Greek word that is otherwise translated *tabernacle*. A tabernacle is a tent. Tents don't convey the idea of permanence. It is this odd phrase that points out the unique quality of another entity, like Israel, that shall receive the stewardship of God. Notice how Peter describes the churches as one that is *traveling* through this world.

*1Pe 1:17 And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of **your sojourning** here in fear ...*

*1Pe.2.11 Dearly beloved, I beseech you **as strangers and pilgrims**, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul ...*

Yet on the other hand the churches have no end, an everlasting existence.

*Eph 3:21 Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus **throughout all ages, world without end.** Amen.*

*Mt 16:18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and **the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.***

*Mt 28:20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you **always, even unto the end of the world.** Amen.*

In the introduction to this message I stated that there was in this illustration a phrase which communicated a sense of urgency. That phrase is *sit down quickly*. For these dear, Jewish brethren living in Christ's day it wasn't long before the Romans would waste the land of Israel and drive the Jews away from their homeland. Against this time Christ would have His disciples prepared to go forth to preach the gospel of reconciliation to the Gentiles. Of them churches would be established and flourish. Who cannot understand that the churches have received for this time what Israel lost: the stewardship of God? What does this stewardship involve?

The stewardship of God involves the same as it did for Israel. Israel was brought into covenant with God. They should have kept God's word, His worship, and His service, but they did not. That charge to keep the word of God, to worship him in spirit and truth, and be the servants of Christ has come to the churches of Jesus Christ through the new covenant. (Mt.28.18-20; 1Ti.3.15) So these things considered, it is true that this parable could be called The Parable of the Great Commission. I think this best explains the meaning of the famous 'Parable of the Unjust Steward,' and particularly the text of Luke 16:9.