Phase 2, Session 11, God or Mammon

Please read the material and the Scriptures included on all 12 points listed for this session.

The following are the subjects that we will review in this email:

1. Why God or Mammon?
2. The Commandment: Only God
3. The Eternal and the Temporal
4. Choose God, not Mammon
5. How did Jesus teach His disciples not to rely on money?
6. Freedom from Money, an Extraordinary Blessing
7. Mammon is the Root of all Kinds of Evil
8. What does the Lord Want us to do with our Money or Property?
9. What is the Impact of Mammon on our Daily Lives?
10. These are the Challenges that Jesus gave us...and His Promises
11. Exercise During the Week
12. Understanding the Parable of the Unjust Steward

https://zoom.us/j/93275410611?pwd=Q1p1Y2pQSFpiQk9ta0doS1RQOGNiQT09

I. Objectives of Session 11 - God or Mammon

1. Explain why Jesus made the comparison between God and Mammon
Matthew 6:24
Genesis 3:4-6
Genesis 3:17-18
Genesis 3:23
Deuteronomy 8:16-18

2. Explain why it is only God
Exodus 20:2-3
Matthew 4:10
1 John 2:15-17
James 4:3-4

3. Discuss the difference be the Eternal and the Temporal and their impact on our lives (fear and worry, slavery, instability and darkness and fatalism)

Hebrews 11:3
2 Corinthians 4:16-18
Matthew 6:19-21
Haggai 1:6-7
John 6:48-51

4. Demonstrate why we are to choose God, not Mammon
Matthew 6:25-34
Psalm 146:3-5

5. Explain how Jesus taught His disciples not to rely on money
Luke 10:3-7

6. Discuss why Freedom from Money is an Extraordinary Blessing
Luke 10:17-24
Luke 22:35-38

7. Demonstrate why Mammon is the Root of all Kinds of Evil and causes many sorrows
1 Timothy 6:10
Haggai 1:6-7
Revelation 9:1-12
Revelation 9:13-21

8. Review what the Lord want us to do with our Money or Property
-**Be a good steward**
Matthew 25:14-30
Luke19:11-27
-**Prosper**
Luke 12:22-34
Psalm 35:27
-**Give**
Luke 21:1-4
2 Corinthians 9:7
-**Be content**
Hebrews 13:5-6
Philippians 4:11-13
-**Allow gleaning**
Leviticus 9:9-10
-**Don’t borrow**

Deuteronomy 15:6
Romans 13:8

-**Provide for your family**
1 Timothy 5:8

-**Provide for yourself**
2 Thessalonians 3:10

9. Discuss the Impact of Mammon on our Daily Lives
Mark 4:18-19
1 Timothy 6:10
1 John 4:18-19

10. Review the Challenges that Jesus gave us...and His Promises to be free from the slavery of Mammon
Matthew 5:48
Matthew 19:21
Matthew 5:39-42
Luke 6:27-36
1 Timothy 6:17-19
1 John 3:16-23
John 6:56
John 15:5
Psalm 127:1

11. Explain the exercise During the Week

12. Discuss the Parable of the Unjust Steward
Luke 16:1-18

II. Email to participants before session 11 - God or Mammon

As believers, what should our attitude be towards money? How should we deal with it? Is tithing all that we are called to do regarding money? How important is money? Going by the number of times that money/possessions/ riches are mentioned in Scripture, it seems that God considers it to be an important topic. On the website Preaching Today, http://www.preachingtoday.com/illustrations/1996/december/410.html (an arm of "Christianity Today"), Howard L. Dayton, Jr. gives the following statistics:

“Jesus talked much about money. Sixteen of the thirty-eight parables were concerned with how to handle money and possessions. In the Gospels, an amazing one out of ten verses (288 in all) deal directly with the subject of money. The Bible offers 500 verses on prayer, less than 500 verses on faith, but more than 2,000 verses on money and possessions.”
Howard L. Dayton, Jr., Leadership, Vol. 2, no. 2.
(For this discussion, we will just use the term money to include all possessions, riches, etc.)

What concerns God the most regarding money is our attitude towards it. People often misquote 1 Timothy 6:10 to say that money is the root of all evil; however, it is not money but the *love of money* that is the root of all evil. In Scripture, we often see that the love of money has both a competing (for our attention/love) and a corrupting influence, referred to as “mammon.” Jesus said, in Matthew 6:24, that you can not serve and give your allegiance to both God and mammon. “*No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon*.” This is why God warns us repeatedly about mammon; He does not want it taking our love and loyalty away from Him.

-Hate one and love the other
Luke 10:27 NKJV
So he answered and said, ‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,’ and ‘your neighbor as yourself.’

-Be loyal to the one and despise the other
Hosea 6:6 NASB
For I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice, And in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.

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1. Why God or Mammon?

God has no equals, so what made Jesus compare God with mammon? Anything that we place above God is an idol that leads us away from God, but what makes mammon especially deceptive, attractive and dangerous? The answer lies in Genesis. It began with the temptation from Satan and the fall of man in Genesis 3:4-6 *Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate*. Even though they lived in Paradise and had everything that they needed, in abundance, Adam and Eve wanted to have more. They wanted to have the only thing the Lord had told them not to have, even though He had said that they would surely die if they had it (Genesis 2:17). No matter the consequences, they decided to have it by their own means, apart from and in disobedience to God. They wanted what they thought was "abundance" (they already had it all), but they were deceived and taken by the spirit of mammon. Something similar happened to Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11).

Then came the curse to the soil from which Adam was made.

Genesis 3:17-19 "*Then to Adam He said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': "****Cursed is the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat of it All the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, And you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread*** *Till you return to the ground, For out of it you were taken; For dust you are, And to dust you shall return*."

Genesis 3:23 "*therefore the Lord God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken*."

From Genesis chapters 1 and 2, we understand that God was providing for all their

needs and that they lacked nothing. In fact, the whole order of creation implied that God provided everything man needed for optimum living, in advance of creating Adam and Eve. They didn't have to do much; they simply had to take care of the garden, without any risk that the ground would fail to produce. In the garden of Eden, man depended solely on God for his subsistence[1], and he had only One Master. After the fall, he had to depend on his work to make a living. He had to depend on the creation (the ground from which he was taken), while still being subject to God and the natural laws of His creation. The possibility of having two masters arose from the fall of man and the actions of the devil. Man had already chosen the creation over the Creator, and God's curse was that he had to depend on the choice that he had made for his subsistence. Man now needed the creation to make a living. Man was still called, however, to rely on God. The curse was to work the soil, the creation; he was not supposed to love the creation but to love God. God kept up His relentless pursuit of man by asking man to turn to Him for the provision of everything he needed and to recognize that God is the source of all of our blessings.

The problem is that the soil — the creation, the object that produces sustenance — could be confused with God, because it provides the necessities of life. According to Genesis 3:17-19, man now needed the creation to make a living. From that reality, arose the possibility of mammon or the love of money. God, in fact, is still the source of man's provision, but mammon clouds the issue.

Psalm 24:1-2 "*The earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness, The world and those who dwell therein. For He has founded it upon the seas, And established it upon the waters*."

John 1:3 "*All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made."*

Colossians 1:15-18 "*He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence."*

Deuteronomy 8:16-18 "*who fed you in the wilderness with manna, which your fathers did not know, that He might humble you and that He might test you, to do you good in the end— then you say in your heart, 'My power and the might of my hand have gained*

me this wealth.' "And you shall remember the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day"

The world is the Lord's. The land produces all. There is nothing created by human work; it is simply transformed. That transformation may make us believe that we are creating something, but the reality is that we are just transforming what the Lord has given us, what belongs to Him and He has put in our care.

There are many things in this world that distract us from God, that compete for our time and attention: loved ones, relationships, power, significance, health, etc**.** Let's explore in more detail why money (or the fruit of working the soil) could be confused with God. Mammon is not like any other idol. It is the only one that can be confused with God, and this is what makes it so treacherous. The love of parents or children can't offer you medical attention, significance or power; the love of self (your appearance, your power, your abilities) also can't offer you what money and riches do. No other idol offers all that mammon does. As we discussed above, man had to work the field, now filled with thorns, to derive his subsistence from nature (Genesis 3:17). That opened the door to the possibility of relying on nature instead of relying on God. God told Adam that he needed the soil, the creation, to make a living, not that he should rely on nature. What we are called to do is to work and benefit from what nature offers, but in full reliance on God. Money appears as the provider of not only necessities (food, drink, shelter and clothing) but also wants. Money gives the appearance of allowing for relationships and love. Money makes you believe that you can purchase health, safety and security. Money allows us to acquire power, prestige and significance in life. In summary, money may make us believe that with it we can overcome the difficulties of life and that with it we can achieve happiness.

Man has been deceived into believing that money is: the provider of needs and wants; the enabler of love and friendships; the supplier of health, safety and security; the acquirer of power, prestige and significance; the one that guarantees deliverance from the hardships of life; and the one that makes happiness possible. This resembles what God does for us. When this confusion is manifested, when man replaces God with money, then money and our love for it becomes mammon. The love of money has the ability to equate what only God can do for us with mammon; in so doing, it creates the possibility of two masters — of whom we can only choose one.

2. The Commandment: Only God

Exodus 20:2-3 "*I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. "You shall have no other gods before Me*.

Matthew 4:10 "*Then Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.'*"

Those who are of the world chose the world and mammon above God

1 John 2:15-17 "*Do not love the world or the things in the world. **If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him**. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.**And the world is passing away**, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever*.

James 4:3-4 "*You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures. Adulterers and adulteresses! **Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God**."*

However, we believers are not of the world.

John 17:14-19 "***I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world**. I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth*.

3. The Eternal and the Temporal

God warns us against mammon and reliance on money not only because it leads us away from Him but also because it leads us towards fear and slavery. Why is this so? We begin to see the answer in these verses:

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 "*Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, **while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not***

seen are eternal."

Hebrews 11:3 "*By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God,* ***so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible***."

Effects of relying on what is temporal

Fear and worry
The possession of money is temporary; money and riches are part of the creation and can fade away in the blink of an eye (Revelation 18:15-18). You can't rely on anything that is temporal and still manage to avoid fear. Fear arose from man's decision, under Satan's influence, to rely on himself (on the creation) and not on God (Genesis 3:7-10).

Extreme conditions of riches or poverty may easily lead to mammon, to the love of money instead of God. Even without these extremes, however, the person who fails to rely on the Holy Spirit becomes susceptible to the wiles of mammon. We know that under the new covenant, in reliance on the Holy Spirit, neither the extremes nor their absence should make any difference in our relationship with God.

We read in Proverbs 30:8-9 "*Remove falsehood and lies far from me;* ***Give me neither poverty nor riches— Feed me with the food allotted to me; Lest I be full and deny You, And say, "Who is the Lord?" Or lest I be poor and steal, And profane the name of my God***."

It is commonly assumed that only the rich are affected by the love of money, mammon. However, these verses make it clear the the effect of mammon could be more pronounced in both extremes of much wealth and great poverty. The poor may be severely afflicted by mammon, with fear and worry, if all that is in their heart is the pursuit and the love of money.

Slavery
Mammon drives man into slavery. One reason is that reliance on what is perishable (money) creates the fear that you may not have enough. In the absence of reliance on God, this leads to an insatiable desire for more and more. You always have to have "more" in case you lose some, or all, of what you have. The thought is that the more you have . . . the less likely you are to lose it all. Secondly, comparisons with other people, fueled by envy, greed and pride, lead those who love money to pursue it to no end. There will always be someone who has more than you do. There is never enough for those who love money:

Luke 12:16-21 "*Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?' So he said,* ***'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry****.'" But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?' "So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God*."

Mathew 6:19-21 "***Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal****; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also*.

John 6:26-27 "*Jesus answered them and said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled.* ***Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you****, because God the Father has set His seal on Him*."

This is another way for us to understand that we must rely on God and not on what is perishable. They ate, they were filled, and they came back for more. This is also the message to the woman at the well regarding the water of life: *Jesus answered and said to her, "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life."* (John 4:13-14)

According to Proverbs 22:7 ***The rich rules over the poor, And the borrower is servant to the lender***. The effect of mammon makes people slaves, not only to the property that they possess (or desire) but also to the people who lend to them.

Insatiability

Whatever is of the world will fail to satisfy us; we will always be in the insatiable pursuit of more. Rockefeller, when he was considered the richest man in the world, was asked by a reporter, "How much money is enough?" He responded, "Just a little bit more".

There is no end to the pursuit of mammon, as stated in Ecclesiastes 5:10 *He who loves silver will not be satisfied with silver; Nor he who loves abundance, with increase. This also is vanity*.

Haggai 1:6-7 "***You have sown much, and bring in little; You eat, but do not have enough; You drink, but you are not filled with drink; You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; And he who earns wages, Earns wages to put into a bag with holes."*** *Thus says the Lord of hosts: "Consider your ways*!"

John 6:48-51 "*I am the bread of life.* ***Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead****. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.*"

Darkness and fatalism

This is a call to rely on God and not on earthly riches, to rely on the Eternal and not on what is temporal. The segment of the verse below, that I have underlined, points to the impact that our treasure has on us; it darkens our hearts, the fountain of life.

Proverbs 4:20-23 "*My son, give attention to my words; Incline your ear to my sayings.* ***Do not let them depart from your eyes; Keep them in the midst of your heart****; For they are life to those who find them, And health to all their flesh. Keep your heart with all diligence,* ***For out of it spring the issues of life***."

Matthew 6:22-23 deals exactly with the effects that our treasure has on our hearts: "***The lamp of the body is the eye****. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness*!

If our treasure is earthly things, there will be darkness in our eyes, darkness in our hearts. Conversely, if our treasure is in heaven, in God, there will be light in our eyes, light in our hearts; He is the light of the earth (John 8:12 and 9:5). Our attitude in life (light or darkness) is determined by where our treasure is.

4. Choose God, not Mammon

The verse that follows is Matthew 6:24 (the verse with which we started), in which the Lord says that we can't have two masters — God and mammon. We see in Matthew 6:25-34 Jesus explaining why we should not set our treasure on earthly riches. Jesus tells us not to worry about our life, for God, who takes care of the most insignificant, would certainly take care of us. Matthew 6 ends with the assertion that there is no worry in reliance on the Lord and with a call to live in the present.

Matthew 6:25-34 "***Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life****, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?* ***Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature****? "So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'* ***For after all these things the Gentiles seek****. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.* ***But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you****. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble*.

"*Do not worry about your life*" is not a suggestion; it is a commandment, which is only possible to fulfill when we rely on Him, when our Master is God. It is interesting to hear believers talk about worry, anxiety and fear as normal and unavoidable aspects of life, yet the Scriptures clearly define them as sins (see Romans 14:23). We hear believers taking umbrage at lying, adultery, murder, idolatry, etc. (as they should), but accepting worry, anxiety and fear as something normal, just as any unbeliever would. Well, the Scriptures have news for us; these emotions are sins that are incompatible with our identity in Christ. As believers, we have to know what these verses say. We are called to reject worry, anxiety and fear as the sins they are, and, in reliance on Him, banish them from our lives. There is no abundant life, the life that Jesus came to give us (John 10:10), in the presence of worry, anxiety or fear. These emotions no longer belong in the souls and bodies of believers. They don't add anything to our lives. Rather, they are a detriment to us, as is any sin. ***But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you*****.** This is the resolution granted to us through the Crucifixion, Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus Christ. Seek One Master, God, and all these things shall be added to you. Observe that it says "seek first". I would challenge anyone to find "seek secondly" in the Scriptures. It isn't there because God is all sufficient "*The lord is my shepherd, I shall not want*" (Psalm 23:1), "*Unless the Lord builds the house the workers labor in vain*" (Psalm 127:1) or "*... if you abide in Me and I abide in you, you would produce much fruit, apart from Me, you can do nothing*" (John 15:5).

Reliance on ourselves or on our earthly riches, reliance on anything that is temporal,

brings worry, anxiety and fear. The Lord tells us not to worry because it is possible for us not to worry, not to be anxious (Philippians 4:6), not to have fear (2 Timothy 1:7). Otherwise, He wouldn't have given us these commandments. This is only possible when we have One Master, God.

Psalm 146:3-5 "*Do not trust in princes, In mortal man, in whom there is no salvation. His spirit departs, he returns to the earth; In that very day his thoughts perish. How blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, Whose hope is in the Lord his God*,"

5. How Did Jesus Teach His Disciples not to Rely on Money?

Jesus initially sent His disciples without anything (money, luggage, sandals) as lambs among wolves.

Luke 10:3-7 "***Go your way; behold, I send you out as lambs among wolves. Carry neither money bag, knapsack, nor sandals; and greet no one along the road.*** *But whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this house.' And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest on it; if not, it will return to you.* ***And remain in the same house, eating and drinking such things as they give, for the laborer is worthy of his wages.*** *Do not go from house to house*."

Their experience was a complete success, since they fully relied on the Lord. The effect of their work was felt everywhere, even in the realm of the demonic.

6. Freedom from Mammon is an Extraordinary Blessing

Luke 10:17-24 "***Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.****" And He said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven." In that hour Jesus rejoiced in the Spirit and said, "I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight. All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him." Then He turned to His disciples and said privately, "****Blessed are the eyes which see the things you see; for I tell you that many prophets and kings have desired to see what you see, and have not***

seen it, and to hear what you hear, and have not heard it."

The effects of this teaching are extraordinary and go far beyond acquiring the capacity not to rely on money. They were able to see and hear what prophets and kings had wished to see and hear, but had not been able to. This is the effect that results from fully relying on the Lord. It is an indication to us about the benefit and the blessing that comes upon us when God, rather than mammon, is our Master.

Find a way to try to replicate Jesus' teaching
Could you envision an exercise in today's world that would help you learn what the disciples learned from this experience? Maybe you could sign up for an expensive mission trip where you don't put a penny of your own money and don't take any money on the trip. Ask the Lord to help you think about doing something for a few weeks without money, luggage or sandals — in full dependence on Him.

Now that you rely on God, you can use all you need

The next time around, Jesus sent them with money, luggage, sandals and even a weapon to protect themselves.

Luke 22:35-38 "*And He said to them, "**When I sent you without money bag, knapsack, and sandals, did you lack anything?" So they said, "Nothing**." Then He said to them, "But now, he who has a money bag, let him take it, and likewise a knapsack; and he who has no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one. For I say to you that this which is written must still be accomplished in Me: 'And He was numbered with the transgressors.' For the things concerning Me have an end." So they said, "Lord, look, here are two swords." And He said to them, "It is enough.*"

Once you have learned to fully rely on the Lord, you can use the tools that He has made available to you in the world. The money and resources that the disciples used the second time around are not mammon, but tools to be used in reliance on the Lord. There is nothing inherently good or evil about money or riches. What matters is the spirit that governs our attitude toward it and our use of it. If that spirit is of God, then we can use that money to do much good in the Kingdom. If the spirit of mammon controls us, however, then our use of that money will eventually lead to evil.

7. Mammon, the Love of Money, is the Root of all Kinds of Evil . . . and Causes Many Sorrows.

I Timothy 6:10 "***For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows***."

As we can see in the following verses from Revelation, mammon, the love of money, is a sin that appears to give power (crowns, lion's teeth) and protection (breastplates). It is attractive (women's hair); however, it produces torment (with tails like scorpions) and brings destruction (fire, smoke and brimstone).

Torment
Revelation 9:3-10
Then out of the smoke locusts came upon the earth. And to them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power. They were commanded not to harm the grass of the earth, or any green thing, or any tree, but only those men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. ***And they were not given authority to kill them, but to torment them for five months. Their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it strikes a man. In those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will desire to die, and death will flee from them****. The shape of the locusts was like horses prepared for battle.* ***On their heads were crowns of something like gold, and their faces were like the faces of men. They had hair like women's hair, and their teeth were like lions' teeth. And they had breastplates like breastplates of iron****, and the sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots with many horses running into battle. They had tails like scorpions, and there were stings in their tails. Their power was to hurt men five months*.

Destruction
Revelation 9:17-19 "*And thus I saw the horses in the vision: those who sat on them had breastplates of fiery red, hyacinth blue, and sulfur yellow; and the heads of the horses were like the heads of lions;* ***and out of their mouths came fire, smoke, and brimstone****. By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed—by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone which came out of their mouths.* ***For their power is in their mouth and in their tails; for their tails are like serpents****, having heads; and with them they do harm*."

The obsession with accumulating possessions leads many to borrow money beyond their limits and their capacity to pay back. This results in bankruptcy and significant damage to their lives, including guilt, shame and condemnation. This obsession may come upon anyone, no matter how rich or poor they are.

8. What does the Lord Want us to do with our Money or Property?

A. Multiply it and be a good steward

We must realize that everything that we have has been given to us by God. The expectation of the Lord, from the parables of the talents in Matthew and the minas in Luke, is that we make the most with the resources that He has given to us.

Psalm 24:1 "*The earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness, The world and those who dwell therein*."

Parable of the talents
Matthew 25:14-30 "*For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey. Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. And likewise he who had received two gained two more also. But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money. After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them. "So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, 'Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.' His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.' He also who had received two talents came and said, 'Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them.' His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.' "Then he who had received the one talent came and said, 'Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.' "But his lord answered and said to him, 'You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest. Therefore take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents. 'For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth*.'

Observe that the lord gave the talent of the wicked servant to the one who had the most, 10 talents. Again, in the parable of the minas (below), the lord gave the mina of the wicked servant to the one who had the most, 10 minas.

The more you have (because you have been proven trustworthy) the more is given to you. This is also the implication in Jeremiah 33:3 '*Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know*.' The more we ask for understanding of the truth the more He reveals to us.

Parable of the Minas
Luke 19:11-27 "*Now as they heard these things, He spoke another parable, because He was near Jerusalem and because they thought the kingdom of God would appear immediately. Therefore He said: "A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. So he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas, and said to them, 'Do business till I come.' But his citizens hated him, and sent a delegation after him, saying, 'We will not have this man to reign over us.' "And so it was that when he returned, having received the kingdom, he then commanded these servants, to whom he had given the money, to be called to him, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. Then came the first, saying, 'Master, your mina has earned ten minas.' And he said to him, 'Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities.' And the second came, saying, 'Master, your mina has earned five minas.' Likewise he said to him, 'You also be over five cities.' "Then another came, saying, 'Master, here is your mina, which I have kept put away in a handkerchief. For I feared you, because you are an austere man. You collect what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow.' And he said to him, 'Out of your own mouth I will judge you, you wicked servant. You knew that I was an austere man, collecting what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow. Why then did you not put my money in the bank, that at my coming I might have collected it with interest?' "And he said to those who stood by, 'Take the mina from him, and give it to him who has ten minas.' (But they said to him, 'Master, he has ten minas.') 'For I say to you, that to everyone who has will be given; and from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. But bring here those enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, and slay them before me.*"

In this parable, we can confirm the meaning that money is "the least" in The Kingdom. When you can be trusted in the least, money (minas), you can be trusted in much (cities), as stated in Luke 16:10 "*He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much*."

According to Luke 16:10, to be trusted with money (the least) means that you wouldn't fall in love with money but that you would follow the Lord's commands, so you can be trusted with much. Once you fall in love with money (mammon), you can't be trusted with it since you become its slave. Then, if you can't be trusted with money, which is the least, you can't be trusted with much.
When you see yourself as poor and expect to remain poor forever, you are, in fact, rejecting both the blessings that God has already given you and His call to multiply what He has given to you. You are not being a good steward; you are being dominated by the spirit of mammon. The same is true when you are embarrassed by the riches the Lord has given you. Again, you would be rejecting or ashamed of the Lord's blessings and abstaining from multiplying what He has given you.

B. Prosper

Luke 12:32-34 "***Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom****. Sell what you have and give alms; provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches nor moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also*.

Psalm 35:27 "*Let them shout for joy and be glad, Who favor my righteous cause; And let them say continually, "****Let the Lord be magnified, Who has pleasure in the prosperity of His servant***."

2 Corinthians 8:9 "*For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich*."

Philippians 4:19 "*And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus*."

Proverbs 10:22 *The blessing of the Lord makes one rich, And He adds no sorrow with it*.

Matthew 6:31-33 "*Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.* ***But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you***."

2 Corinthians 9:6-15 "*But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and* ***he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully****. So let each one give as he*

purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. ***And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work****. As it is written: "He has dispersed abroad, He has given to the poor; His righteousness endures forever." Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness, while you are enriched in everything for all liberality, which causes thanksgiving through us to God. For the administration of this service not only supplies the needs of the saints, but also is abounding through many thanksgivings to God, while, through the proof of this ministry, they glorify God for the obedience of your confession to the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal sharing with them and all men, and by their prayer for you, who long for you because of the exceeding grace of God in you. Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift*!"

C. Give your money away, cheerfully and in secret

Luke 21:1-4 "*And He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury, and He saw also a certain poor widow putting in two mites. So He said, "****Truly I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all; for all these out of their abundance have put in offerings for God, but she out of her poverty put in all the livelihood that she had****.*"

2 Corinthians 9:7 "*So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity;****for God loves a cheerful giver***."

Matthew 6:1-4 "*Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven. Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.* ***But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly***.

Galatians 6:6-10 "***Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches****. Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.* ***Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the***

household of faith."

D. Be content with what you have

Hebrews 13:5-6 "*Let your conduct be without covetousness; **be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you**." So we may boldly say: "The L ord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?*"

Luke 12:13-15 "*Then one from the crowd said to Him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." But He said to him, "Man, who made Me a judge or an arbitrator over you?" And He said to them, "**Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses***."

Philippians 4:11-13 "*Not that I speak in regard to need, for **I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content**: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me*."

E. Let others benefit from your riches. Gleaning

Leviticus 19:9-10 '*When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field, nor shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest. And you shall not glean your vineyard, nor shall you gather every grape of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger: I am the Lord your God*."

Leviticus 23:22 "*When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field when you reap, nor shall you gather any gleaning from your harvest. You shall leave them for the poor and for the stranger: I am the Lord your God.'"*

Deuteronomy 24:19-22 "*When you reap your harvest in your field, and forget a sheaf in the field, **you shall not go back to get it; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands**. When you beat your olive trees, you shall not go over the boughs again; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow. When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, you shall not glean it afterward; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow. And you shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt; therefore I command you to do this thing*.

F. Lend but don't borrow

Deuteronomy 15:6 "*For the Lord your God will bless you just as He promised you; you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow; you shall reign over many nations, but they shall not reign over you*."

Deuteronomy 28:12 "*The Lord will open to you His good treasure, the heavens, to give the rain to your land in its season, and to bless all the work of your hand. You shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow*."

Romans 13:8 "*Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law*."

As we mentioned above, the impact that borrowing has on those who have an insaciable desire for possessions is slavery and destruction.

Proverbs 22:7 "*The rich rules over the poor, And the borrower is servant to the lender*."

Slavery to the lender may lead people to other sinful actions, such as compromising principles and engaging in dishonest practices, including lying, stealing and even murder.

In the parable of the unjust steward (which we review at the end of this email), Jesus described the pressure and immoral behavior which mammon creates.

Not only do the Scriptures tell us not to borrow, but they also tell us not to be a pledge for anyone who is borrowing. That is because this is another way in which we become a slave to the lender.

Proverbs 22:26 NASB "*Do not be among those who give pledges, Among those who become guarantors for debts*."

The Scriptures tell us to not live in debt. If, however, we do find ourselves in debt, we must take action, in reliance on the Lord, to pay back and eliminate that debt. We must realize that debt is the consequence, but mammon is the root cause; it was mammon that got us into debt in the first place. Unless we deal with mammon by choosing God, debt will be a continuing scourge in our lives.

9. What is the Impact of Mammon on our Daily Lives?

What is the effect of mammon on our lives?
How does mammon negatively impact our potential to overcome the world?

We overcome the world only in reliance on the Lord, when we abide in Him and He abides in us. Mammon blocks our potential because it, rather than the Lord, becomes our master. Money is temporary, and reliance on what is temporary brings about fear. There is no perfect love when there is fear. What happens to us under the slavery of mammon, among other things, is that we are unable to receive the love of God, which, in turn, hinders our capacity to love Him (and to love others). The consequences are considerable, including the inability to overcome the world.

1 John 4:18-19 "*There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. We love Him because He first loved us*."

Mammon chokes the word of God, as we see in Jesus' explanation of the parable of the soils, when the seed (the word of God — see V14) falls among the thorns. *Now these are the ones sown among thorns;* ***they are the ones who hear the word, and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful***. Mark 4:18-19

1 Timothy 6:10 "*For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows*."

10. These are the challenges that Jesus gave us...and His promises to be free from Mammon

Be perfect
Matthew 5:48 "*Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect*."

Do you want to be perfect?
Matthew 19:21 "*Jesus said to him, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me*."

Perfect, as Jesus defined the term for us, is not the one who never makes a mistake but the one who has only God as his Master and follows Him.

Challenges

The following are some of the most difficult statements that Jesus made. If we were to understand how much He loves us, even a fraction of the depth of His love for us, we wouldn't hesitate for a minute to do what He says, for we would know that He wants the best for us. We would be absolutely certain that it would be a blessing to us if we were to do what He says in the following verses.

Matthew 5:40-42 "***If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also****. And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away*.

Luke 6:27-36 "*But I say to you who hear:* ***Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you****. To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also.* ***And from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either****.* ***Give to everyone who asks of you. And from him who takes away your goods do not ask them back.*** *And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise. "But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same.* ***And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back****.* *<u>But love your enemies</u>,* ***do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil****.<u>Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful</u>*.

Matthew 5:38-48 "*You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.'****But I tell you not to resist an evil person****. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.* ***If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also****. And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two.* ***Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away****. "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies,* ***bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you,*** *<u>that you may be sons of your Father in heaven</u>; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so?* ***Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect***.

The capability to do what Jesus said in these verses is within you already, if you are a believer. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal that capability in you; ask Him to reveal Christ in you.

Means by which we become free from mammon.

Generosity, Love, Obedience and Abiding in and Relying on God.

1 Timothy 6:17-19 "***Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy.*** *Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life*."

1 John 3:16-23 "*By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him. For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things. Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God. And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.* ***And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment***."

John 15:9 "*As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love*."

John 17:23 "*I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one,* ***and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me***."

Matthew 7:24-27 "***Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock****. "But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall*."

James 1:22 “*But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves*.”

John 6:56 “*He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him*.”

John 15:5 “*I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing*.”

Psalm 127:1 - NRSVA “*Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labour in vain. Unless the Lord guards the city, the guard keeps watch in vain*.”

11. Exercise During the Week:

Base Scripture
Matthew 6:19-21 “*Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.* ***For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also***.

In reliance on the Lord:

Observe how much time you spend on money related issues.

Discover the type of emotions that you experience while you are dealing with money and possessions.

Become aware of the feelings that you experienced when someone wronged you in matters of money and possessions

12. Understanding the Parable of the Unjust Steward, Luke 16:1-15

Luke 16:1-15 “*He also said to His disciples: “There was a certain rich man who had a steward, and an accusation was brought to him that this man was wasting his goods. So he called him and said to him, ‘What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your stewardship, for you can no longer be steward.’ “Then the steward said within himself, ‘What shall I do? For my master is taking the stewardship away from me. I cannot dig; I am ashamed to beg. I have resolved what to do, that when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.’ “So he called every one of his master’s debtors to him, and said to the first, ‘How much do you owe my master?’ And he said, ‘A hundred measures of oil.’ So he said to him, ‘Take your bill, and sit down*

quickly and write fifty.' Then he said to another, 'And how much do you owe?' So he said, 'A hundred measures of wheat.' And he said to him, 'Take your bill, and write eighty.' 8 ***So the master commended the unjust steward because he had dealt shrewdly. For the sons of this world are more shrewd in their generation than the sons of light. 9"And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home****. He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much. Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if you have not been faithful in what is another man's, who will give you what is your own? "No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon." 14* ***Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, also heard all these things, and they derided Him. 15 And He said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God****.*

Many interpretations of this parable assume that the master is God, as is the case in many parables. There are, however, two exceptions to this general rule— the parable of the unjust judge and this parable (as we will demonstrate). The other faulty assumption that many interpreters make is that Jesus is making reference here to what He says in Matthew 6:19-21, while overlooking the fact that the unjust steward is not using his own money but his master's money. These two faulty assumptions lead interpreters to declare that God is applauding the shrewd actions of the unjust steward. It is clear, however, from the context of the parable that those actions are an abomination to the Lord.

Let's take a look at some of the verses in this parable—particularly verses 14 and 15, which, I believe, provide the explanation to the parable.

14 Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, also heard all these things, and they derided Him.
15 And He said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God*.*

We are looking at the whole parable, including verses 14 and 15, since those verses help us understand what Jesus is saying. We don't take what has been entrusted by

God to other people to serve ourselves. Nor do we take from the rich to give to the poor, in Robin Hood style. That is an abomination to the Lord—praised by carnal man but detested by God.

We are considering all verses in the parable, including 8-13. In verse 8 we read the commendation of the master to the unjust steward: ***"So the master commended the unjust steward because he had dealt shrewdly. For the sons of this world are more shrewd in their generation <u>than the sons of light</u>."*** The master is applauding the steward's action, but that action is an abomination to God. The Lord asks us to build treasures in heaven with our money, that is the money that He has entrusted to us, NOT with the money of other people. This is what unfortunately many interpreters say. They are applauding the use of the money of others to build treasures in heaven. That is an abomination to the Lord (V15), so you would end up not in heaven but in hell.

This is what verse 9 says: ***<u>9"And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home."</u>*** The everlasting home where you would be welcomed is hell, not heaven. Using unrighteous mammon will not get you into heaven.

Verse 13 says that you can't serve two masters God and mammon, or God and the love of money. You are either in the Spirit or you are living according to the flesh, but you can't be in both. You either serve God or serve the world.

In verse 14, Jesus is comparing the master and the unjust steward with the Pharisees who love money

In verse 14, the Pharisees are described as lovers of money; they make fun of Jesus because what Jesus says is foolishness to them.

1 Corinthians 2:14 *But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned*."

In verse 15, we can see a summary of 1 Corinthians 1:18-31, 2:6-16 and 3:18-23 that point out the great difference between the Lord's thoughts and values and ours. These passages give us an understanding about the mind of God (see for example 1 Corinthians 1:27-28). The shrewdness of the unjust steward is commended by the world, not God. Men often praise and highly esteem behaviors that are abominations to God.

Luke 16:15 *And He said to them,* "*You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God*.

Jesus is telling us that the ways and values of men are not the ways and values of God. In fact, they are often an abomination in the eyes of God. The "wisdom" of the world is not God's wisdom. This is further explained in verses 8 and 9:

Luke 16:8 *So the master commended the unjust steward because he had dealt shrewdly. For the sons of this world are more shrewd in their generation than the sons of light*.

In verse 8, the master exalts the unjust steward, which is an exaltation of the good of the world. In the latter part of the verse Jesus alerts us (sons of the light) about the shrewdness of the sons of the world.

Matthew 10:16 NIV "*I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves*."
Psalm 18:26 "*With the pure You will show Yourself pure; And with the devious You will show Yourself shrewd*."

Also, see Psalm 64:8, Exodus 1:10 and 2 Samuel 22:27.

The verses mentioned above (Matthew 10:16 and Psalm 18:26) do not call us to do anything evil—contrary to the will of God. We are to be shrewd but not to commit unjust actions. We see what it means to be shrewd in Matthew 10:11-14 and Matthew 7:6. It means that we leave when there is danger or when we are not welcomed. We are also not to give those who oppose us anything that could be used against us.

In verse 9, I prefer to use the KJV instead of NKJV. The difference is important because the KJV points at the Pharisees who are friends of mammon—friends of the mammon of unrighteousness. However, both versions at the end lead to the same conclusion:

Luke 16:9 KJV "*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*."

Luke 16:9 NKJV "*And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by* ***unrighteous mammon****, that when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home*."

In analyzing verse 9, I looked at 3 words that appear in the original Greek text: Mammon (love for money), Adikia (unrighteous) and Skene (tabernacle or habitation, **not limited to God's tabernacle**). You may see the full definitions of these words from Strong's Concordance at the end of this email.

In the parable of the unjust steward, Luke was very precise in using these words to convey the strong condemnation that Jesus was aiming at the Pharisees. He is comparing the unjust, unrighteous actions of the steward to the actions of the Pharisees. These actions, which show their love for unrighteous mammon, are an abomination to God. Luke's use of the Greek word "skene" in verse 9 becomes clear when we look at his use of that word in Acts 7:43. Here, Luke makes it clear that the skene he is talking about is the tabernacle or habitation of the "god" Moloche; the unjust steward and his unrighteous friends will end up in the everlasting habitation of the demonic!

In Matthew 23 and Mark 7, Jesus gives more detail about the unrighteous actions of the Pharisees. Below are some excepts from His "woe" verses and "defilement" verses, which show that the Pharisees loved mammon, unrighteously took the property of others, and were more interested in what men thought of them than what God thought. He also pointed out that they were headed for Hell. They knew how to manipulate the law for selfish gain and in order to look "righteous" before men. Note in the Mark 7 verse, that taking the property of others, even for a "righteous" reason, is wrong. If you take, or encourage others to take, money that is meant for elderly parents and give it to God (the temple), God sees this as a sin. It is stealing the property of others in order to make yourself look good, look generous, in the eyes of men. This is similar to what the steward was doing. This was not a case of storing up one's riches in Heaven (Matthew 6:20), because God had already designated those riches for someone else. This was stealing!

Matthew 23:13-14, 15-17, 27-28 NKJV "*But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation. . . Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves. Woe to you, blind guides, who say, 'Whoever swears by the temple, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obliged to perform it.' Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that sanctifies the gold? . . . Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees,*

hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness."

Mark 7:10-13 NKJV "*For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.' But you say, 'If a man says to his father or mother, "Whatever profit you might have received from me is Corban"—' (that is, a gift to God), then you no longer let him do anything for his father or his mother, making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do."*

Like the Pharisees, the steward's shrewdness is manifested in his unjust actions, which were to use someone else's money for his own benefit, in order to gain favor with unrighteous men. The action was dishonest because he used someone else's money to satisfy his self-centered ambition. It is possible that the steward's actions, as dishonest as they were, actually helped the manager collect some portion of an uncollectible debt; this could be why, in the end, he praised the steward's shrewdness. The steward was doing what collection companies do, but these companies act under authorization of the owner of the debt. For the owner of the debt, it is better to make 80 or 50 cents on the dollar rather than nothing. However, if a company's salesman or bookkeeper were to take it upon themselves to write off a portion of the debt owed to the owner, without his authorization, it would be the same as stealing from the owner. There is no such thing as "good" theft or embezzlement. Even if the debts had not been uncollectible and the steward had actually cost the owner money that he could have eventually collected, it is possible that the owner of the debt was simply acknowledging and praising the "street smarts" of the steward—as one carnal man to another. Whatever the case, the owner's praise of the steward's shrewdness should not be taken as representing God's approval of the steward's actions, because what he did was an abomination to the Lord.

The obvious conclusion we can reach when considering these three words is that the eternal dwellings, everlasting home/habitations where they will find themselves is hell, not heaven.

The interpretation of verse 9 would be very different (erroneous in my view) if we were to use the NIV.

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

If you take the NIV translation, you could say that in verse 9 Jesus is asking us to build treasures in heaven (as He does in Matthew 7:19-21) with our worldly wealth, but that is not what the text in Greek says in Luke 16:9. This is due to the fact that the words “unrighteous (Adikia) mammon”, and not “worldly wealth”, appear in the original Greek scriptures.

Verse 10, as explained above, indicates that money is the least in the kingdom. That when you can be trusted in the least, money (minas), you can be trusted in much (cities), as stated in Luke 16:10 *He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much*.

According to Luke 16:10, to be trusted with money (the least) means that you won’t fall in love with money but that you will follow the Lord’s commands. Once you fall in love with money (mammon), you can’t be trusted with it since you become its slave. Then, if you can’t be trusted with money, which is the least, you can’t be trusted with much.

Verses 10, 11 and 12 are a clear repudiation of the actions of the dishonest steward, who was praised by his master. Who would praise dishonesty?

This brings me to the conclusion that the master in this parable is not God, as in other parables. He is, instead, a carnal man, a worldly man. The other parable where the master (a person in power) is a worldly, carnal man is the parable of the unjust judge. In this parable, Jesus explained that if even an unjust carnal man will finally provide justice, we can expect so much more from God.

Given the interpretation that I have just shared, I am at peace with this parable. I find no mixed messages, no disjointed ideas, and no contradictions with other texts in the Scriptures.

Mammon
Strong’s Definitions [?]
(Strong’s Definitions Legend)
μαμμωνᾶς mammōnâs, mam-mo-nas'; of Chaldee origin (confidence, i.e. wealth, personified); mammonas, i.e. avarice (deified):—mammon.

Luke 16:13 “*hate the one and love the other, or else he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and [fn]wealth.” (mammonas)”*

Adikia

Strong's Definitions [?]
(Strong's Definitions Legend)
ἀδικία adikía, ad-ee-kee'-ah; from G94; (legal) injustice (properly, the quality, by implication, the act); morally, wrongfulness (of character, life or act):—iniquity, unjust, unrighteousness, wrong.

Regarding Luke 16:9 and the word "unrighteousness"

This means that the correct translation of mammon in Luke 16:9 can not mean simply "worldly wealth." It is the love of money (avarice) in opposition to God. On top of that, it is specifically declared unrighteous. This leads to a different understanding of this verse. It is not, as some translations and commentaries suggest, saying you should simply use your "worldly wealth" to "store up for yourselves treasures in heaven" (Matt 6:20) by giving to the poor. As Luke 16:13 says, you can't serve both God and mammon. I see this verse, not as a suggestion by Jesus of what to do, but as a warning of what will happen if you "make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon" (NKJV) or "Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness" (KJV). It is a warning not to do what the Pharisees do. Jesus was saying that you will spend eternity with them in their dwellings/habitations (skene).

Skene
Strong's Definitions [?]
(Strong's Definitions Legend)
σκηνή skēnḗ, skay-nay'; apparently akin to G4632 and G4639; a tent or cloth hut (literally or figuratively):—habitation, tabernacle.

Some translations and commentaries assume that, since the greek word used (skene) can mean tabernacle, this verse is referring to *the* Tabernacle of God and, thus, is referring to dwelling eternally in Heaven. It must be noted, however, that Luke did not always equate the word skene with God's tabernacle. In Acts 7:43: "Yea, ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Remphan, figures which ye made to worship them: . . ." In this verse, the Israelites chose to dwell in the tabernacle of the god Moloch! It seems that the best understanding of Luke 16:9 is that if you choose to use unrighteous mammon, or be friends with people who love and serve unrighteous mammon (such as the Pharisees), then you will end up with them in some "tabernacle" for all eternity. It is doubtful that tabernacle will be Heaven.

This is what the Lord wants us to do with our money:

2 Corinthians 9:6-15 “*But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work. As it is written: “He has dispersed abroad, He has given to the poor; His righteousness endures forever.” Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness, while you are enriched in everything for all liberality, which causes thanksgiving through us to God. For the administration of this service not only supplies the needs of the saints, but also is abounding through many thanksgivings to God, while, through the proof of this ministry, they glorify God for the obedience of your confession to the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal sharing with them and all men, and by their prayer for you, who long for you because of the exceeding grace of God in you. Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift*!”

In Christ,

Hernando
Receiving His Life Ministries