

The Parable of the Unprofitable Servants

Luke 17:7-10

1. Relate the parable in a few words.
2. What is the link to the parable before it, if any?
3. Can you state a link between the parable and the verse before it?
4. One commentator says that the question Jesus posed is hypothetical. What is meant by hypothetical?
5. The same commentator describes the question as rhetorical. What is meant by rhetorical?
6. Is it possible that the Lord is anticipating the leadership roles the disciples would exert in bringing men to him and instructing the churches under the circumstances he is about to describe?

7. Would the master in the parable be considered “wealthy” if he had only one servant (slave) to do his bidding in the field and in the house?

8. Would the disciples, as servants, be doing the hard work of plowing? (1 Corinthians 3:5-9)

9. The word in the original, “poimainonta,” translated “feeding cattle” in the King James Version, refers more to “keeping sheep,” scholars say. Would the apostles be doing that? (John 21:15-17)

10. What would you expect a slave to do when he comes in from the field before he may have food and rest for himself?

11. If the master made an exception and showed compassion one time, should the servant expect it every other time?

12. How do we reconcile the picture in Luke 12:35-40 with the rather harsh demand in this parable?

13. Can the most active and devout person put God in the position of owing that person anything?

14. What is the second rhetorical question?

15. What would a worldly master expect of a servant who had just come from the field?

16. In our work, would we expect our employers to thank us daily for doing the routine things required of our jobs?

17. Rather than receiving thanks for service, how did Paul consider the role of a servant? (1 Timothy 1:12-13)

18. If Jesus expected the disciples to make an application of these things, does he expect our attitude to conform to this instruction?

19. Do you think a time will come when we shall have done all those things commanded?

20. May we choose from among his teachings and patterns and select those we wish to obey?

21. Even if we have done everything perfectly, are we worthy to set our own standards of service, or require special favors, or even fee! we are due a reward?

22. Did Jesus say that the laborer was an unprofitable servant, or that he should say (i.e., to think within himself) that he is an unprofitable servant?

23. Coffman says the parable is "a lesson designed to teach humility, obedience, and a sense of lacking any merit in the sight of God." Do you agree with this assessment?

24. Are we to conclude from this parable that God will refuse to reward faithful servants?