

The Parable of the Prodigal Son

Key Verse: *“For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.”*
—**Luke 15:24**

Selected Scripture:
Luke 15:11-24

The parable of the prodigal

son begins with these words: “A certain man had two sons: And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey

into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, ... he began to be in want.”—**Luke 15:11-14**

This parable illustrates in a general sense God’s dealings with all mankind. The younger son, having received much from his father, left his father’s house and wasted all that he had received, spending it “with riotous living.” Having left the privileges of his father’s house, he illustrates all those who have fallen into sin and have become “dead in trespasses and sins.”—**Eph. 2:1; Rom. 3:23**

After realizing his waywardness, the younger son later humbly returned to his father. He said: “I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father. But when

he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.”—Luke 15:18-20

The wayward son realized his mistakes and returned to his father, who accepted him gladly. He was dead, as far as the father was concerned, while he was away. He was alive again, however, when he willingly returned. How grandly this illustrates to us the lengths and breadths and heights and depths of the love of God. In giving this parable, Jesus desired that his hearers should have an illustration of God’s goodness and care in his desire to recover the lost race of mankind. Indeed, all were lost due to Adam’s sin, but all will have the opportunity for life through Christ. “Since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”—I Cor. 15:21,22

In another lesson from this parable, the father well represents Jehovah God; the elder son illustrates Israel’s faithful servants and prophets of the Old Testament; and the younger son represents the remainder of the nation who were largely inclined to willfulness and waywardness as respects divine law. Because the nation of Israel as a whole rejected Jesus as their Messiah and crucified him, they were rejected by God. Jesus said, “Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.”—Matt. 23:38

Like the wayward son, however, Israel will also return to full favor with God. “All Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. ... For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all. O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out.”—Rom. 11:26-33 ■