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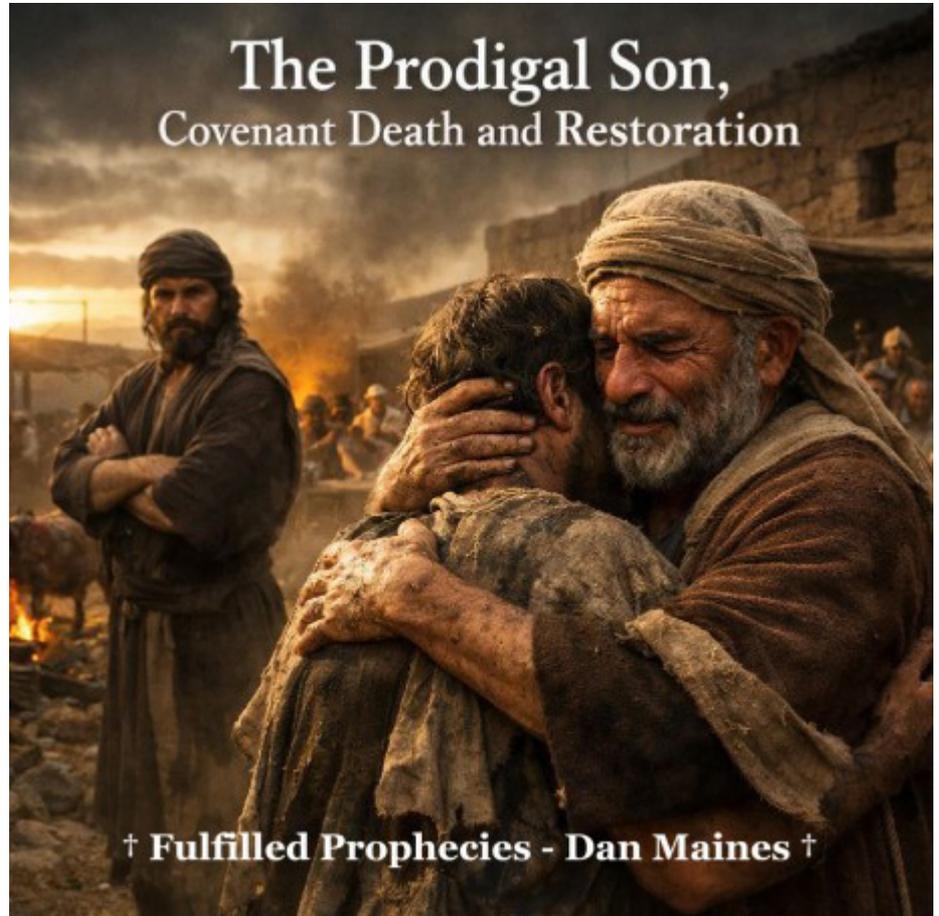
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The Prodigal Son, Covenant Death and Restoration



By Dan Maines

The Prodigal Son, Covenant Death and Restoration

Introduction

† This parable was spoken to Pharisees and scribes who complained that Jesus received sinners and ate with them (Luke 15:1-2).

† It is not about individual salvation mechanics, but about covenant loss and covenant restoration within Israel (Luke 15:1-2; Romans 9:4-5).

† The story explains how those considered dead under the Law

were being restored through grace before AD 70 (Luke 15:24; Matthew 23:36; Matthew 24:34).

Luke 15:11-32

Luke 15:11

And He said, "A man had two sons.

† Jesus frames this as a family story, pointing to Israel as a household, not the nations (Luke 15:1-2; Romans 9:4-5).

† The two sons represent two groups within Israel, not believers and unbelievers in general (Luke 15:1-2; Romans 11:1-6).

† This sets the stage for covenant identity, not geography or heaven (Romans 2:28-29; Romans 9:4-5).

Luke 15:12

The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the estate that is coming to me.' And so he divided his wealth between them.

† Asking for the inheritance early was a declaration of relational death, treating the father as if he were dead (Luke 15:24).

† This mirrors Israel breaking covenant and pursuing life apart from God (Jeremiah 2:13; Jeremiah 3:6-8).

† The father allows the request, showing God permitted Israel to walk under the consequences of the Law (Deuteronomy 28:15; Romans 7:10-11).

Luke 15:13

And not many days later, the younger son gathered everything together and went on a journey to a distant country, and there he squandered his estate in wild living.

† The far country represents separation from covenant fellowship, not distance from heaven (Isaiah 59:2; Ephesians 2:12).

† Riotous living reflects Israel's history of covenant

unfaithfulness (Jeremiah 3:20; Ezekiel 16:15).

† This is covenant exile language, consistent with the prophets (Hosea 9:3; Isaiah 1:4).

Luke 15:14

Now when he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred in that country, and he began doing without.

† Famine is a recurring covenant curse under the Law (Deuteronomy 28:23-24; Deuteronomy 28:48).

† Spiritual emptiness always follows covenant rebellion (Amos 8:11-12).

† This points to Israel's condition under the Law before Christ (Romans 7:9-11; Galatians 3:23).

Luke 15:15

So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed pigs.

† Feeding swine signifies uncleanness, showing complete covenant defilement (Leviticus 11:7-8; Isaiah 65:3-4).

† This would be especially offensive imagery to Jewish hearers (Leviticus 11:7-8).

† Jesus is showing how far covenant Israel had fallen (Isaiah 1:4-6; Jeremiah 2:21).

Luke 15:16

And he longed to have his fill of the carob pods that the pigs were eating, and no one was giving him *anything*.

† The Law could not satisfy or restore life (Galatians 3:21; Hebrews 10:1).

† Israel's leaders offered no true provision for covenant restoration (Ezekiel 34:2-4; Matthew 23:13).

† This reveals the barrenness of legal righteousness (Romans 10:2-4; Galatians 2:16).

Luke 15:17

But when he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired laborers have more than enough bread, but I am dying here from hunger!

† Coming to himself reflects repentance, a change of covenant understanding (Isaiah 55:7; Ezekiel 18:30-31).

† He recognizes life is found only in the father's house (Psalm 23:1; John 6:35).

† This mirrors Israel awakening through John and Jesus' preaching (Matthew 3:1-2; Mark 1:14-15).

Luke 15:18

I will set out and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight;

† Sin against heaven is covenant language, not spatial language (Daniel 4:26; Psalm 51:4).

† Repentance acknowledges broken relationship, not fear of punishment (Psalm 51:10-12; Isaiah 55:7).

† This matches the prophetic calls to return to the Lord (Jeremiah 3:12-14; Hosea 14:1-2).

Luke 15:19

I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me as one of your hired laborers.

† He expects restoration through works, not sonship (Galatians 4:9-11; Romans 10:3).

† This reflects Israel's mindset under the Law (Romans 9:31-32; Galatians 3:23).

† Grace exceeds his expectations (Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 5:20).

Luke 15:20

So he set out and came to his father. But when he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion *for him*,

and ran and embraced him and kissed him.

† The father runs, violating cultural norms, showing divine initiative (Luke 19:10; Romans 5:8).

† Restoration begins before the confession is completed (Luke 15:20; 1 John 4:19).

† This anticipates the gospel of grace (Ephesians 2:4-5; Titus 3:5).

Luke 15:21

And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

† The son never finishes his hired servant speech (Luke 15:19-21).

† Grace interrupts works based expectations (Romans 4:4-5; Ephesians 2:8-9).

† Sonship is restored fully (Galatians 4:6-7; John 1:12).

Luke 15:22

But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet;

† The robe signifies restored covenant standing (Isaiah 61:10; Zechariah 3:3-4).

† The ring represents authority and family identity (Genesis 41:42; James 2:2).

† Shoes indicate freedom, not servitude (Ephesians 6:15; Galatians 5:1).

Luke 15:23

and bring the fattened calf, slaughter it, and let's eat and celebrate;

† Covenant restoration is celebrated, not earned (Luke 15:6-7; Romans 5:11).

† This points to fellowship and table communion (Luke 15:2; Acts 2:46).

† It anticipates the messianic banquet imagery (Isaiah 25:6; Matthew 8:11).

Luke 15:24

for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.' And they began to celebrate.

† Death here is relational and covenantal, not biological (Luke 15:24; Ephesians 2:1-5).

† This verse defines the parable's meaning clearly (Luke 15:24).

† Resurrection language is used before physical death (Ezekiel 37:11-14; John 5:24).

Luke 15:25

"Now his older son was in the field, and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing.

† The elder son represents self righteous Israel (Luke 15:1-2; Romans 10:2-3).

† He remains outside the celebration (Luke 15:28; Matthew 23:13).

† Proximity to the house does not equal participation (Matthew 7:21-23; Romans 2:17-24).

Luke 15:26

And he summoned one of the servants and *began* inquiring what these things could be.

† He doesn't know the father's joy (Luke 15:26-27; Luke 15:10).

† Legalism always misunderstands grace (Romans 9:31-32; Galatians 5:4).

† This mirrors Pharisaic confusion (Luke 15:1-2; Matthew 23:23).

Luke 15:27

And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has slaughtered the fattened calf because he has received him back safe and sound.'

† Restoration is complete, not partial (Luke 15:22-24; Romans 8:1).

† The father receives him as a son, not a probationer (Luke 15:22; Galatians 4:7).

† This offends the elder son's mindset (Luke 15:28; Luke 18:11-14).

Luke 15:28

But he became angry and was not willing to go in; and his father came out and *began* pleading with him.

† Refusal to enter is self exclusion (Luke 15:28; Matthew 23:13).

† The father seeks both sons (Luke 15:28; Luke 15:4-7).

† Grace invites even the self righteous (Luke 18:9-14; Romans 11:20).

Luke 15:29

But he answered and said to his father, 'Look! For so many years I have been serving you and I have never neglected a command of yours; and *yet* you never gave me a young goat, so that I might celebrate with my friends;

† He views sonship as servitude (Luke 15:29; Galatians 4:9).

† He measures worth by obedience (Romans 10:3; Philippians 3:4-9).

† This exposes the heart of legalism (Luke 18:11-14; Romans 9:31-32).

Luke 15:30

but when this son of yours came, who has devoured your wealth with prostitutes, you slaughtered the fattened calf for

him.'

† He distances himself from his brother (Luke 15:30; Luke 10:29).

† He resents grace given to others (Jonah 4:1-2; Matthew 20:11-16).

† This mirrors Israel's rejection of repentant sinners (Luke 15:1-2; Luke 7:39).

Luke 15:31

And he said to him, 'Son, you have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours.

† Covenant privileges were always available (Romans 3:1-2; Romans 9:4-5).

† The elder son lacked nothing but understanding (Luke 15:31; Romans 10:2).

† Law based righteousness blinds people to grace (Romans 9:31-32; Galatians 5:4).

Luke 15:32

But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and *has begun* to live, and *was* lost and has been found.

† Restoration is necessary, not optional (Luke 15:32; Luke 15:7).

† Covenant resurrection is the heart of the gospel (Luke 15:24; Ephesians 2:4-6).

† This sets the stage for AD 70 fulfillment (Matthew 23:36; Matthew 24:34; Luke 21:20-24).

Historical References

† Josephus records Israel's covenant collapse and restoration crisis leading to AD 70, Antiquities and Wars.

† Eusebius notes early Christian understanding of covenant

transition and judgment.

† Irenaeus emphasized restoration through sonship, not legal performance.

† Clement of Alexandria spoke of repentance as present restoration to life, not a post death event.

† Tertullian affirmed repentance as covenant reconciliation within the life of the believer.

How It Applies To Us Today

† Covenant life is relational, not performance based (John 15:4-5; Romans 5:1).

† Being alive in Christ means restored fellowship now (Ephesians 2:4-6; 1 John 1:3).

† We live as sons, not servants trying to earn favor (Galatians 4:6-7; Romans 8:15).

† Resurrection life is a present reality expressed through reconciliation and peace with God (John 5:24; 2 Corinthians 5:18-19).

Q & A Appendix

Q Was the prodigal physically dead?

A No. He was covenantally dead, as defined in Luke 15:24, consistent with Ezekiel 18:4.

Q Does this parable teach heaven after death?

A No. It teaches covenant restoration within Israel, fulfilled in Christ before AD 70 (Matthew 16:27-28).

Q Who is the elder son?

A Self righteous Israel, especially the Pharisees, who rejected grace (Romans 10:2-4).

Q Why is resurrection language used if no one physically died?

A Because Scripture regularly uses death and life to describe

covenant standing, as seen in Hosea 6:1-2 and Isaiah 65:17.

Q Does the father represent God restoring Israel before judgment?

A Yes. The father represents God's covenant mercy toward Israel prior to AD 70, restoring repentant sons before the generation judgment came (Luke 15:20, Matthew 23:36, Matthew 24:34).

Q Why does the father go out to the elder son instead of forcing him to enter?

A Because covenant participation is never forced. The elder son excludes himself by refusing grace, just as many in Israel rejected Christ despite being near the covenant promises (Luke 15:28, Romans 11:20-22).

Q Is this parable teaching two different ways of salvation?

A No. It exposes two false mindsets under the Law, rebellion and self righteousness, and shows that restoration comes only through grace and sonship (Romans 3:27-28, Galatians 2:16).

Q Why does Jesus end the parable without telling us if the elder son enters?

A Because the decision was still before Israel at that time. The open ending reflects the real historical moment leading up to AD 70, where acceptance or rejection of grace remained unresolved for that generation (Luke 15:32, Acts 28:24).

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

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Source Index

† Luke 15:11-32; Deuteronomy 28:15-68; Ezekiel 18:4; Hosea 6:1-2; Isaiah 65:17; Matthew 16:27-28; Romans 10:2-4; Matthew 23:36; Matthew 24:34; Luke 21:20-24; Matthew 24:15-

16; John 5:24; Ephesians 2:1-6; 2 Corinthians 5:18-19; Isaiah 55:7; 1 John 1:9; 1 John 1:3

† Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews; Wars of the Jews; Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History; Irenaeus, Against Heresies; Clement of Alexandria, Stromata; Tertullian, On Repentance

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