

Part I

The Door to the Kingdom: Who enters the kingdom (13:23–35)

1. Characters: **Who are these** that are applying to the Judge/Doorkeeper to enter the kingdom [Identify the characters as to who they are in reality; e.g., Jews, Gentiles, etc.]?

Those applying to the doorkeeper are the Jews who knew Jesus when he walked the earth [v.26].

2. Values: **On what basis** do they value themselves as worthy to enter the kingdom?

They argue they should enter based on their identity as fellow Jews [v.26; this could be taken as an argument based on being descendents of Abraham].

3. Character: **Who specifically (real person) is the determiner** of entry to the kingdom? Cite the verse where you found it.

Jesus is the doorkeeper, who determines who gains entry into the kingdom [v.26, as he is the one who taught in their streets; v.27 is a quote from Messianic Psalm 6:8].

4. Values: **What is the Judge/Doorkeeper's basis** for them to have entry into the kingdom?

The basis for entry is a relationship with the doorkeeper, he must know where one is from [vv.25, 27]. This could be phrased as requiring a relationship with the doorkeeper, which is implied in the reference to Isaiah 43:5-7 [v.29], the original of which includes the concept of being called by his name. [This would require the correct response to the Abrahamic Promise rather than physical association with Abraham; notes p.47].

5. **To what image** (figure of speech) does Jesus compare the Kingdom?

Jesus compares the kingdom to a house [vv.25, 28] and then to a dinner [at that house; v.29].

6. Conclusion: **What will happen** to those who have a different entry requirement than the entry requirement of the Judge/Doorkeeper?

Those who have a different entry requirement than the doorkeeper [i.e. do not fulfill the entry requirement of the doorkeeper] will be shut out permanently [v.28].

A healing at dinner: Opposing values (14:1-6)

1. Characters: **Who are the opposing characters** in this story?

Jesus faces antagonists in the Pharisees and legal experts [v.3].

2. Values: **What are the opposing values** (i.e., what do Pharisees value versus what Jesus values?).

Jesus valued people, specifically the oppressed [e.g. sick; v.4], while the antagonists valued their possessions and relations [v.5].

3. Was healing a man on the Sabbath against the Law? Refer to Deuteronomy 22:4. (Was this only to be done on days other than the Sabbath? or was this something that the Pharisees had added?) Read Isaiah 58 and see what one was to do in fasting and on the Sabbath.)

According to Isaiah 58, the Jews were to focus on God's desires, ways, and words on the Sabbath [v.13]; furthermore, God would not accept a sacrifice such as a fast if the hearts of the people were not in alignment with him [vv.1-5]. What God intended was for people to help the oppressed [vv.6-7]. Healing on the Sabbath was not against the Law, being nowhere specifically banned and being in keeping with God's intention of helping the oppressed. Apparently, the Pharisees and legal experts had created this man-made tradition, in violation of the intent of God in the Law.

Seating at Dinner: Whose value system determines seating (14:7-11)

1. Characters: **Identify the two players** (by their position) in the story.

The host would be Jesus [or God the Father], the one determining people's place in the kingdom. The guests would be those who seek a good place in the kingdom. Jesus accused the religious Jews [to whom he was speaking; v.1] of arrogantly assuming an important place in the kingdom based on self-merit [vv.8-9], whereas the humble [those who recognize their need for Christ because of their sin] do not assume such and are elevated by the host [vv.10-11].

2. Values: **Whose value system** is used by the guests to determine where one sits at dinner?

The guests tend to use their own value systems to determine where they should sit relative to each other [v.8].

3. Determiner of right value: **Whose values ultimately determine** where one sits at dinner?

The host uses his value system to determine where one sits [vv.9-10].

The Invitation to Dinner: Defining the value system in the invitation (14:12-14)

1. Values: **On what basis** should one invite others to dinner?

Invite those who do not have the means to repay you [vv.13-14], i.e. invite without expectation of repayment [unconditional and sacrificial giving].

2. **From whom is** that value system derived (who originally has that value system)?

This is God's value system, as he will repay the one who does this at the resurrection of the righteous [v.14], indicating this behavior is a reflection of God's heart, which offers us mercy and grace without expectation of repayment.

The Great Dinner: Determining the value system of those who come (14:15-25)

1. Characters: **Identify the characters** in this story as related to the main characters in the Book of Luke (God, Jesus, Apostles, Jews, outcasts; some may not apply).

The man who is having the dinner is God, who is inviting people to the kingdom; his slave is Jesus; the original invitees are the self-righteous Jews, who see no need for what Christ has to offer; the poor, crippled, blind, and lame are the outcasts of Israel, who are humble enough to see their need for what Christ has to offer; the ones found on the highways and along the hedges could refer to the invitation being extended to the Gentiles [those outside the covenant community] or an indication that the invitation is widespread.

2. Values: Identify the values of each of the characters in the story by answering the following questions.

- **What is the basis** of the value system of those originally invited (how they value their own things versus that of the Master's dinner)?

Those originally invited valued their possessions more than the invitation to the dinner [vv.18-20]; i.e. the self-righteous Jews valued the gifts with which God had blessed them more than they valued being with God himself. They saw no need for what Christ was offering, believing themselves to be self-righteous and thus not needing the righteousness offered through Christ.

- **How do they value the dinner** and thus the host?

Those originally invited appear not to value the dinner or the host very highly, at least not as highly as they value attending to their possessions [vv.18-20].

- **On the basis of which value system** do they reject the dinner?

Those originally invited apparently feel self-righteous enough to reject the invitation to the dinner [i.e. they do not need the host's hospitality]; this is their own value system.

3. Conclusion: The host rejects the original invitees and invites a new group. **What is it about the character (value system) of the host** that results in this decision (relate back to the previous story in 14:12-14)?

The host invites those who are too humble to be able to repay him [mercy offered without expectation of repayment]; these will appreciate his invitation, in contrast to the original invitees who were too self-righteous to appreciate the invitation.

Contrasting values: Hating and loving (14:26-27)

1. **What is the common connection** between all the things they are supposed to hate?

A person must “hate” all that he has valued by physical relationship: his blood relatives, his wife [related by vow], and even his own life [v.26]. These are the things the self-righteous value based on their own value system.

2. Explain in your own words **what is the positive action** they should take (in contrast to the action of hating).

A person is to be willing to give up everything about his life – even his life itself [face persecution even to martyrdom] – to follow Christ [vv.26-27].

Building The Tower: Evaluating one’s abilities (14:28-30)

1. From the previous story there are things (basis for value system) one should “hate” and things one should “follow.” **What are the specific things that the tower builder should evaluate** before he begins to build?

The tower builder should evaluate the cost of construction to ensure he has enough to complete the project [v.28].

2. If he evaluates properly **what will be his conclusion** about his own abilities and identity (the things to hate) to reach God? (Note that this tower is a literary connection back to the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11 where they tried to reach God).

The tower builder must realize that he cannot provide his own righteousness [through works], he cannot “construct” his own entrance into the kingdom, so he needs what Jesus has to offer.

3. **Does the story give an option** if he determines during the planning stage that he cannot complete the tower? (Note the difference here between this and the next story.)

If he tries building the tower, there is no hope for him when he realizes he cannot complete it. This story does not offer an alternative; however, if he determines during the planning stage that he could not possibly complete the tower then he could abandon doing it on his own, i.e. give up reliance on his own abilities to reach the kingdom through works.

The Battle: One’s options from a true evaluation of one’s abilities (14:31-33)

1. Note the importance of being able to value things properly in this story. **What** (don’t input your theology into the story, just leave it simple) **would be the proper evaluation** of the outcome of the man with 10,000 soldiers?

The man with ten-thousand soldiers is likely to lose the battle.

2. If the man with 10,000 soldiers evaluates himself and his ability for victory properly **what are the two contrasting options and their respective outcomes?**

If he evaluates himself properly, he will recognize two options: he can continue on into the battle he has started [relying on own abilities] and lose; or he can send a delegation to the other king and ask for terms of peace [relying on mercy; v.32].

The Door to the Kingdom – Summary of value systems (14:33-35)

1. **What conclusion** does Jesus make regarding one's own valuation and his entry into the Kingdom?

One must be willing to give up all his possessions; i.e. realize he cannot earn his way into the kingdom based on his abilities, hereditary identity, possessions, or self-righteousness, only by trusting in Christ.

2. If salt represents people and their possession of the revelation of God's character (His value system), **what has happened to Israel** due to losing their perception of God's value system for their own?

Israel became tasteless, and thus useless to God, because they did not reflect his values.

3. **What does this say** about their character (their heart)?

They did not have a heart after God; they did not reflect his values in that they were self-righteous and selfish, not appreciating the need to receive or give mercy.

The Dinner with Sinners (Chapter 15): Israel's values versus God's values

The next chapter in context is the chapter that you are to develop for your project. It will take the lesson summary here on values and talk about God's value system (character) versus Israel's character. So be sure you are looking for the next chapter to reveal the difference in Israel's character and God's.

1. **(15:1-2) From the previous work on the contrasting value systems** of God and man, **what is the difference in value systems** between Jesus and the Pharisees with respect to sinners and tax collectors?

Jesus received and taught these undesirable people, whereas the Pharisees and scribes grumbled that this was inappropriate, for they perceived these undesirable people as outside the covenant blessing, but themselves as self-righteous and deserving of covenant blessing. They saw no need for mercy for themselves and so offered none to others.

2. **(15:4-7) Answer very simply here (no added theology!!!):**

- a. What does the shepherd value? What category is that (returned material possessions or returned people?)

The shepherd values his returned material possession [the sheep; vv.4-6].

- b. What does God value? What category is that (returned material possessions or returned people?)

God values returned people [v.7].

3. **(15:8-10) Answer very simply here (no added theology!!!):**

- a. What does this woman value? What category is that (returned material possessions or returned people?)

The woman values her returned material possession [the coin; vv.8-9].

- b. What does God value? What category is that (returned material possessions or returned people?)

God values returned people [v.10].

4. **(15:11-32) Answer very simply here (no added theology!!!):**

- a. What does the father value? What category is that (returned material possessions or returned people?)

The father values his returned son, in the category of returned people [vv.20-24].

- b. What does the elder son not value? What category does he not value (returned material possessions or returned people?)

The elder son does not value his returned brother, he does not value the category of returned people [vv.28-30], thus he does not reflect his father values, does not represent his father's will.

5. **Summary**

- a. How does the value system (the things they value) of the shepherd, the woman and the elder son contrast with God and the father?

The shepherd, the woman, and the elder son value possessions instead of people, in contrast to God, who values people instead of possessions and thus desires to show mercy to the repentant sinner.

Part II

15:1-32: Interpretation

- A. **Literary Flow:** The chapter is one story. It is a story of Jesus where He is in a situation and then tells three stories to those in attendance.

1. **REAL Historical Setting (15:1-2)**

- a. **The Characters** (Note each historical character in the setting and whether they are the Positive (Good) character, the Negative (Evil) character and the Neutral character (object of their interaction between Pos. and Neg. character).

- i. The Positive (Good, Main) Character is:

Jesus is the positive character, the protagonist [v.1].

- ii. The Negative (Evil, Antagonist) Character is (are):

The Pharisees and the scribes are the negative characters, antagonists [v.2].

- iii. The Neutral Character (object of tension) is (are):

The tax collectors and the sinners are the neutral characters [v.1-2].

- b. **The Tension introduction** (Note the problem that is raised by the negative character(s) or antagonists. This will be a problem presented for the Main Positive Character to explain.) The Tension is:

The antagonists grumble about Jesus associating with sinners, even eating with them [v.2], because they view the sinners as outside the covenant blessing and themselves as self-righteously deserving of the covenant blessing; because they see no need for mercy for themselves [being self-righteous], they offer none to others. So the tension is, why does Jesus eat with these “sinners”?

2. **Response Given in Three Stories (15:4-32)**

- a. **The Characters** (Identify the story characters in the answer portion as to who they are or who they represent. Note that this is answering the tension which was created in the historical setting.

Story #1 (15:4-7)

- i. The Shepherd is to show how [who] is.

The shepherd rejoices over the return of his possessions [vv.4-6], reflecting the values of the Pharisees and scribes.

- ii. Joy in Heaven is to show how [who] is.

The joy in Heaven is over the return of lost people [v.7], reflecting the values of God [and therefore also of Jesus].

Story #2 (15:8-10)

- i. The Woman is to show how [who] is.

The woman rejoices over the return of lost possessions [vv.8-9], reflecting the values of the Pharisees and scribes.

- ii. Angels of God is to show how [who] is.

The angels of God have joy over the return of lost people [v.10], reflecting the values of God [and Jesus].

Story #3 (15:11-32)

- i. The Younger son is to show how [who] is.

The younger son has squandered the gifts of his father and lived shamefully [13], but now comes back to the covenant relationship repentant and understanding the need for mercy [vv.18-20], reflecting the situation of the repentant tax collectors and sinners who associated with Jesus.

- ii. The Father is to show how [who] is.

The father rejoices over the return of his lost son [lost people; vv.20-24, 32], reflecting the values of God [and Jesus].

- iii. The Elder son is to show how [who] is.

The elder son does not rejoice over the return of his lost brother [lost people], but instead was self-righteously condemning his brother [v.29-30] and concerned with possessions [v.30], reflecting the values of the Pharisees and scribes.

- b. **The first two illustrations as a response to the tension** (Since Jesus is answering the tension, the stories must also detail the answer to the tension. Show how the stories illustrate the response to the tension.)

Story #1 Illustration:

- i. Response of the sheep owner to something found [Do not simply repeat the story, but do this in your own words as a description of its literary purpose; e.g., “a sheep owner is used to show . . .”]

Jesus used the sheep owner to illustrate the values of the Pharisees and scribes, who placed great value on possessions and would have rejoiced at recovering a sheep as the sheep owner did in the story.

- ii. Response of God to something found [See instructions previously; e.g., “Angels in heaven are used to show . . .”]:

Jesus used those in Heaven to illustrate the values of God the Father, who placed great value on people and would have rejoiced at recovering a sinner [outcast] as those in Heaven did in the story.

- iii. What is the similarity between them [compare the responses, but again from a literary viewpoint; e.g., “the storyteller uses similarity between the two characters to point out that they both . . .”]?

In Jesus’ story, both the shepherd and the residents of Heaven rejoiced at the recovery of something that had been lost and was of value to them [finding something of value gave them joy]. The similarity would help the listeners understand God’s perspective on recovered lost people, since it was similar to their perspective on recovered lost things.

- iv. What is the difference between them [e.g., “the two characters show a contrast in that they . . .]?

The contrast in the story is in what is recovered and valued [i.e. the value systems are different]: the shepherd recovers and values a possession [a sheep], while the residents in Heaven recover and value a person [a sinner].

- v. What is the conclusion of this illustration?

Summary of the characters in the illustration [Use the characters of the story and summarize iii. And iv.].

Both the sheep owner and the residents of Heaven rejoiced at the recovery of what was lost, but what they rejoiced over recovering were different [reflecting their different value systems], a sheep for the sheep owner and a sinner for those in Heaven.

Summary using the characters in the real setting of vs. 1-2 [Relate the characters in the illustration back to the characters in verses 1—2 and tell what the point is]

Both the religious leaders [Pharisees and scribes] and Jesus rejoiced at the recovery of what was lost, but what they rejoiced over recovering were different [reflecting their different value systems], possessions for the religious leaders and people for Jesus. Both the difference and the similarity would have helped the listeners understand why Jesus associated with sinners [including tax collectors].

Story #2 Illustration: [Follow the helps for Story #1]

- i. Response of the woman to something found:

Jesus used the woman to illustrate the values of the Pharisees and scribes, who placed great value on possessions and would have rejoiced at recovering a coin as the woman did in the story.

- ii. Response of God to something found:

Jesus used the angels of God to illustrate the values of God the Father and himself, who placed great value on people and would have rejoiced at recovering a sinner [outcast] as the angels of God did in the story.

- iii. What is the similarity between them [compare the responses]?

In Jesus’ story, both the woman and the angels of God rejoiced at the recovery of something that had been lost and was of value to them [finding something of value gave them joy]. The similarity would help the listeners understand God’s perspective on recovered lost people, since it was similar to their perspective on recovered lost things.

- iv. What is the difference between them [compare the responses]?

The contrast in the story is in what is recovered and valued [i.e. the value systems are different]: the woman recovers and values a possession [a coin], while the angels of God recover and value a person [a sinner].

Both the woman and the angels of God rejoiced at the recovery of what was lost, but what they rejoiced over recovering were different [reflecting their different value systems], a coin for the woman and a sinner for the angels of God.

Both the religious leaders [Pharisees and scribes] and Jesus rejoiced at the recovery of what was lost, but what they rejoiced over recovering were different [reflecting their different value systems], possessions for the religious leaders and people for Jesus. Both the difference and the similarity would have helped the listeners understand why Jesus associated with sinners [including tax collectors].

3. Story #3 Illustration: [Explain how this story ultimately gives an answer to the tension of the overall chapter] This will also break into several sections, which are listed.

a. Characters: [Relate the characters in the story to the main characters of the historical story (See your answer in 2a and repeat it here.)]

1) The Younger son is to show how [who] is.

Jesus used the younger son to illustrate the situation of the sinners with whom he was associating, who had squandered the blessings of God the Father and sinned against him, but who now were repentant and seeking to return, recognizing the need for mercy.

2) The Father is to show how [who] is.

Jesus used the human father to illustrate the attitude of God the Father [and himself], who placed great value on people and would have rejoiced at recovering a lost son who was a sinner [but now was repentant], just as the human father did in the story.

3) The Elder son is to show how [who] is.

Jesus used the elder son to illustrate the values of the Pharisees and scribes, who placed great value on possessions and their self-righteousness through good deeds, and in their self-righteousness were condemning of others.

b Literary Flow:

1) Setting: [Explain here how the initial setup of this story brings about the tension of the story. This tension of the story should be similar to the tension of the overall chapter, since the solution to this tension will answer the tension of the chapter. Be sure to identify the setting in terms of the characters which should be matched up to the main characters of the chapter].¹

Jesus provided this setting: a man and his two sons [v.11] had an agricultural property [v.25]; the younger son requested of the father and received his half of the estate [apparently in some form more liquid than land] and left [vv.12-13]; he squandered all this wealth in sinful ways [v.13]; as a result of his impoverishment and a famine, he hired on to work with swine [which would be repulsive and unclean to him] and remained hungry [vv.14-16]; he developed an attitude of dependence and repentance toward his father and chose to return to seek mercy [vv.17-19]. The younger son symbolized the real sinners, who had squandered the blessings of God

¹ Note that Jesus is not directly represented in each story. This is important since Jesus does not prove His answer by showing His own character. The character in the story is there to show that Jesus relates His actions in the setting to that character in the story.

the Father and sinned against him [failing to represent him], but now were developing an attitude of dependence and repentance toward God and were choosing to return to him and seek his mercy through Jesus.

- 2) Introduction of Tension: [What is the problem to which two of the characters of the story respond (interact and differ), revealing their respective heart?]

The tension in Jesus' story was that the younger son returned to his father seeking mercy after having squandered all that his father had given him and having sinned against him [v.20]. This symbolized the real tension of the real sinners returning to God to seek mercy through Jesus [and thus his association with them].

- 3) Contrast of Responses to the Tension.

Character #1 Response:

In the story, the father felt compassion for the younger son and ran to him to embrace him [v.20], and then indicated that he still valued the son as a son and that he rejoiced in his son's return [vv.22-24, 32]. This symbolized God the Father's attitude toward the real life sinners who had shown repentance: he was welcoming them back into a covenant relationship and rejoicing at their return.

Character #2 Response:

In the story, the elder son was angry at the attitude of his father [v.28], arguing that he had not received his just reward for his self-righteousness through his actions, yet the younger son – who deserved condemnation – was receiving an unjust reward just for returning [vv.29-30]. This symbolized the attitude of the religious leaders toward the real life sinners who had shown repentance, as they self-righteously judged and held in contempt those sinners – seeing no need for mercy for themselves, they offered none to others – resenting Jesus' association with those sinners in contrast to Jesus' lack of acknowledgment of them.

Summary of similarities and/or differences in response [List them to show the major point of the similarities and differences. There are quite a few.]

Both the father and the elder son valued something lost; however, what they valued was different: the father valued the younger son, while the elder son valued the squandered wealth. The father represented God the Father, who valued the recovery of repentant sinners who returned to him for mercy, recognizing their need for the righteousness of Christ. The elder son represented the religious leaders, who believed they were self-righteous because of their identity as descendants of Abraham and their works under the Law. They valued material things, rather than people, in contrast to God who values people.

Both the father and the elder son reacted strongly to the tension of the return of the younger son; however, they reacted in different ways: the father rejoiced and embraced the younger son, while the elder son got angry and judged the younger son. The father's reaction represents God's reaction to the return of repentant sinners: he rejoices, offers mercy, and bestows even more blessing. The elder son's reaction represents that of the religious leaders: self-righteously seeing no need for mercy for themselves, they offer none to others, in contrast to God who does offer mercy.

The father and the elder son showed opposite character traits in response to the tension of the return of the younger son: the father forwent judgment in favor of offering mercy in welcoming home his repentant younger son, while the elder son asserted his self-righteousness and claim to judge the younger son. The father's character reflects God's, as he forgoes judging the repentant sinner who returns through Christ, and instead offers mercy to him. The elder son's character reflects that of the religious leaders, who believed in their own righteousness obtained by themselves without mercy and judged the outcasts as unrighteous and undeserving rather than showing them mercy.

The father and the elder son showed opposite attitudes toward the value of possessions: the father forgave the younger son for squandering half of his wealth in sinful ways and even lavished more on him, while the elder son regretted the loss of the wealth and resented more being used for the welfare of the younger son. The father represented God, who is more interested in the return of the repentant sinner – to whom he offers mercy – than he is about what material blessings have been squandered. The elder son represented the religious leaders, who were not interested in the welfare of the outcasts, nor in offering them mercy, but instead were focused on themselves and their possessions.

Part III [begins next page]

	Historical Setting: Eating with outcasts	Lost Son Story: God's treatment of Israel when she returns	Lost Son Story: Relationship of living in God's land to blessing and inheritance	Lost Son Story: Father and Mother as authorities for God to be respected
OT Reference:	Deut 14:29; 26:12; 10:17-18, cf. Hosea 2:23	Deut 30:1-15	Deut 28:63-68; 31:7	Deut 5:16; 21:18-21
Your Explanation of the OT Reference: (e.g., what does it say about God or Israel?)	God does not judge partially, and does make provision for the outcasts who cannot help themselves.	When Israel would repent and return to God, he would welcome them in compassion, gathering them out of captivity to restore them to the land, prospering them while afflicting their enemies, and circumcising their hearts so they would obey God fully.	While in exile, Israel would find no rest, but rather would find despair designed by God to bring them to repentance and a return to God.	Israelites were to honor their parents to receive God's blessing, else they could be stoned.
Luke 15 Reference:	Luke 15:1-2	Luke 15:11-32	Luke 15:12-14	Luke 15:12-14
What does it say about the actions of the characters in light of the OT passage?	Jesus [reflecting the heart of God] was gathering with social outcasts who had realized their need for his provision. In contrast, the religious leaders shunned these outcasts and expected Jesus would also [indicating they did not have hearts after God's].	In the parable, when the younger son repented and returned to his father, the father welcomed the son with compassion, restored him to the household, and again blessed him with his prosperity. This reflects the attitude of God toward repentant sinners, including the nation if she would turn back through Christ.	In the parable, while the younger son is away from his father and home, he struggled and found despair which brought him to repentance and a return to his father. Contemporary Israel was struggling under Gentile rule and in despair because of separation from God, but God knew that in the right time they would be brought by this despair to repentance through Christ.	In the parable, the younger son squandered the blessings of his father in activities that would not have been approved by his father, thus showing his father dishonor and bringing him to his suffering state. Israel had squandered the equipping blessings of God and sinned against him, showing God dishonor and bringing the nation to its suffering state.

	Lost Son Story: Famine as an indication of . . .	Lost Son Story: Removal of materials as indication of . . .	Lost Son Story: Covenanting with Gentiles	Lost Son Story: Problems of swine
OT Reference:	Deut 28:48	Deut 28:48	Deut 7:1-3	Deut 14:8
Your Explanation of the OT Reference: (e.g., what does it say about God or Israel?)	Part of Israel’s discipline from God was that they would serve their enemies in hard labor and yet still lack even the necessities such as food.	Part of Israel’s discipline from God was that they would lack all things, including necessities.	When Israel went to possess the land, they were not to have any covenant relationships with the Gentiles of that land.	The Law stated that pigs were an unclean animal for Jews.
Luke 15 Reference:	Luke 15:14	Luke 15:14	Luke 15:15	Luke 15:15
What does it say about the actions of the characters in light of the OT passage?	In the parable, the younger son finds himself struggling against hunger even as he works in detestable conditions for the people of that land. In contemporary Israel, they were under Gentile rule and there were poor [hungry] among them indicating a lack of covenant blessing.	In the parable, the younger son finds himself destitute, even while working in detestable conditions for the people of that land. In contemporary Israel, there was poverty among them indicating a lack of covenant blessing.	In the parable, the younger son placed himself in submission to Gentiles rather than repent and return home to his father earlier. Israel had done a similar thing and was now unrepentant despite Gentile rule in the land.	In the parable, the younger son had willingly worked with pigs rather than repent and return home to his father. In contemporary Israel, the Gentile culture had afflicted them with behaviors that were contrary to God’s law, to which the people submitted rather than repent and return to God.

	Lost Son Story: The purpose of being under a curse so that one might “return”	Lost Son Story: God showing “compassion” when one has returned from being God’s enemy	Lost Son Story: God rejoicing in response to a “return”	Lost Son Story: “Keeping commands” as loving to represent the desires of God’s heart
OT Reference:	Deut 30:1-6,9; Deut 4:25-31	Deut 4:31, 30:3 Hosea 2:23, 3:5	Deut 30:9 Deut 28:63	Deut 12:28
Your Explanation of the OT Reference: (e.g., what does it say about God or Israel?)	God designed his curses such that they would bring Israel to humility, thus to repentance, thus to a return to God and the land.	When Israel would repent and return to God, he would welcome them in compassion, gathering them out of captivity to restore them to the land, prospering them while afflicting their enemies, and circumcising their hearts so they would obey God fully.	When Israel repents, God will rejoice in that return and rejoice in blessing them again.	God’s commands reflect his desires and his character. Israel was to keep those commands so as to reflect God’s heart in themselves, as part of their loving response to his loving provision.
Luke 15 Reference:	Luke 15:17-18	Luke 15:20	Luke 15:22-24, 32	Luke 15:29-30
What does it say about the actions of the characters in light of the OT passage?	In the parable, the younger son suffers, which brings him to humility, thus to repentance, and thus to a return to his father and home. If contemporary Israel would have adopted this humility and thus repentance, Christ would have delivered them to reconciliation with God and into the kingdom.	In the parable, when the younger son repented and returned to his father, the father welcomed the son with compassion, restored him to the household, and again blessed him with his prosperity. This reflects the attitude of God toward repentant sinners, including the nation if she would turn back through Christ.	In the parable, the father rejoices in the return of his younger son and rejoices in blessing him again. This blessing could have been for contemporary Israel, if they would have repented and returned to God through Christ.	In the parable, while the elder son sought to be obedient to the commands of his father, he did so in self-righteousness and so did not reflect his father’s heart. The contemporary religious leaders sought to be obedient to the letter of the Law, but did so self-righteously, and so did not reflect the desires of God’s heart nor his character.

	Lost Son Story: "Life" as "keeping the commandments" (loving God's heart) and "death" as not representing God's character.	Lost Son Story: Anger toward God as indicating a difference in character	Lost Son Story: "Life" as "loving God" (loving the revelation of His desires)	Lost Son Story: Ability to identify one's motivation (character) in their desire to "keep the Law" (God's heart)
OT Reference:	Deut 30:15-20	Jonah 4:1-4; Gen 4:5	Deut 30:6	Deut 5:29; 6:6; 8:2; 11:13; 17:20; 26:16; 30:2, 10; 32:46
Your Explanation of the OT Reference: (e.g., what does it say about God or Israel?)	The Law indicated that true life was to represent God, and that this was the only path to promised blessings in physical life and eternal spiritual life. To not represent God was to be walking in death.	Anger toward God is revealed in those who are not aligned with his desires or the values of his character. Jonah's attitude was representative of Israel, not aligning with God's character about mercy.	God would empower the people to love him fully and thus truly live.	God repeatedly indicated that obedience should result from having a heart for God.
Luke 15 Reference:	Luke 15:24, 32	Luke 15:28-30	Luke 15:24, 32	Luke 15:28-30
What does it say about the actions of the characters in light of the OT passage?	In the parable, the younger son had rebelled against his father, and so was considered dead to him, but now had repented and so was considered alive again. Contemporary Israel was considered dead in that they were not representing God's character.	In the parable, the elder son was angry with his father, revealing his desires and values differed from his father's [self-righteousness and value for the material loss vs. mercy and value for the returned person]. In contemporary Israel, the religious leaders were angry at Jesus for meeting with known sinners, revealing their desires and values differed from his [God's] in the same way.	In the parable, the younger son had returned to his father, expressing repentance and obedient love, and thus was considered alive again to the father. In contemporary Israel, there was a lack of this love for God, as evidenced by their lack of repentance and obedience.	In the parable, the elder son had obeyed his father's commands, but not from having a heart for him, rather from a sense of self-righteous earning of reward. In contemporary Israel, the religious leaders sought to obey the letter of the Law out of a self-righteous sense of earning reward instead of out of having a heart for God.

	<p>Lost Son Story: Similarity between Israel and the elder son as seen in Jonah</p>	<p>Lost Son Story: How the lost son and the elder son each identify with Israel</p>
<p>OT Reference:</p>	<p>Jonah 1–4</p>	<p>Deut 30:1-9</p>
<p>Your Explanation of the OT Reference: (e.g., what does it say about God or Israel?)</p>	<p>Jonah [like Israel] revealed through his actions and words that he did not have the same desires and values as God about God’s mercy toward those who would repent and to whom Jonah [and Israel] were sent to witness for God.</p>	<p>When Israel would repent and return to God, he would welcome them in compassion, gathering them out of captivity to restore them to the land, prospering them while afflicting their enemies, and circumcising their hearts so they would obey God fully.</p>
<p>Luke 15 Reference:</p>	<p>Luke 15:11-32</p>	<p>Luke 15:11-32</p>
<p>What does it say about the actions of the characters in light of the OT passage?</p>	<p>In the parable, the elder brother’s words indicated he did not have the same desires and values as his father about the father’s mercy toward his repentant younger son, to whom the elder brother should have been an example for the father. In contemporary Israel, the words and actions of the religious leaders indicated they did not have the same desires and values as God about mercy for repentant sinners, to whom the religious leaders should have been an example [witness] for God.</p>	<p>In the parable, the younger brother did repent and return to his father, and his father did welcome him with compassion and restore him to blessing. This was the promise for contemporary Israel, if she would repent. In the parable, the elder brother made himself the enemy of the repentant younger brother, thereby bringing on himself the rebuke of the father [curses]. Contemporary Israel, as represented by the religious leaders, was making itself the enemy of those who were repenting through Christ, bringing on themselves the rebuke of Christ [and possibly other curses].</p>

Summary

Give a short repeat of the Lost Son story **except use Israel for the Lost Son** from Deut. 30:1-15. Be sure you don't just put in outcasts, but cover the history of Israel up to the Jesus' present day dealing with the outcasts.

God had blessed Israel in many ways, to equip them to represent him to the nations: he had given them deliverance from Egypt, covenant promises, land, victory over enemies resulting in peace, prosperity, fertility, the Law, his presence, and a righteous king [a man after God's own heart]. Israel took those blessings and squandered them in sinful living, particularly in various forms of idolatry. When they began to experience curses, they began to suffer and fear, then they turned to the Gentiles instead of to God, resulting in further suffering and uncleanness. Eventually, they would return to God in repentance, and God would welcome them, rejoicing in their return and forgiving them for squandering his blessings in sinful ways. He would restore them to blessing and provision, and curse their enemies. In contemporary Israel, they had not yet reached this national repentance, as evidenced by their domination by Gentile rulers and the lack of various covenanted blessings. This was epitomized in the hard-hearted and self-righteous religious leaders. However, in response to the words and actions of Christ, a remnant of outcasts began to repent and be reconciled to God through Christ.

Explain **the elder son in terms of Israel** (cf. Mal. 3:7,13-15, or Jonah as typical of Israel). This should be in terms of Israel up to and including Jesus' present day represented in the Pharisees.

God sent Jonah to witness for him to the Gentiles in Nineveh. Similarly, God had equipped Israel to witness for him to the Gentile nations. However, Jonah was not willing to obey this command. Similarly, Israel had not represented God to the Gentile nations. Jonah was self-righteous: he had received God's mercy but he considered himself to deserve God's mercy, whereas he judged that the Gentiles who needed mercy did not deserve it. Similarly, Israel had received God's mercy many times, but considered themselves to deserve it as those who descended from Abraham and those who sought to obey the Law, but considered Gentiles not to merit God's mercy. When Jonah finally delivered God's message in Nineveh and God did grant mercy to the Gentiles there, Jonah complained against God for this. In contemporary Israel, the Pharisees complained when Jesus welcomed and showed mercy to repentant sinners. In the parable, the elder son does the same when the father welcomed home and showed mercy to the repentant younger son. He argued that he was the righteous one based on his obedience to the letter of his father's commands, and that the younger son should not receive the father's mercy, just as the Pharisees were arguing about themselves compared to the obvious sinners.

Relate the elder son and the lost son to the main characters in 15:1-2 and explain why Jesus eats with sinners in terms of God's love for Israel.

The lost son represents the known sinners who have squandered God's blessings in sinful living, but now have repented and seek to return to God through Christ. The elder son represents the religious leaders, who believe they are righteous based on their works, and who care about themselves and possessions instead of people in need. As the known sinners repent through Christ, God welcomes them back and rejoices over their return and promises to bless them, as the father did in the story. This is manifested by Christ's eating and associating with them, reflecting the heart of God and showing the mercy and love of God. The religious leaders judge those known sinners to be unworthy of such mercy, while insisting that they have earned such blessing themselves.

Part IV

Literary Structure & Argument of the Book.

A. Message:

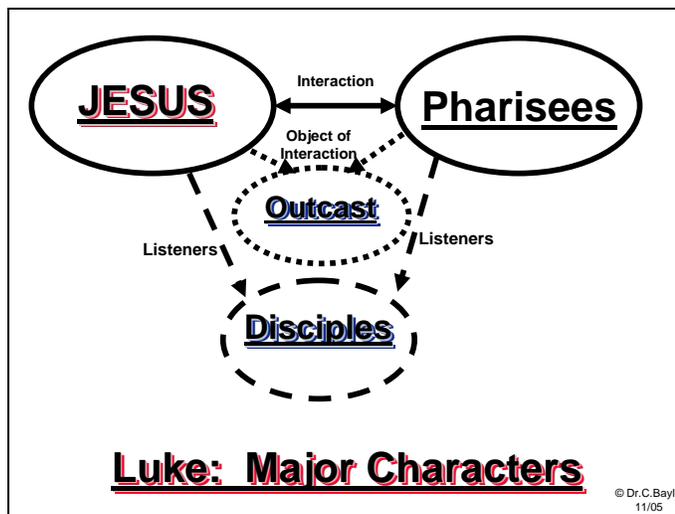
Jesus came as the suffering servant and Lord of the Sabbath, to offer the New Covenant and release from the bondages of sin, death, Satan, and Gentile rule. Upon Jesus' resurrection and ascension, he would trust the disciples to carry forth his message of imputed righteousness and release.

Defense:

Luke first showed how John the Baptist prophetically identified Jesus as the one who would bring release and the New Covenant [1:1-3:22]. Luke second related how Jesus gathered disciples and identified himself as the Lord of the Sabbath who could bring release [3:23-9:50]. Luke third portrayed Jesus' final approach to Jerusalem as the suffering servant who was offering deliverance [release] for Jerusalem and Israel [9:51-19:27]. Finally, Luke explained that Jerusalem rejected this deliverance, but Jesus sacrificed himself to bring this release which his disciples would begin to proclaim in Jerusalem [19:29-24:53].

B. Explanation of the movement in the main characters:

1. Character Diagram:



2. Characters:

a. Character #1: Jesus

Jesus is the protagonist of the story, representing God the Father. His theology is that all need God's merciful deliverance through God's grace from sin, death, Satan, and Gentile rule. He offers this deliverance [release] to individuals and the nation, to all who recognize their need and accept his offer.

b. Character #2: Pharisees

The Pharisees represent the religious establishment of Israel, and by extension Israel as a nation. They are the antagonists, opposing Jesus' teaching and ministry, serving the literary purpose of showing the error in the Jews' thinking. They were looking for

justification based on self-righteousness and deliverance from the Gentiles, self-righteously denying their need for the spiritual deliverance Jesus offered. They believed they did not need mercy because they were righteous through their works and heritage as Jews [sons of Abraham], and thus they showed no mercy to outcast sinners whom they believed were out of covenant relationship and deserved rejection. Because of their selfish values, they continuously opposed the teachings of Jesus.

c. Character #3: Outcasts

The outcasts are those who are disadvantaged: the poor, the sick, the widowed, the aliens. The Pharisees believed these disadvantages indicated curses from God for unrighteousness while their own prosperity indicated blessings from God for their own righteousness. However, the outcasts were often those who were humble enough to recognize their need for what Jesus offered, and thus were to be made righteous by God through Christ's sacrifice. Jesus played on the incorrect attitudes toward the outcasts of the Pharisees to expose the error of those attitudes and their contrast with God's.

C. Literary Flow of the Sections

1. 1:1—3:22 Message:

John the Baptist [the last and greatest Old Covenant prophet] prophetically identified Jesus as the one who would bring release [for individuals and the nation] and the New Covenant, through the forgiveness of sins.

Support:

John would be born as the New Elijah to call the nation to repentance in anticipation of deliverance [1:5-25; 57-80]. Jesus would be born as the Son of God to offer God's deliverance to those humble enough to heed the call to repentance [1:26-38; 2:1-52]. The two met while in the womb [1:29-56] and when grown [3:1-22], and John identified Jesus as God's judge and deliverer of mercy and grace through the New Covenant.

2. 3:23—9:50 Message:

Jesus gathered disciples in Galilee and identified himself as the Lord of the Sabbath who could bring release.

Support:

Jesus proved his identity as God the Son and ability to deliver the nation by resisting Satan and exercising power over demons [3:24-4:44]. He then gathered disciples to himself, teaching of his deliverance from sin and death [the penalty for sin], as the minister of compassion and mercy from God ["Lord of the Sabbath"; 5:1-6:13]. He then prepared those disciples to reflect the heart of God, identify with him, and witness for him and his gospel [6:14-9:50].

3. 9:51—19:28 Message:

Jesus made his final approach to Jerusalem as the suffering servant who was offering deliverance for Jerusalem and Israel.

Support:

Jesus proclaimed the availability of ultimate Sabbath rest, which Israel – being self-righteous, valuing worldly things, and not perceiving the heart of God – rejected, but which outcasts – being humble enough to recognize their need of God's mercy and willing to turn to the gospel over worldly things – accepted, to become disciples of Jesus [9:51-17:10]. Jesus taught about

the delay in judgment, during which Israel would perceive themselves as worthy and would judgmentally persecute the disciples of Christ, while the disciples would perceive themselves as having graciously received mercy from God and would offer that mercy to others [17:11-18:30]. Jerusalem rejected Jesus and his gospel, while the disciples heard Jesus' call to live [to give up all] for the gospel [18:31-19:10]. Jesus taught about the end times, when his enemies would be slain and his followers rewarded for their devotion to the gospel [19:11-27].

A. 9:51–17:10:

Jesus proclaimed the availability of ultimate Sabbath rest, which Israel – being self-righteous, valuing worldly things, and not perceiving the heart of God – rejected, but which outcasts – being humble enough to recognize their need of God's mercy and willing to turn to the gospel over worldly things – accepted, to become disciples of Jesus.

Luke 15:

In Luke 15, Jesus used two illustrations and a parable to explain the difference in his philosophy from that of the religious leaders, and the difference in his treatment of the outcasts from the religious leaders. The first distinction is that while Jesus selflessly values people, the religious leaders selfishly value only what is their own. The second distinction is that while Jesus shows mercy to the repentant sinners [reflecting God's heart], the religious leaders harshly judge the outcasts and show them no mercy. The third distinction is that while the outcasts are humbly repentant and recognize the need for Jesus' deliverance, the religious leaders self-righteously reject the need for Jesus' deliverance. Thus, this chapter illustrates the themes found in this whole section, as explained in A above. These differences in philosophy are why Jesus eats with the sinners and the religious leaders object.

B. 17:11—19:10:

Jesus taught about the delay in judgment, during which Israel – having rejected his gospel – would perceive themselves as worthy and would judgmentally persecute the disciples of Christ, while the disciples – having responded to Jesus' call to live [give up everything] for the gospel – would perceive themselves as having graciously received mercy from God and would offer that mercy to others.

C. 19:11—19:27:

Jesus taught about the end times, when his enemies would be slain and his followers rewarded for their devotion to the gospel [living by it and bringing it to others].

4. 19:29 – 24:53 Message:

Jerusalem rejected the deliverance Jesus offered, but Jesus sacrificed himself to make possible this release which his disciples would begin to proclaim in Jerusalem.

Support:

Israel rejected Jesus as the Son, leading Jesus to prophesy that they would remain under Gentile rule [judgment] until his return [19:28-21:38]. Jesus instructed his disciples to remain faithful despite the nation's rejection of him [22:1-38]. Jesus endured trials at which he was not found guilty, yet he died as a substitute for sin [22:39-56]. Jesus was resurrected and the disciples began to proclaim release in Jerusalem [24:1-53].

Part V

Detailed Interpretation of Luke 15.

Provide a *detailed* interpretation, in your own words, which explains how each of the following parts of Chapter 15 answers the question posed to Jesus by the Scribes and Pharisees.

2) Historical Setting (15:1-2):

Setting (15:1–2): Literarily, the setting provides the three sets of characters and the situation which leads up to the tension [question]: Jesus [the protagonist], the Pharisees and scribes [the antagonists], and the tax collectors and sinners with whom Jesus associates [outcasts, the object of the tension between the other two]. The setting presents the situation of Jesus associating with the outcasts [tax collectors and sinners] to the chagrin of the religious leaders [Pharisees and scribes].

Question (15:2): Literarily, this is the tension. The question that Jesus must answer is the accusation by the religious leaders [scribes and Pharisees] that there is something improper about his association with the outcasts [tax collectors and sinners]. The religious leaders want to know why Jesus would receive and eat with the outcasts, whom they judge to be outside of the covenant blessing, unclean, and undeserving of mercy.

3) Jesus' Answer (15:3-32):

1. Two Illustrative Stories (Luke 15:3-10: "So He told . . .")

Story #1 (vv. 4–7):

The first story illustrates that, just as a sheep owner would rejoice over finding a lost sheep, God rejoices over the repentance of a lost sinner. They both rejoice over finding what they value, which illustrates the difference in their value systems [character].

Details:

1. What man among you: Jesus is asking a direct but rhetorical question to the Pharisees. The religious leaders placed great value on their material blessings, so they would readily identify with the sheep-owner who rejoiced over finding his lost sheep. This is contrasted with God valuing the lost sinner who repents.
2. A hundred sheep: Even though the sheep owner had many sheep, each one was important to him. The religious leaders would identify with this, because they valued possessions highly. Similarly, though God has many believers, each lost person who repents is important to him.
3. Go after: The sheep owner would readily search out the lost sheep. The religious leaders would have behaved the same way if they had lost a valuable possession. Similarly, Jesus was acting for God the Father by readily interacting with sinners to provide them a chance to return to God the Father.
4. Rejoicing: Upon finding the lost sheep, the sheep owner would carefully bring it back home and rejoice at the recovery of so valuable a possession. The religious leaders would behave the same way if they had found so valuable a possession which had been lost. Similarly, Jesus was acting for God by offering sinners the way home to God the Father, so God could rejoice at their recovery.

5. Joy in Heaven: Just as the shepherd would rejoice at finding his lost sheep [a lost possession, a sentiment with which the religious leaders could identify because of how highly they valued possessions], so God rejoices at the repentance of sinners, the recovery of what he values.
6. Ninety-nine righteous: God rejoices at the recovery of each repentant sinner, but there is no rejoicing over those who believe themselves to be self-righteous and thus do not repent. This was a reference to the religious leaders themselves, who thought they were self-righteous through their heritage and works, and thus did not see any reason to seek the mercy offered by Jesus [i.e. to repent].

Story #2 (vv. 8-10):

The second story illustrates that, just as a woman would rejoice over finding lost money, God rejoices over the repentance of a lost sinner. They both rejoice over finding what they value, which illustrates the difference in their value systems [character].

Details:

1. What woman: Jesus again is asking a direct but rhetorical question to the Pharisees. The religious leaders placed great value on their material blessings, so they would readily identify with the woman who rejoiced over finding her lost money. This is contrasted with God valuing the lost sinner who repents.
2. Ten silver coins: Even though the woman had many coins, each one was important to her. The religious leaders would identify with this, because they valued possessions highly. Similarly, though God has many believers, each lost person who repents is important to him.
3. Sweep the house: The woman would readily search out the lost coin. The religious leaders would have behaved the same way if they had lost a valuable possession. Similarly, Jesus was acting for God the Father by readily interacting with sinners to provide them a chance to return to God the Father.
4. Rejoice with me: Upon finding the lost coin, the woman would invite all her friends to rejoice with her at the recovery of so valuable a possession. The religious leaders would behave the same way if they had found so valuable a possession which had been lost. Similarly, God would rejoice in the presence of the angels at the recovery of a previously lost sinner.
5. In the presence of the angels of God: Just as the woman would rejoice at finding her lost coin [a lost possession, a sentiment with which the religious leaders could identify because of how highly they valued possessions], so God rejoices at the repentance of sinners, the recovery of what he values.

Summary of Stories #1 & #2:

These two stories contribute to Jesus' answer by showing a similarity and a difference between the religious leaders and Jesus [who represents God the Father]. There is a similarity in Jesus' response to lost people and the worldly religious leaders' response to lost assets: just as the religious leaders would search out a lost possession and rejoice when they found it, so Jesus searches out lost people and rejoices at their repentance. The difference is in what causes the rejoicing: to the religious leaders – who are like the shepherd and the woman of the two illustrations – celebration comes from finding lost

possessions because they valued possessions highly; but for Jesus – who has the heart of God, and so is like God in the two illustrations – celebration comes from finding lost people [sinners who are ready to repent], because he [and God the Father] value people highly.

2. Story #3 (Luke 15:11-32: “And He said, ‘A man had two sons . . . ’”):

This story contributes to Jesus answer by illustrating the difference in attitude between God [Jesus] and the religious leaders toward repentant sinners and the promise God [Jesus] was holding out for apostate Israel [represented by the religious leaders] if they would repent.

Setting: The setting provides the basis from which the tension will arise. Jesus provided this setting: a man and his two sons [v.11] had an agricultural property [v.25]; the younger son requested of the father and received his half of the estate [apparently in some form more liquid than land] and left [vv.12-13]; he squandered all this wealth in sinful ways, not representing his father well [v.13]; as a result of his impoverishment and a famine, he hired on to work with swine [which would be repulsive and unclean to him] and remained hungry [vv.14-16]; he developed an attitude of dependence and repentance toward his father and chose to return to seek mercy [vv.17-19]. This part of the story has a lot of symbolic meaning for Jesus’ audience. As with the father and the younger son, God has blessed the outcast sinners and the nation greatly [especially with regard to equipping them to represent him]. However, like the younger son did to his father, they have squandered God’s blessings and lived in sin apart from God. As with the younger son, this failure to represent God well has resulted in their suffering and submission to Gentile rule. Now, like the younger son, some outcast sinners are coming to repentance through Christ, though the nation, and particularly the religious leaders, have not come to this repentance yet.

Details:

1. A man had two sons: the man, the father, would be the authority in the household and thus the provider of blessing to his sons. This father represents God, who was in authority over Israel and who blessed the nation and the outcast sinners.
2. The younger son: He would not be the primary heir, but still would be blessed through his father and would represent his father. In this sense, he represents the outcast sinners, but we shall see later that in other ways he also represents the nation of Israel as a whole.
3. Give me the share: The younger son took his inheritance; in a sense in this moment he rejects representing the father to represent himself. This inheritance represents the blessings of God, particularly as relates to the equipping of the nation and the promises inherent in the covenant; the nation too rejected representing God to represent itself
4. Distant country: The younger son stopped representing his father’s desires and character, turning away from him and ending up in exile, away from the place of blessing. This represents the distance from God in which the outcast sinners and the nation have been living, including the exile that resulted as a curse from their failure to represent God’s desires and character. Deuteronomy 28:63-68; 31:7

says the nation would find no rest while in exile, but rather would find despair designed to bring them to repentance.

5. Squandered his estate with loose living: The younger son lost all his inheritance as a result of his sinful ways, his failure to represent his father well. This represents the loss of covenant blessings [and existence of covenant curses] suffered by the outcasts and the nation due to the sinful and dishonoring way they have lived apart from God, in failing to represent him well. The command to honor one's parents to receive God's blessing is found in Deuteronomy 5:16; 21:18-21.
6. Severe Famine: The younger son was away from his father who could have blessed him, and so he suffered from famine and poverty. This represents the lack of covenant blessing when the outcast sinners and the nation are away from God [and the land]. This was part of the covenant found in Deuteronomy 28:48, 63-68; 31:7.
7. Hired himself out: In his time of distress, rather than return to his father who could have blessed him, the younger son turned for sustenance to someone outside his family, someone without his best interests at heart. This represents how the nation placed itself in submission to Gentiles rather than turning to God, in opposition to God's promise and command that they represent him to the Gentiles. Israel was not to have any covenant relationships with Gentiles of the land, per Deuteronomy 7:1-3, and were to represent God to the Gentiles per Genesis 12:1-3.
8. Swine: The younger son lowered himself to working with swine, which would have been repulsive and unclean to him, rather than turning to his father for help. This represents the Gentile influence over the nation, to which they willingly submit rather than repent and return to God. The specific statement of swine being unclean is found in Deuteronomy 14:8.
9. Came to his senses: In his misery, the younger son came to see the truth, that he should return to his father and beg for mercy. This represents the anticipated reaction to God's curse, designed to bring the outcast sinners and the nation to repentance; this is the recognition of the need for God's mercy and grace by the repentant outcast sinners. The use of curses to bring repentance is found in Deuteronomy 4:25-31; 30:1-6, 9.
10. Get up and Go: The younger son acted in repentance, physically returning to his father to beg for mercy. This represents the repentance to which the outcast sinners had arrived, but which the nation [represented by the religious leaders] still lacked.
11. No longer worthy: The younger son had come to humility, recognizing his lack of worthiness and the need for mercy from his father. This represents the acknowledgment of the repentant outcast sinners that they do not merit God's mercy and grace. The religious leaders, and the nation as a whole, had not yet arrived at this attitude.

Tension: The tension provides the problem to which the characters respond. In the story, when the younger son returns [v.20], the father and the older son must decide how to respond. This represents the real life tension of the difference between how God and the religious leaders respond to the repentant return to God the Father of the outcast sinners.

Details:

1. Came to his father: The younger son returned to his father to beg for mercy and express his humility. He was returning to the one who could bless him, asking for forgiveness and expressing his devotion. This represents the acceptance of deliverance in Christ by the repentant outcast sinners, and the attitude God expects to see in the nation [and religious leaders].

Response #1: The father felt compassion for his younger son [v.20], lovingly embraced him [v.20], immediately began to further bless him [v.22-23], rejoicing at the return of what had been lost and was valued: his son [v.24]. This response to the tension reveals the philosophy of the Main Character's heart, which represents God's heart toward repentant outcast sinners [or the nation, were they to repent], which is reflected in Jesus' attitude toward them.

Details

1. Compassion: Upon seeing the younger son returning to him, the father immediately felt compassion for him, and ran to embrace him. This represents the attitude of God toward repentant sinners who return to him through Christ. Moses prophesied about this in Deuteronomy 4:31; 30:3; Hosea 2:23; 3:5.
2. No longer worthy: The younger son continues to recognize that he does not merit mercy or love from his father and yet is depending on him for provision, trusting in his generous heart. This represents the attitude of the outcast sinners, who have returned to God through Christ. It is the attitude God expects from the nation [and the religious leaders], who until this time still did not recognize these things.
3. Best robe: Despite what the younger son had done against his father, his father begins to bless him further and welcome him back to the family, restoring his sonship and abundant provision. This represents the continued provision and blessing of God to those outcast sinners who repent and return to him through Christ. When Israel repents, God will bless them and provide for them again, per Deuteronomy 28:63; 30:9.
4. Celebrate: The father wants to celebrate, because he has found something he values: his previously lost son. This represents the atmosphere in heaven when one outcast sinner repents [which links this to the previous illustrations]. When Israel repents, God will rejoice, per Deuteronomy 30:9.
5. Was lost and has been found: The father considered his younger son to be lost or even dead to him when he was off not representing him, but now sees him as found or alive again, because he has returned to the family relationship. This represents the perspective of God [and Jesus] toward the outcast sinners [and nation] when they are away from God and sinfully failing to represent God

[Lost], and when they repent [Found]. Deuteronomy 30:6, 15-20 indicates that true life is to represent God, else one is walking in death.

6. Pleading: The father pleads with his older son to respond to the return of the younger son consistent with the response of the father. This represents what Jesus is doing in telling this story, explaining to the religious leaders why they should value the repentant outcast sinners just as he does.
7. All that is mine is yours: The father assures the older son that for him too there is family blessing that will not be diminished by the return of the younger son, but rather augmented. This is a key aspect of the tension: whether the older son will now make the same mistake and fail to represent his father well. This represents what Jesus is saying to the religious leaders, that they must represent God the father well in their response to the return of the outcast sinners.

Response #2: The older brother reacted to the return of the younger brother with resentment and anger: he was angry that his father had welcomed back the younger son with blessing [v.28], he was self righteous about his own merit with the father [v.29], and he was judgmental instead of merciful toward his brother [v.30]. This response to the tension reveals the philosophy of the contrasting character's heart, representing that of the religious leaders, toward the repentant outcast sinners.

Details

1. Older son: The older son had remained on the estate, working for his father. However, in that he was not looking for the younger son as his father was, he was not truly reflecting his father's heart or representing his father well. His attitudes represent those of the religious leaders.
2. Music and dancing: As the older son approached the house, he realized there was a celebration going on. This represents the joyful association of Jesus with the repentant outcast sinners.
3. Inquiring: The older son inquired of a servant what was happening, rather than seeking out his father. This represents the approach to Jesus by the religious leaders, who could of inquired of God's Word instead.
4. Angry: The older son's response to the celebration over the return of the younger son was anger and a refusal to join in the celebration. This is evidence of a difference in his response to that of his father; i.e. his heart does not reflect his father's heart in this matter. This represents the attitude of the religious leaders when they see Jesus associating with the repentant outcast sinners, which indicates the existence of a difference in their attitude from God's; they do not understand his mercy toward them. Anger toward God is consistently revealed in those who are not aligned with God's desires and values, e.g. Genesis 4:5; Jonah 4:1-4.
5. His father came out: The father came out searching after his older son, who was absent from the celebration. This represents God reaching out to the hard hearted religious leaders through Jesus, in effect the very act of Jesus telling this story to them.

6. Answered and said: When his father comes out to plead with him to come to a right attitude and join the celebration, the older son tries to tell his father why he is correct and his father is not. This represents the religious leaders who should have known the heart of God from scripture, yet were telling God [through Jesus] that this was not the right attitude; they had changed the nature of the scriptures in their teachings to reflect their own values instead of God's, and now they sought to notify Jesus of these values.
7. Never neglected a command: The older son believes he merits his father's love and blessing, while the younger son does not, because he has continued to serve his father consistently [though one must note the failure to represent his father well, as reflected in his unwillingness to look for the younger son and now his unwillingness to join the party despite his father's request]. This represents the self-righteous attitude of the religious leaders, that they have earned God's favor by following the Law [despite their failure to represent God well, as exhibited in the need for this story], in contrast to the outcast sinners whom they judge to have not earned God's favor. Deuteronomy 12:28 indicates obedience should derive from a loving response to God's provision and to represent his character, not out of a sense of earning merit and thus not representing his character.
8. Never given me a young goat: The older son believes he has not been blessed well enough [that his father has not been kind and merciful to him] while his father has blessed the younger son too much [rewarding sin]. This represents the self-righteous attitude of the religious leaders, that God had not blessed them all that they deserved [they desired justification and deliverance from the Gentiles] and that Jesus is wrong to bless the repentant outcast sinners [rewarding their sin] instead of them.
9. This son of yours: The older son does not feel mercy toward the younger son, but instead is judgmental of him. This represents the derisive judgment of the repentant outcast sinners by the self-righteous religious leaders.

IV. Summary

The question of the Scribes and Pharisees (tension) is whether it is improper for Jesus to associate with the outcast sinners [i.e. since it is improper in their view, why he would do it]. They believed they were righteous through their works and their inheritance from Abraham, so they looked for justification of that righteousness and deliverance from the Gentiles, but they looked for this on their own merit, not with an attitude of repentance. Thus, they did not see God as merciful, but rather as having withheld the blessing they deserved, and so they did not see the need to reflect this part of his character. They saw themselves as righteous and the outcast sinners as unrighteous. Further, their values were related to physical blessings, primarily possessions. All this together led them to not value the repentant outcast sinner and so to not show them mercy.

Jesus' answer to the question of the Scribes and Pharisees is that he is representing God the Father, who has a heart for people and who offers mercy and grace for those who return to him repentant. The outcasts have recognized their lack of self-ability to deliver, have recognized God as merciful, have their lack of merit and need for that mercy. They have turned away from the priority of physical blessing and sought the gospel. They are willing to see the kingdom for what it is, unlike the religious leaders who seek a kingdom of their own imagination. God's response to these outcasts, administered through Jesus, was mercy, blessing, and rejoicing.

V. **Application**

A. **Historical Application** (Be sure this is specific for your chapter but fits in the book's application.):

1. **Theological:**

The theological response of the historical church to this parable was to care about lost people and to rejoice when one became repentant through Christ; and to avoid self righteously judging others as unworthy of God's mercy and grace or judging themselves as worthy of God's mercy and grace. This would reflect the character of God, rather than that of the Pharisees.

2. **Physical:**

The physical response of the historical church to this theology was to bring the truth of Christ's gospel to the lost sinners, offering them God's mercy and grace; and to avoid persecuting lost sinners in any way.

B. **Present Application** (This should be the same application as historical yet brought up to date.):

1. **Theological:**

The theological response of the present day church to this parable should be to care about lost people and rejoice when one becomes repentant through Christ; and to avoid self righteously judging others as unworthy of God's mercy and grace or judging themselves as worthy of God's mercy and grace. This will reflect the character of God, rather than that of the Pharisees.

2. **Physical:**

The physical response of the present day church to this parable should be to bring the truth of Christ's gospel to the lost sinners, offering them God's mercy and grace; and to avoid persecuting lost sinners in any way.