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# Bracknell Bible Study Day

17<sup>th</sup> June 2023



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# Studying the Gospel of Luke

**Chapter Study**

**LUKE 15**





Starting a study is always the hardest thing to do

Read it, read it, read it again

With a chapter study, that means the whole book – over and over again! And then the chapter over and over again!

Luke – around 1½ hours? A game of football! (275wpm)

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Where to begin -  
READ



A HARMONY OF THE GOSPELS – [click here to access one version of this](#) – others are available. Why not create your own?



In the gospel record, read the parallel passages in other gospels too, in order to get a fuller account

What is similar?

What is different?

How does one add to the other?

They NEVER contradict

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Where to begin -  
READ

# Consider the CONTEXT

Read the chapter(s) before and the chapter(s) after again.

- What is happening?
- What is the flow?
- Why is this chapter where it is?
- What is it all about?

Read the beginning of the chapter carefully.

- Again, what is happening?

Read the end of the chapter carefully.

- How does it all end up?
- What lessons are coming across?

# LUKE 15: Consider the CONTEXT

Jesus is 'journeying toward Jerusalem' *13:22*

Jesus speaks against the Pharisees *13:20,27*

The Pharisees tell him to leave *13:31*

Jesus cries out over Jerusalem *13:34,35*

Chapter 14 is a real summary of Luke's gospel in terms of approach, in the house of a Pharisee *v1*

- A miracle on the Sabbath (unusual in this part of the book) *v1-6*
- Teaching about true discipleship *v7-14*,
- A parable about acceptance *v15-24*
- More teaching about true discipleship *v25-35*.

# LUKE 15: Consider the CONTEXT

Now look at the start of chapter 15

Still in the house? Maybe

Tax collectors and sinners gather around – the common people

The Pharisees and scribes are complaining – again! (There is a line of study in that)

Their complaint? ‘This man receives sinners and eats with them’. He does – Hallelujah! What study could you build around this phrase? Could it help you with your worship?

In fact, the remainder of the chapter feeds from this statement – we have got the CONTEXT!

Don't forget – what about the chapter that follows...?

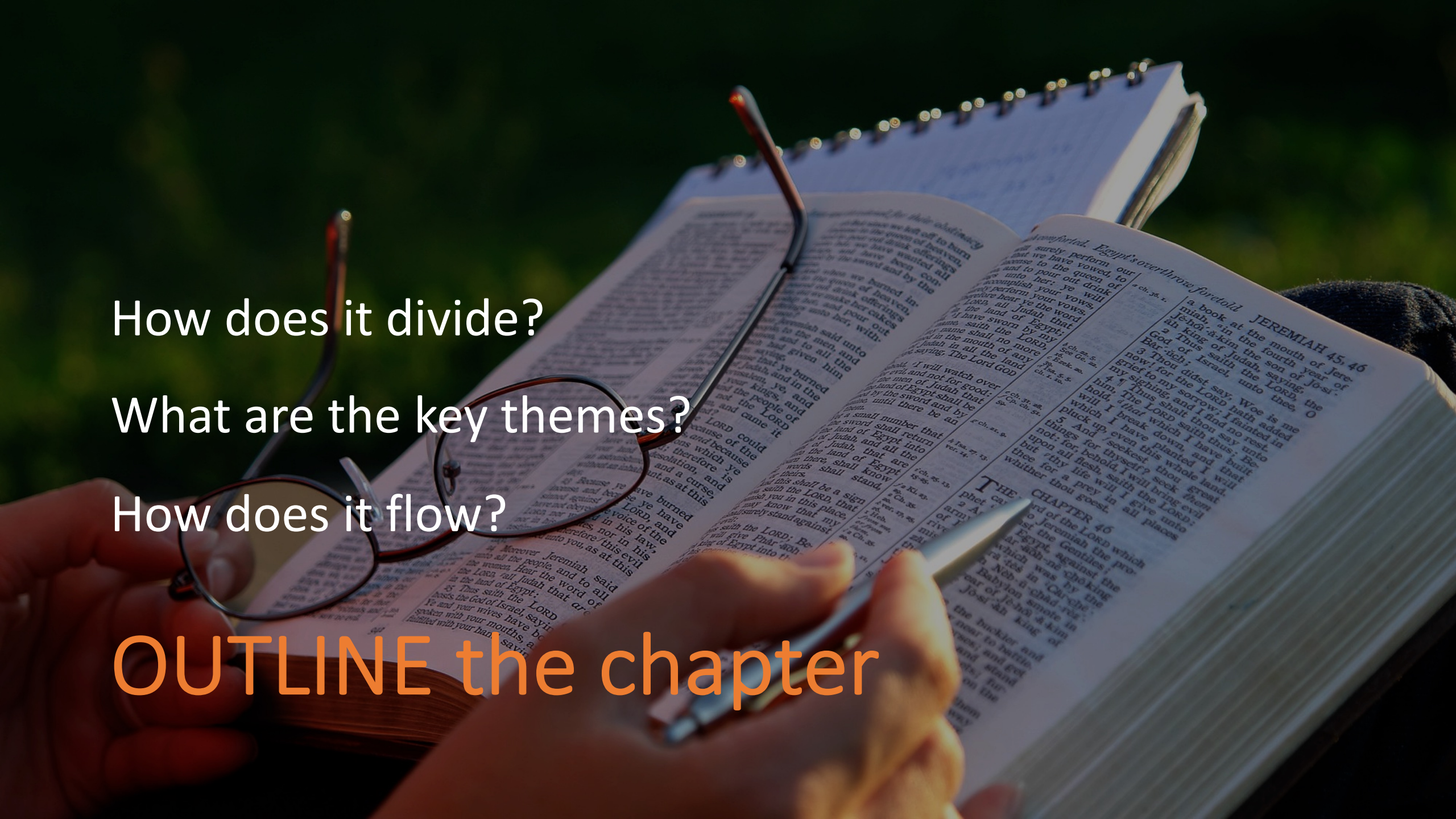


How does it divide?

What are the key themes?

How does it flow?

OUTLINE the chapter



This chapter is quite straightforward in many ways

v1-3 The Pharisees' complaint

v4-7 The Parable of the Lost Sheep

v8-10 The Parable of the Lost Coin

v11-32 The Parable of the Lost (Prodigal) Son

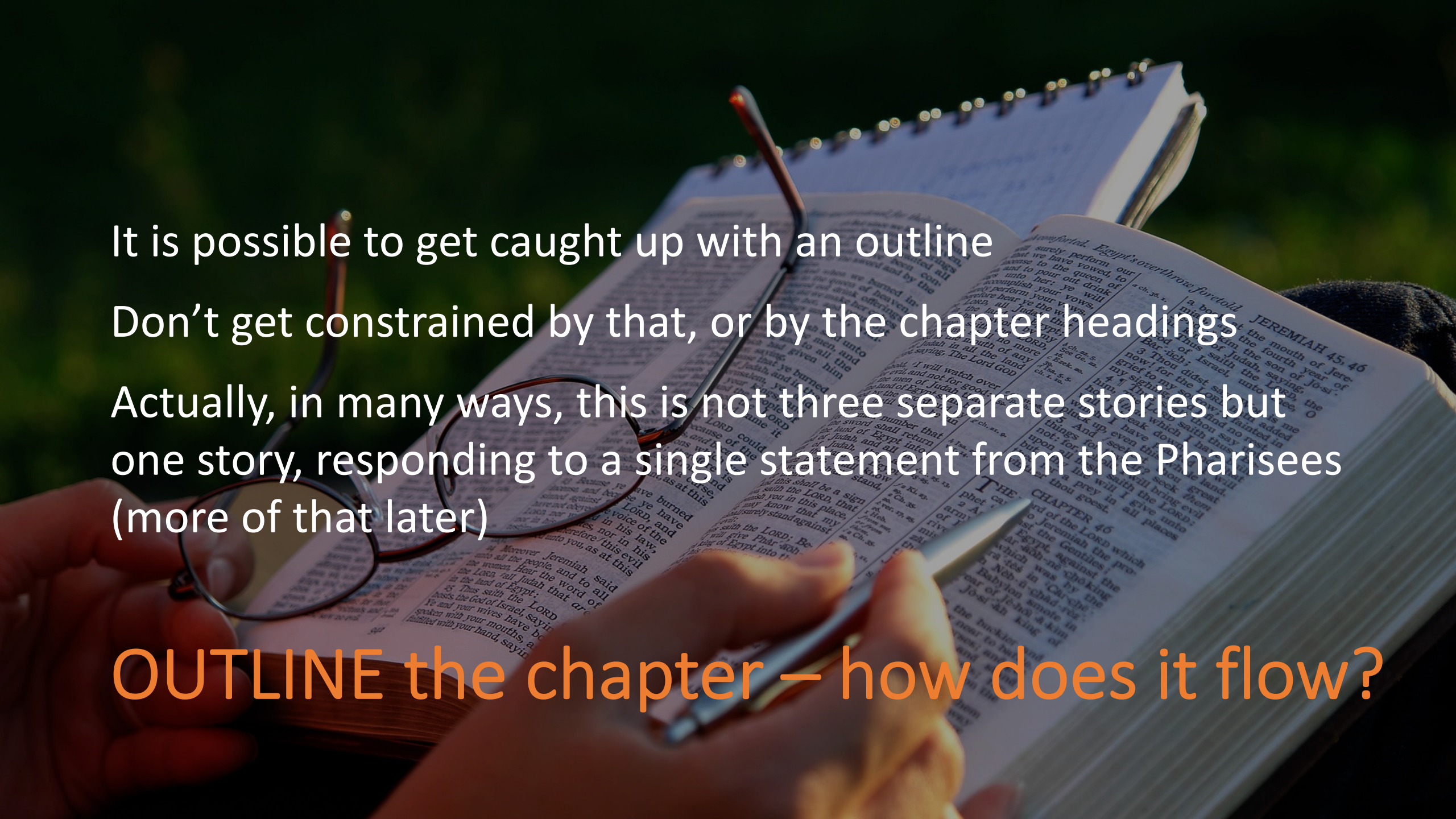
OUTLINE the chapter – how does it divide?

Again, in many ways this is straightforward...but not completely (more of that to follow)

- Pharisees and scribes
- Lost and found
- Rejoicing in heaven over sinners repenting

How could you develop these for yourself, your Sunday School class, camp quiet times, your discussions with friends, a gospel message etc?

OUTLINE the chapter – what are the key themes?

A close-up photograph of a person's hands holding an open Bible. The person is wearing glasses and holding a pen over the text. The Bible is open to a page with text in two columns. The background is a blurred green field. The text is overlaid on the image in white and orange colors.

It is possible to get caught up with an outline  
Don't get constrained by that, or by the chapter headings  
Actually, in many ways, this is not three separate stories but  
one story, responding to a single statement from the Pharisees  
(more of that later)

OUTLINE the chapter – how does it flow?

# Don't forget to TELL the story



- In your study, in preparation for any delivery, don't lose the sense of 'story' in the passage, and how Jesus might have told that story
- Remember that so many people do not know these stories these days
- There is no better story book than the Bible – you don't need to invent other stories or find other materials, particularly in children's work and gospel preaching – there is no need to get too clever!
- Turn to someone near you; choose one of these parables; in 3 minutes, tell them the story; make it EXCITING, because it is!

# KEY QUESTION

## What is a parable?

WE VINE'S EXPOSITORY  
DICTIONARY OF NEW  
TESTAMENT WORDS

### PARABLE

1. PARABOLĒ (παραβολή) lit. denotes a placing beside (akin to *paraballō*, to throw or lay beside, to compare). It signifies a **placing of one thing beside another with a view to comparison** (some consider that the thought of comparison is not necessarily contained in the word). In the N.T. it is found outside the Gospels, only in Heb. 9 : 9 and 11 : 19. It is generally used of a somewhat lengthy utterance or narrative drawn from nature or human circumstances, the object of which is to set forth a spiritual lesson, e.g., those in Matt. 13 and Synoptic parallels; sometimes it is used of a short saying or proverb, e.g., Matt. 15 : 15; Mark 3 : 23; 7 : 17; Luke 4 : 23; 5 : 36; 6 : 39. It is the lesson that is of value; the hearer must catch the analogy if he is to be instructed (this is true also of a proverb). Such a narrative or saying, **dealing with earthly things with a spiritual meaning**, is distinct from a fable, which attributes to things what does not belong to them in nature.

Christ's parables most frequently convey truths connected with the subject of the Kingdom of God. His withholding the meaning from His hearers as He did from the multitudes, Matt. 13 : 34, was a Divine judgment upon the unworthy.

**Two dangers** are to be avoided in seeking to interpret the parables in Scripture, that of **ignoring the important features**, and that of **trying to make all the details mean something**.

2. PAROIMIA (παροιμία) denotes a wayside saying (from *paroimos*, by the way), a byword, maxim, or proverb, 2 Pet. 2 : 22. The word is sometimes spoken of as a parable. John 10 : 6 is a figurative discourse

# CHECK – what about some of the key words?

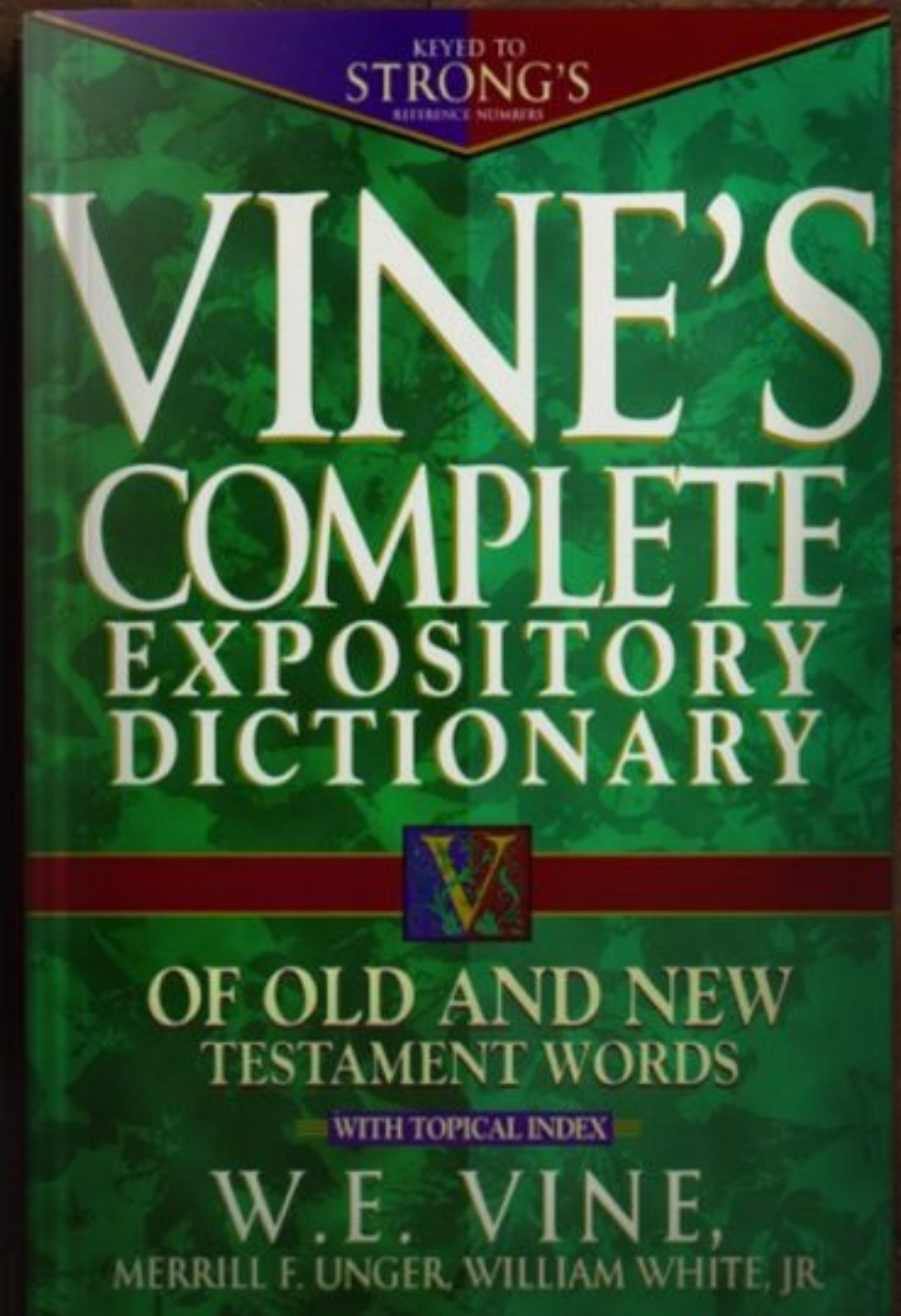
**Lost** – same as ‘perish’ – ‘to destroy utterly’; not extinction; not loss of being but of well-being – see also Luke 13:3

**Prodigal** – v13 NKJV – riotous AV – wastefully; same word in Gk OT in Proverbs 7:11 – one who is ‘loud and rebellious, her feet would not stay at home’

**Compassion** - “to be moved as to one’s inwards (splanchna), to be moved with compassion, to yearn with compassion,” is frequently recorded of Christ towards the multitude and towards individual sufferers

**Repentance** – literally ‘to perceive afterwards’ – ‘metanoeo’ (meta, ‘after’ implying ‘change’, noeo, ‘to perceive’; nous, ‘the mind, the seat of moral reflection’) hence signifies ‘to change one’s mind or purpose’

**Rejoicing** – joy, delight, gladness, wellness, cheerfulness, celebration – ‘joy’ and ‘rejoicing’ are the same root word – ‘sygchairō’ and ‘chara’ *Philippians 2:17,18*





APPLY what you  
have read

...to yourself first,  
then to others

APPLY other  
scriptures too

## THE LOST SHEEP

At the basic level this is a story of salvation

- We are the sheep - 'all we like sheep had gone astray' *Isaiah 53:6*
- Christ is the Shepherd – 'the Good Shepherd' *John 10*
- He went all the way to the cross, to seek the lost *Philippians 2*
- He saves the lost *Luke 19:10*
- There is great rejoicing on earth and in heaven when a sinner repents – when the lost is found



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## THE LOST COIN

At the basic level, something is found that is incapable of finding itself

- Another similar illustration of the lost being found but this time an inanimate object
- This time, a lamp is lit – light is brought to the situation
- Maybe Jesus as the light of the word *John 8/9*
- Or maybe the Spirit of God taking the Word of God and applying it to our lives
- Again, the good news is shared with others – friends and neighbours rejoice, and heaven rejoices too!

APPLY what you  
have read

...to yourself first,  
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APPLY other  
scriptures too

## THE PRODIGAL SON

At the basic level, the repentance of a lost soul

- Someone who is more interested in money and self, than in the things that really matter
- The pleasures of sin do not last *Hebrews 11:25*
- The son was desperate and came to a recognition of need
- He showed a real example of repentance – a change of direction, humility, an acknowledgement of sin, a plea for forgiveness *Acts 20:21*
- Complete forgiveness and great rejoicing (again)
- Another son who criticises and is not so happy – like the world when a sinner repents



**APPLY** what you  
have read

...but don't forget  
the **CONTEXT**

Remember... 'This man receives sinners and eats with them' – Pharisees and scribes complaining

We need to look at it through the eyes of the audience

There is a deeper application here

And perhaps it isn't three separate stories at all but one story

**APPLY** what you  
have read

...but don't forget  
the **CONTEXT**

The 'sinners' are represented by the lost sheep (those who have wandered astray), the lost coin (of themselves they can do nothing) and the prodigal son (they have lived in sin and uncleanness, away from God). They were dead and are alive again <sup>v32</sup>.

The Pharisees are the other ninety-nine sheep (in the wilderness) – in their own opinion they are 'just persons who need no repentance'. They are the 'angry' son who 'would not go in' and never enters into the joy of a sinner repenting.

Also note the work of the Father (prodigal), Son (Shepherd) and Holy Spirit (lamp), in the salvation of a lost soul.

And don't forget, the angels – there is joy in heaven over sinners repenting – there is a witness in heaven, even if these righteous Pharisee refuse to rejoice. By definition, there is no such rejoicing over those who do not repent.

# HELP! What do others have to say?

At 14:1-6 the Pharisees planted a sick man at a dinner-party to which they invited Christ in order to force a show-down...Now they criticise him again, this time on grounds of moral laxity: Christ welcomed tax collectors and loose-living people, and was prepared to take a meal with them. This, according to the Pharisees, was to condone these people's immorality. The criticism was grossly unfair. It overlooked Christ's unambiguous teaching against immorality, which was in fact far stricter than that of the Pharisees themselves; and it also overlooked both the purpose for which the tax-collectors and sinners sought his company and his motive in taking a meal with them. They were coming in order to hear him preach and they knew exactly what moral standards he stood for. *D. Gooding*

The Lord's indictment of the scribes and Pharisees was clear and inescapable. How could they affirm the ethical responsibility of a shepherd to search for a lost sheep and a woman to search for a lost coin, while condemning Him for seeking to recover lost souls? How could they understand the joys of the humble men and women in a village over temporal recovery, and utterly fail to comprehend the joy of God in heaven over eternal salvation? *J. MacArthur*

# HELP! What do others have to say?

‘The prodigal son’. It may truly be called a mighty spiritual picture. Unlike some of our Lord’s parables it does not convey to us one great lesson only, but many. Every part of it is peculiarly rich in instruction.

More deeply affecting words than these, perhaps, were never written. To comment on them seems almost needless. It is like gilding refined gold, and painting the lily. They show us in great broad letters the infinite love of the Lord Jesus Christ towards sinners. They teach how infinitely willing he is to receive all who come to him. And how complete, and full, and immediate is the pardon which he is ready to bestow. *J.C. Ryle*

Gospel preachers have no problem in explaining the ‘far country’. People in the ‘far country’ are far from God, ‘having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God’ (Eph4:18). Gospel preachers rightly point out as well that sin is a hard master, and that servants of sin find this out sooner or later. The world is like a wilderness. *J. Riddle*

DIG A LITTLE DEEPER





**APPLY** what you  
have read

...through eyes that  
see the complete  
picture of scripture

## PART ONE – THE LOST SHEEP

As the Lord Jesus addresses these people, he addresses the nation of Israel that are like sheep going astray – no shepherd, or false shepherds. His desire is that they might get back into the fold

*Num. 27:17; 1 Kin. 22:17; 2 Chr. 18:16; Zech. 10:2*



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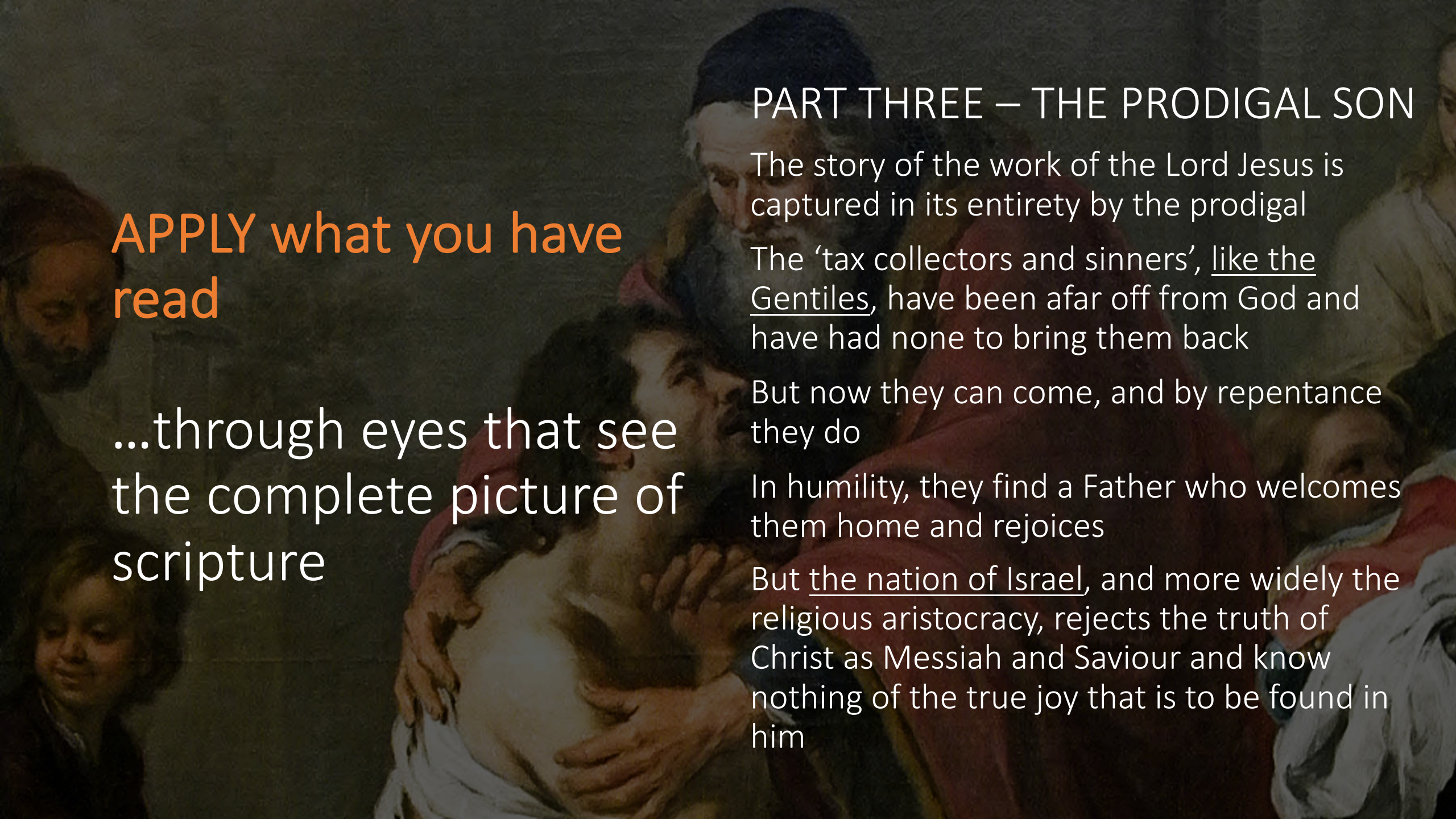
## PART TWO – THE LOST COIN

Perhaps the coin can be linked to the ruling Romans  
– a Gentile nation

Given the rejection by the nation, the light has now  
come, not only to ‘tax collectors and sinners’ but to  
the Gentiles too, those who are unclean in the sight  
of the nation of Israel - ‘a light to lighten the  
Gentiles’ *Luke 2*

There is great rejoicing when such are brought to  
repentance

This was all counter-cultural as far as the Jews were  
concerned, but the reality is that the light has come  
and all can come to repentance and be saved



**APPLY** what you have  
read

...through eyes that see  
the complete picture of  
scripture

## PART THREE – THE PRODIGAL SON

The story of the work of the Lord Jesus is captured in its entirety by the prodigal

The ‘tax collectors and sinners’, like the Gentiles, have been afar off from God and have had none to bring them back

But now they can come, and by repentance they do

In humility, they find a Father who welcomes them home and rejoices

But the nation of Israel, and more widely the religious aristocracy, rejects the truth of Christ as Messiah and Saviour and know nothing of the true joy that is to be found in him



# CHECK! What do others have to say?

In leaving this part of the parable, I feel it right to say, that I fully admit that it may be taken in a national sense, and that in that sense it makes excellent divinity. The Gentile nations who departed from God after the flood, and reaped darkness, misery, and hard bondage under Satan, by their departure, may undoubtedly be typified by the younger son.

Their repentance and return to God, through the preaching of the Gospel after our Lord's ascension, may be typified by the prodigal son's return to his father's house. The envy with which the believing Gentiles were regarded by the Jews, may be typified by the conduct of the elder son. The parable would then, as is often the case, be a prophecy.

The words of our Lord are often so deep that they will admit of a double meaning. So it may be here. The parable may be interpreted both of nations and of individuals. All I maintain is, that the individual personal interpretation of it is decidedly the primary one which it ought to receive.

*J.C. Ryle*



**APPLY** what you have read ...through eyes that see the complete picture of scripture

## A WIDER VIEW

The story of the spread of the gospel is captured even further in its entirety by this one story

The nation of Israel was like a sheep without a shepherd

The heathen nations of the earth (Gentiles – Genesis 10) had lived in pride and selfishness for so long, with no thought of God

But now the light of the gospel has come to the Gentiles

By repentance, all can be restored to relationship with God

But the nation of Israel largely rejects their Saviour and will have nothing to do with such, instead, they complain

READ, read, read!

CONTEXT

OUTLINE

TELL

APPLY

CHECK

# Chapter Study SUMMARY





## Bibliography – *a few of the books I've used*

Crawford, N. - Luke: What the Bible Teaches

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