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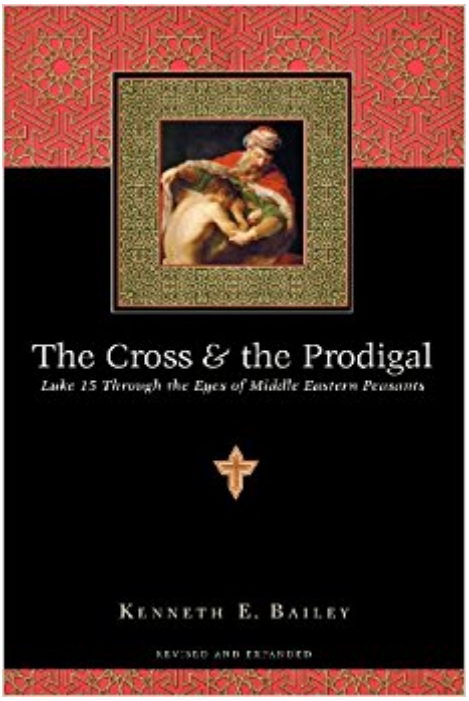
The Cross & The Prodigal: Luke 15 Through The Eyes Of Middle Eastern Peasants



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Synopsis

Honored in 2006 as a "Year's Best Book for Preachers" by Preaching magazine. Where is the cross in the parable of the prodigal son? For centuries, Muslims have called attention to the father's forgiveness in this parable in order to question the need for a Mediator between humanity and God. In The Cross & the Prodigal, Kenneth E. Bailey--New Testament scholar and long-time missionary to the Middle East--undertakes to answer this question. Drawing on his extensive knowledge of both the New Testament and Middle Eastern culture, Bailey presents an interpretation of this parable from a Middle Eastern perspective and, in doing so, powerfully demonstrates its essentially Christian message. Here Bailey highlights the underlying tensions between law and love, servanthood and sonship, honor and forgiveness that grant this story such timeless spiritual and theological power.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I really enjoy Bailey's style, and this book was a bit less technical than some of his others, making it even more easy to read and grasp. He takes a relatively short story and expands on the underlying concepts and cultural understandings that the original hearers would have grasped when they heard it. He adds so much background story to it, that it really comes to life more.My only complaint, and it is a relatively slight one in light of the whole story, is that Bailey kind of misses the mark in identifying the parties of the story. In identifying the prodigal son as just mankind, he misses the covenant significance behind it. The father figure is indeed representative of Yahweh as he points

out, but the older son would be representative of the two southern tribes that were technically still within the covenant with the Father, with the prodigal son representing the ten Northern tribes who were not. Like the prodigal son, those tribes were cast out, dispersed throughout the nations, but they were promised (as seen in Isaiah, Hosea and Ezekiel 37, and elsewhere) that one day they were to be brought back into the fold. As we see this beginning to happen under the ministry of Paul, we see the building frustration of the Pharisees who were dealing unkindly to the idea, just as the older son in the story did.But as I said, while this is a technical issue of sorts, it doesn't really alter the thrust of this book's underlying story, that of the Father's love even for the people who despised him beforehand, but were now returning to the fold. I just think that bringing in that identification would add a slightly deeper meaning to the story, as well as bringing in the connection and tying together the promises from the OT that were about to take place.

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