

*The Challenge of Jesus Parables*. By Richard N. Longnecker. Grand Rapids, Michigan Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 2000. Pg 1-338. ISBN: 0-8028-4638-6

This book is the fourth volume of the McMaster New Testament series that was created in order to address and work through different major themes played out in the New Testament. These articles, including those written in the future were made to be at a high level of Biblical knowledge but also to be read in a manner easily understood by people in any level of the Christian walk. This book focuses on the parables of Jesus specifically in the Synoptic Gospels. Many of Jesus' parables are the basis for what Christian life should be and what the Gospel is so understanding them as well as their importance is valuable to the Christian faith. The purpose of this book is to educate those who want to enhance their knowledge about the Christian faith and our walk with Christ and by doing that have a deeper impact on the church as a whole.

This book is well organized into sections focusing on the History, Genre, and Parallels of Parables, Parables of the Kingdom, Parables of Warning and Preparedness, and Parables of the Christian life. Each section is written by a different author who at the end of the chapters is asked to add a few bibliographies to conclude their discussion. Some chapters are more in depth than others but all are communicated clearly. All sections of this book are knowledgeable in the parables of Jesus including challenges that may be faced with Jesus' purpose behind His words, how they were used, and the message it means for us today. Parables make up much of the Gospels and it's important to have a thorough understanding in order to live our lives genuinely aligned with God's plan. Reading this book allows us to understand the parables in modern day and the relevance that they had not only back then but also to the 21st century.

This work begins with the section *History, Genre, and Parallels*, this starts off with a well detailed overview of the history of the interpretation of the parables of Jesus including

interpretation noted in modern times by Klyne Snodgrass. He speaks about allegorizing the texts and how it isn't just limited to the church itself and how one of the best examples for theological allegorization is St. Augustine's interpretation of the Parable of the Good Samaritan. Robert Stein focuses on the genre portion of this section describing how parables have gone through multiple phases and it focuses on multiple different issues. He discusses that simile and allegories can be "reduced to literal and abstract interpretations." (pg 35) Craig Evans surveys the parallels noted between both parables and the Old Testament, rabbinic parables and notes both the similarities and differences.

The second section of this work is on the perspective about *Parables of the Kingdom*. Morna Hooker begins this section with Mark and how the parables here tell us to find salvation in Jesus alone and when we do that we are to bear fruit. Donald Hagner surveys in chapter 5 about what the parables are detailed about in the Gospel of Matthew mainly and some content in Luke. He explains how the parables in Matthew are shown as a major turning point in Jesus' teaching overall. The book of Luke has less ideas of Kingdom parables than other Gospels.

The third section focuses on the *Parables of Warning and Preparedness*, where Allan Martens focuses on parables judging the actions of the Jewish leaders. Richard France then speaks on the parable about the sheep and the goats and what its context is and about being ready for God's return.

The last section in this work is on *Parables of the Christian life*, where Stephen Barton looks at the parables in Luke 15:1-32. Stephen Wright describes parables that focus on wealth and poverty from Luke. He warns that having too many possessions "can destroy the humanity in relationship that is our greatest treasure." (pg 238) Walter Liefeld looks into Luke 11 and 18 which focuses on the idea of prayer. Sylvia Keesmaat looks at the Good Samaritan, the

unforgiving servant, and also the parable of the banquet. Back in Jesus' time the forgiveness of sins and the forgiveness of debts were not two separate things. As in the parable of Good Samaritan which was an example of two people groups who didn't like each other, as Christians we are called to be willing to join with everyone. They are expected to join with people they might not even think they were expected to associate with. Lastly Micheal Knowles concludes this section with information on the parable of the two builders, the unworthy servant, and the vineyard.

By reading this book I was able to gain a deeper understanding of the parables themselves and the meaning behind Jesus' teachings. One point I really liked from this text was the parable of the unforgiving servant and how it stated that "When Jesus forgave the sins of those who came to him for healing, he not only undermined the authority of the temple priests, he also evoked the great promises of the dawn God's new age found in Israel's Scriptures." (pg 266) God's restoration brings not just forgiveness but also safety in Him. I enjoyed reading and growing in knowledge about the context of these parables. Oftentimes we read parables and don't understand what the meaning behind them is, it was helpful to have background context on many of these parables and to learn why Jesus said what he did.

I feel as though this book was well organized with the amount of content that was found inside. Some chapters were more intense in Biblical knowledge while others were leaning toward a more basic understanding of the parables. Overall this book was easy to understand from the standpoint of a student studying at a Christian school, some areas I found myself needing to slow down to understand yet all content was valuable. In a few different sections I needed to reread so some content is more easily understood by those who may be theology students or pastors. This book is impressive with how it divides up each section which makes the chapters themselves

easier to read through. It provided helpful summaries and understanding of Jesus' parables as well as some history and modern day opinions additionally. I would recommend this book to those who are encouraged to dive deeper into the knowledge of the Christian walk and want a more in depth understanding of Jesus' words. Reading this was helpful to my understanding of the New Testament and I appreciated the bibliographies for added reference at the finishing of each chapter. The index of subjects at the very end of the book notes the extreme amount of subjects worked on throughout the novel as well as scriptures and ancient literature that was noted throughout the text.

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BIB336: Parables