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Parables

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RICHARD N. LONGENECKER (ed.), The Challenge of Jesus' Parables (McMaster New Testament Studies; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000).

The Challenge of Jesus' Parables written by Richard N. Longenecker is a book in which it provides background of the origins of the Parables and to get a deeper understanding of the parables of Jesus in their original context. The book helps break down the history and how many scholars points out where it all originated and how certain words or sentences have significance meaning to which Jesus tells in the Bible in the New Testament. The Beginning of the chapters begins a more historical perspective on the interpretation of the Parables then it compares both the Rabbinic Parable with the Synoptic Gospels. The book is broken down into 3 parts in which it gives a clear insight how the book contains in the reading. It begins like mentioned earlier, the history, then the different genres of the parable, and lastly a breakdown of each of the synoptic gospel.

The Beginning of the book begins with a history of the interpretation of the Parables of Jesus Christ, and it began with the work of Adolf Julicher. Adolf has been criticized heavily on his work against his abuse of allegorizing. On Page 6, Adolf believes, "Rather, Jesus' stories contained self-evident com- parisons that did not need interpretation. All allegorizing interpretations of the parables, therefore, must be viewed as being illegitimate. The beginning of

the chapter brings confusion in which it seems like Julicher is trying to be negative about Jesus' Parables. Julicher's work is still criticized in today's modern world in which many other teachers or scholars disagree Julicher's work. Among one of them was Paul Fiebig. On page 7 states, "Paul Fiebig, who argued that Jülicher had derived his understanding of Jesus' parables from Greek rhetoric rather than from the Hebrew world, where allegorical parables and mixed forms were common." Paul Fiebig's section of the reading shows how he defends Jesus' parables from being change of thinking from the ideas of Adolf Julicher. Then again, we will see further into the story in which there will be other people that accepts the work of Julicher.

C.H. Dodd and Joachim Jeremias were defenders of the works of Adolf Julicher in which they also believe of the removal of allegory of the parable of Jesus. They believed that Jesus' Parable had a significant meaning to eschatology in which it has to do with end times. 2They believed that everything that Jesus was saying to his followers leads to judgement. Nothing about lessons that one should continue to grow their faith and to follow the same path as Jesus. Their work including Adolf Julicher were not always consistent. On Page 9 mentions, "Both viewed the parables as realistic first-century peasant sto- ries and sought to explain the cultural setting of the individual parables. But in seeking to recover the original situations in which Jesus spoke, both Dodd and Jeremias also tried to remove the allegorical features found in the evangelists' presentations of the parables.

Chapter 2 continues with details as to why Julicher believes that the parable has no meaning relating to allegories and that his work is what it should be believed to be the real accuracy. Julicher believes that the parables are fiction and has no meaning at all behind to it. It

seems to me while reading about how could someone that believes in Jesus Christ and that he mentions that he is a Christian oppose that way. On page 31 mentions, " A major contribution of Jülicher involved his discussion of the dif- ference between parables and allegories. He defined a parable as being an extended simile, whereas an allegory was a series of extended metaphors. Because a parable was an extended simile, Jülicher concluded that it could contain only a single point of comparison. In interpreting a parable, there- fore, one should not search for various meanings, but for the meaning. De- tails in a parable simply provide local color and interest. They do not pos- sess meaning in themselves, but only contribute to the meaning of the text."

Then we get to the history of the origin of Jewish parables in which it breaks down on Jewish literature and how Jesus used his different way of method and used in a way to teach his fellow followers. The Rabbinic Parables deal a bit more with interpreting the text. The Rabbinic Parables seem to be more connected to the text literary. The Parables of Jesus seems to be a little bit more like a live drama that they are dealing to see right in from of them like an event that was occurring at the time. Jesus was giving more of an illustration which gives out a much better view than a rabbinic Parable. Reading the Parables of Jesus give you a better insight and you also began to develop some sort of feeling inside of you like for instance a warmth feeling just by reading Jesus' parables. The reading mentions on page 52 mentions, " The more pressing concern, however, is not the identification of other parable-telling rabbis from the time of Jesus, but an understanding of the origins, forms, and functions of parables in Judaism. If Jesus did not invent the parable, where did it come from? An answer to our question suggests itself immediately: Jesus derived the parable form of teaching, whether directly or indirectly, from the

Scriptures of Israel.” This shows how Jesus derives from the Jewish literature and made his own version to it. There is a positivism in which you can easily identify while reading Jesus’ parable. The Jewish Parable seems more like a textbook from school in which you only gain the knowledge but wouldn’t take the wording into consideration in which it does not help gain confidence boost within your faith. Another thing to point out in this chapter is how Jesus’ parable can easily be notice the differences between the Jewish Parables. On page 47, mentions, “Jesus used the parable (inso- far as the gospel narratives tell us) in essentially the same way as the Rabbis employed the mashal— in public contexts (sermons or preaching), and as an instrument for praise and blame, often directed at the persons present in the audience" (Parables in Midrash, 200).

Then we begin a deeper dive into the Synoptic Gospels in the New Testament and which the author breakdowns meaning of the Synoptic Gospel. It begins with the book of Mark; the book of Mark’s Parable of the Kingdom mentions how the parable is a bit shorter than the others is because there were less teachings of Jesus. This part of the reading then shows us how certain words and sentences is being defined in the book of Mark. The section of the Kingdom of God is where we began to see what it truly defines whenever it is mentioned multiple times in the Bible. On page 82, it mentions, "Truly I tell you, there are some stand- ing here who will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God come with power." Mark's positioning of this saying is significant, for it is pre- ceded by the first clear prediction of Jesus' death and resurrection in 8:31, and immediately following it we have the story of the Transfiguration in 9:2-13 in which Jesus is acknowledged by a heavenly voice to be God's Son.” This is where we begin to continue to see this throughout all the parable the phrase, “The Kingdom of God.”

In the middle of the book, something that caught my attention that it really struck me is that Jesus' parable is not only for insider, but for outsider as well. The book did a good job in breaking down the meaning of specific parables for those who has no knowledge of what Jesus was trying to say in the Bible, for example, on page 209, the author explains in deeper meaning of the Parable of the prodigal son. I at first had no clue what it was trying to tell me and how it should relate to my faith. It mentions, " That helps to explain why this parable has such strong echoes of the stories of the Old Testament. For biblical stories about younger brothers were a classic source of reflection on the unpredictability of God's ways — in particular, of God's refusal to limit the measure of his grace to human ways of seeing and doing things.

"The parable of God's love and forgiveness was overall my favorite chapter throughout the entire book. I've learned so much in which it gave me the courage to continue to worship God. Seeing how Jesus' parables has made an impact on the Pharisees really put a smile on my face. The power of Jesus' parables proves to be stronger than the works of the Hasidim and the Pharisees that were mentioned in the book. It felt like as if all of Jesus Followers has defeated the enemy in which Jesus sure did verbally. On page 213, it mentions, "Scribes and Pharisees are invited to find themselves represented in the parable as the elder son — responsible and obedient, it would seem, but failing in their solidarity with the redemptive purpose of God. Will they identify with God's will and, having done so, join repentant sinners at the table? Putting aside their own concerns with status and recognition (cf. 14:7-14), will they accept as members of the family of God those whom God accepts? Or, refusing to embrace God's gracious calculus, which works to include those who (re)turn to him, will they exclude themselves from the family of God? The parable is open-ended and so is the invitation. (Luke, 586)."

Another thing that also caught my attention is the fact that in Chapter 7, when in one section of the reading mentions how the Matthew's Parables of judgement has a symbolic meaning in which at first it was hard to understand. In the reading mentions how Jesus cursed at the fig tree. For someone who is beginning to walk in the path of Jesus, just reading a couple of sentences of the parable could think that Jesus is a bad person in some way. Thankfully, the author helps to breakdown the meaning as to why Jesus was cursing at the fig tree. On page 152 mentions, "Matthew's three parables of judgment in 21:28-22:14 are positioned im- mediately after three narratives that speak of judgment and feature the Je- rusalem temple in one way or another. The first narrative in 21:12-17 de- picts Jesus cursing the Jerusalem temple, wherein is acted out a symbolic judgment on the temple. The second in 21:18-22 presents Jesus cursing the fig tree, which probably is to be understood not only as a symbolic act of judgment on the Jewish leaders but also as an act of judgment on the Jew- ish nation and its religion. And the third in 21:23-27 sets out a question about Jesus' authority as he teaches in the temple precincts, where he is portrayed as demonstrating his dialectical mastery over the Jewish leaders." The author did an amazing job breaking down and interpreting the meaning of Matthew's Parables, of course this helps someone who is trying to understand the meaning of the Parable.

This book is by far one of the best books that has been ever written. It helps give a better understanding of both the history and the literature of Jesus' parables. There were other different books I've read about Jesus' parable, but it seems like this book seems to be more honest than the other books relating to Parables. This books not only specify the meaning behind to it, but also give us a better perspective about Jesus. The only downside of this book is that it should be

tell its reader a bit more of the history of Parables. It took me a while to understand what is going on in the story, but eventually I finally understood how this book is going to start. It did start out. Well with the introduction, but then I got lost when we began to see different viewpoint from different people in which it's hard to agree or disagree with their work. There was a whole disagreement about the works of Julicher, but the author should specify furthermore about his work instead of telling the reader his work is currently still being criticized in today's day of age in which it doesn't give enough details and evidence to back up.

To sum it all up, I would give this book a 7/10. It had some flaws, but it did help me understand a better insight about the parables in which I will more likely recommend this book to many people who are very curious about both the works of Jewish Literature and Jesus' Parable for a research or just for some interest in the Parables. I am happy that I've gain amount of knowledge in which whenever I go back and read the Bible and reading Jesus' Parable, I will have a better understanding the meaning behind to it and its significances.