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Parables

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*Book Review: The Challenge of Jesus' Parables*

*The Challenge of Jesus' Parables* was edited by Richard N. Longenecker, a New Testament scholar. In his book, *The Challenge of Jesus' Parables*, a collection of multiple authors discuss topics such as the history, and genre of parables and the importance behind certain parables that are current and applicable in regards to the message behind certain parables in peoples lives in the todays church. It was written with the intent to speak into the lives of Christians in a pastoral sense, as it guides them to seek to understand parables in greater depth and understanding. The book is split up into four sections. The first one discusses the history, genre, and parallels of parables. The second section talks about parables of the Kingdom, and the third about parables regarding warning as preparedness. Lastly, in the final section, the topic is on the parables of the Christian life. It addresses and asnwers questions concerning parables such as Jesus' purpose behind telling parables, and what parables are.

In the first section of the book, one of the passages, "The Genre of the Parables" by Robert H. Stein discusses the meaning of the word, 'parable.' On page 30, Stein mentions that parables as a brief narrative of a typical real life event which is usually told in the present tense. Some Biblical examples he uses to back up this statement are found in Mark 4:21-22, the parable about the light hidden under the basket, and Luke 15:4-10 about the Lost sheep and the lost coin. In the second section of the book, one of the passages written by Richard N. Longenecker himself writes about Lukes parable of the kingdom in Luke 8:4-15, and 13:18-21. It's noted on

page 146 that the Lukan kingdom parables express a wide range of significant teachings, which may lack the authority of Jesus' intentions within the parables he was sharing with his audience. He also stated that going beyond the texts in the gospels may be considered an existential exercise in the literary genre of "parables."

The third section, touches on parables of warning and preparedness. In Chapter eight, Richard T. France provides an in depth look in to the parable in Matthew 25:1-46. France raises the question on the call to readiness, just how is someone supposed to prepare for the unexpected coming of Jesus? France seeks to answer this question in parables such as the parable of the bridesmaids (25:1-13) and the parable of the talents (25:14-30). France goes on to explain what the meaning of the parables mean to provide a greater understanding of what Jesus had meant when it came to the whole deal of being ready and preparing ourselves as a church for Jesus' unexpected return.

In the final section of this collection, the topic, parables of the Christian life is brought up. Stephan C. Barton mentions on page 199, the whole ideal of 'cheap grace' and how it is a deadly enemy to the church. Cheap grace, is grace without a doctrine, or a principle. Cheap grace has no system. Cheap grace denies the living word of God. In this passage, Barton discusses the parables of God's love and forgiveness. Looking at the gospel of Luke 15:1-32, the parable of the lost sheep is used as an example of God's Love and forgiveness. God's grace is shown in the parable of the lost sheep. It shows how every sheep is so valuable, that the shepherd is willing to leave the whole flock behind just to find the one missing sheep. This example shows God's love and grace towards everyone. The whole gospel is for the whole world.

The collection of passages written by numerous authors and edited by Richard N. Longenecker helps those who read this book understand what parables are, and why Jesus spoke

in them. Going in depth and looking into the New Testament gospels, each author uses examples to back up the importance of parables and the meaning behind them. I would recommend this book to anyone who is seeking for the truth in the gospels, and for anyone who may be questioning why parables are still relevant in this day and age. It's an interesting in general, and would help to read this book along with your Bible, so that you are able to look alongside the parables.