

Joshua Smith
 Bib 336 NO-Challenge of Jesus Parables Book Review
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Title: The Challenges of Jesus Parables: An In-Depth Guide to Interpretation

Author: Richard N. Longenecker

“The Challenges of Jesus Parables” by Richard N. Longenecker is a scholarly and interpretive guide to the parables of Jesus. Longenecker provides a deep understanding of the parable including the historical and cultural context of Jesus. He also examines the literary features of the parables, including their structure language, and imagery, helping readers understand the writings of Jesus.

In chapter one, we are provided a history titled “Allegorization to Allegorization” which provides a theological interpretive insight into Jesus' parables. As Kyne Sndrass writes the best-known example of such interpretation came from Augustine and his interpretation of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 30-37.) the author does warn the reader that allegorization is not the authentic means to interpret the original script. It was also noted, allegorization text was used not only by the church but also frequently in the writings of the Jewish philosopher and writer Philo.

In the second chapter, Robert Stein provides the reader with a great understanding of the genre of the parables. In his writing, Stein provides a brief history of parables and the genre of the parable which was developed in 1888 by Adolph Julicher. Julicher also defined both a parable and an allegory. Although later shared in the chapter Julichers view between allegories and parables is not necessarily shared by today’s scholarly audience. With that said the revised views are now to be considered as metaphors and parables, which as Stein writes are considered to be living transforming entities. (35) The chapter continues providing the reader with more definitions of a maxim and even dimensions of the term marshal.

As we were ushered into chapter three, I knew I felt a growing sense of anticipation building up within me as I got to the beginning of the chapter. I recognized, however, that reading this valuable information that is needed to decipher and potentially get more in-depth views and interpretations of Jesus's parables and a way to look at the parables through a new pair of lenses. Craig A. Evans shares commentary on the parable in Early Judaism during this chapter. Evans makes it clear to the reader. When speaking of early Judaism, he is referring to the first century. When speaking of the Old Testament, Evens uses the parable referenced in 2nd Samuel:1b4 where Nathan speaks to David after he committed a great sin, adultery with Bathsheba, and plotted the death of her husband Uriah. As Evans indicates this form of the parable is considered a juridical parable. Other forms of commentaries discussed in Evan's commentary include Dream and Interpretive (Gen 12:17. While Evans concludes his commentary, he suggests that it is quite possible that Jesus developed his parables according to the style of his mission (74)

Mona D. Hooker gives her commentary in chapter four writing about Mark's parable of the Kingdom. As Hooker states, Mark is believed to have Mark only two parables that speak of. One of which is the parable of the Mustard seed, (4:30-32) As Hooker shares the other parable has more of an eschatological meaning. Also, chapter three includes sociological teaching. I liked how Hooker ended her commentary by providing us with her view that the "harvest is already gathered and the kingdom is already present in the hearts and to those who respond to God's call. (100)

Following the Parables of Kingdom (13: 1-52,) the Gospel of Mark specifically vers 4 Donald A Hagner writes in chapter (five) how it is led to believe that in chapter four how Mark borrows his introductory material (vv 1-2) the Sower and the Seed (vv3-9) Mark 4-2-9. The only significant change is that Hagner made Matthew use plural seeds vs Mark's singular version of seed. It is also mentioned in chapter 13 of Mark that Jesus makes use of teaching devices that could conceal and reveal mysteries of the kingdom. Finally, Hagner addresses how these realities continue to be of great importance today.

Richard N. Longenecker takes the lead in chapter 6. I felt that we are noticing a slight increase of scholars pointing out how in the New Testament gospels there are those instances where the author may have used a similar context as another writer. A case in point is the parable about the mustard seed. Luke 13:18-19 is closer to Matt 13:31-32. We see this mentioned more frequently as the chapters pass. I will say that I'm not a scholar by any means and this has really opened my eyes to an understanding. However when the comparisons I could see where this may be perceived as a jolt of information overdrive

In chapter seven, Allen W. Martens gave his view on Matthew 21:28, 22:14, and Luke 13:6-9. In reference to the literary context, Martens addresses Matthew's three parables on the judgment that are also spoken on judgment and feature Jerusalem temple.

Richard T. brings a rich commentary while Matthew 25:1-44 in chapter eight. At the beginning of his commentary, France writes that this distinguished formula happened by the following words that were recorded "And it happened when Jesus had finished [these words]" (7:28; 11L1, 13:53;19:1,26:1). (177) The carefully crafted Christ spoke inevitably foretold of his Ministry in the future as France writes. As the chapter unfolds we discover the meaning of the chapter is "Being Ready." It is true we need to be ready for Christ's return for no one knows the hour, day, or time when his glorious return shall come to the earth. However, I remember not too long ago Professor Notley speaking on Being ready and I pray for those people who are not taking things seriously in their life, and pray for them to build that relationship with God. As France simplifies what the bible guides us to be prepared and be ready.

While reading on in the following chapter Stephen C. Barton shares a well-sought perspective on Luke 15:1-32 which addresses the Parables on God's Love and Forgiveness. In a bold approach, Barton provided new insight into the term "Cheap Grace (Cheap coverings for the sins that are being committed. (199).)" A simplified version of the term as Barton writes "Grace without price and grace without cost.199). I found myself to be in rightful agreement with what Barton was implying What I really liked also about this particular Chapter as he writes "Our reading of the parables should not be to try to strip away their [inessentials]" in order to get their

[real message] Jesus or the early church or the evangelist...Once we have worked on what they meant, we need not concern ourselves further. Rather reading the parables as they were meant to read is to be [once more] astonished by the gospel.] (200) While reading the honest views of Barton, it brought me to the first or second lecture of the semester with words that Professor Notley spoke regarding Fleusser's view on overthinking/analyzing Jesus' parables as the parables define their own meaning, chimed through my memory as the views shared from (Barton/Flusser/Notley) The chapter had great perspective suggesting ways in which we can approach the parables that were discussed 1. The Parable of Luke 15 in Contrast. 2. The Parable of the Lost Sheep (Luke 15:1-7). 3. The Parable of the Lost Coin (Luke 15:8-10). 4. The Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32). I did appreciate the way in which Barton concluded his commentary by stating "The new economy is eschatological, that has to do with the reordering of one's priorities in a way appropriate to the coming of God in mercy and justice. It brings heaven to earth at least in anticipatory ways." (214)

The following chapter, (ten) is another parable spoken by Jesus that was not only quite relevant in first-century Judea but should be just as relevant in the society that we are living in today. In all three of the chapters that are discussed during the commentary, [Luke 12:13-21, 16:1-13; 16:19-31] Stephen I wright addresses to the reader all three of the commentaries begin with the phrase "a rich man" Here we are provided with two pieces of relevant information that details first-century society, how the characters are later revealed in the story. Although I was in favor of the direction at the beginning of the commentary, I would have to say that one of the concluding comments that Wright makes made me somewhat disagree with his view "The listed parables should not be pressed into service as fodder for a doctrine of afterlife. (236) Maybe I misunderstood what Wright was employed based on the importance of Charity and how God asks humanity to show charity towards those less fortunate than we are, and knowing that Charity is the way through which God uses redemption in our lives, I would have to question Wright and challenge his view.

In continuum to chapter 11, Walter L Liefeld writes a very extensive commentary on the Parables of Prayer (Luke 11:5-13; 18:1-14) Liefeld begins by providing his view on the three parables of Jesus speaking on prayer. Liefeld makes his comments on the differentiation of wording in verses 1-4 differ in the book of Luke while compared to the book of Matthew. It is noted that the two books (Matthew and Luke) share the word "Father" in common due to it carries an assurance of the basis on which God will answer our prayers.--(241)

As I read chapter twelve by Sylvia C Keesmaat, I would have to say out of the thirteen commentaries, I would have to say that chapter 12 is one of the many chapters that I really enjoyed reading and I was pleased that Sylvia is not afraid to speak her view on what she is seeing happening in the world today. To begin, Sylvia referenced Matt 18:21-35, Luke 14:7-14; Luke 10:25-37. Keesmaat does not back down when revealing her viewpoint on what was at the time the book was written and has truthfully gotten worse specifically with tribalism and globalism. Later Keesmaat offers a powerful (truthful) view of the purpose of the parable on the forgiveness, of others. It reads: "Are we people who, in spite of forgiveness of our debts both [Spiritual and Economic] continue to insist on payment from holding the debate of others over

their heads? Or do we practice God's gracious forgiveness in our churches, homes, and world joining initiatives that seek to forgive the debts of poor people and poor nations?" (283)

Michael P. Knoles provided the final commentary in chapter 13, which provided a detailed explanation of the Parables on Discipleship. (Matt 7:24-27, Luke 6:47-49, Luke 14:28-33, Luke 17:7-10, Matt 20:1-16.) An interesting point that Knoles brings to attention is at the near end of the story of the two brothers, the Matthean presentation includes one additional feature compared to its fellow gospels Luke and Mark. The language of the building on the rock anticipates that of Peter's commissioning in 1618. In summary of the chapter, Knoles makes a strong conclusion that the parables will carry the impression that the parables that Jesus spoke are difficult to understand. Which for some may be. However, "Individual readers hear this words-and whose voice they hear within them-is precisely a question of discipleship. (304-305)

One of the potential drawbacks of the book is its scholarly nature. In reading, I found that some chapters in the book should have been condensed especially the first two chapters of the book which were highlighted. I was to place myself in the role of a New Christian or possibly someone who was curious in learning about Jesus and what the parables were about, I wouldn't doubt if the book would be discouraging and a little bit confusing to understand.

Overall though, I enjoyed reading most of the scholars give their viewpoints and during those chapters when thinking "Why are they dissecting what Jesus said and giving their theory and ideas" keep in mind, what Professor Notley instructed the class from what his mentor David Fleusseur told him when he was studying is invaluable information that I hope to share with others who may appreciate the invaluable advice over treasured words.