

Davins Manasse

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### Book Review

RICHARD N. LONGENECKER (ed.), *The Challenge of Jesus' Parables* (McMaster New Testament Studies; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000). Pp. xii + 324. \$28.

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This book was interesting to me because of all the details about Jesus' parables that it entails. A quick summary from the introduction is as follows on page xii, the author implied, "Unabashedly, the authors of this volume have taken certain critical stances and used a variety of interpretive methods in their respective treatments. The only criterion they have followed is that of greatest compatibility with the material being studied. It is expected that their academic expertise will be evident in what they write. More than that, however, it is hoped that through their efforts the teaching of Jesus in his extant parables and the proclamation of the evangelists in their portrayals of those parables will be better presented than is usually the case."

There are many other volumes but the content of this book is as follows. It is divided into four sections. Section 1, "History, Genre, and Parallels," which consists of three essays: "From Allegorizing to Allegorizing: A History of the Interpretation of the Parables of Jesus," by Klyne R. Snodgrass (pp. 3-29); "The Genre of the Parables," by Robert H. Stein (pp. 30-50); and "Parables in Early Judaism," by Craig A. Evans (pp. 51-75). The essays by Klyne R. Snodgrass and Robert H. Stein gives us introductions to the history of scholarship on the parables.

Snodgrass exerts, on page three "Nonetheless, one cannot do a serious study of the parables without first setting out and interacting with such a history of interpretation"

Section 2, "Parables of the Kingdom," consists of three essays: "Mark's Parables of the Kingdom (Mark 4:1-34)," by Morna D. Hooker (pp. 79-101); "Matthew's Parables of the Kingdom (Matthew 13:1-52)," by Donald A. Hagner (pp. 102-24); and "Luke's Parables of the Kingdom (Luke 8:4-15; 13:18-21)," by Richard N. Longenecker (pp. 125- 47). The essays by Hooker and Longenecker were clear and insightful; they play a huge role in the introduction of Marcan and Lucan Parables of the Kingdom.

Section 3, "Parables of Warning and Preparedness," includes two essays: "'Produce Fruit Worthy of Repentance': Parables of Judgment against the Jewish Religious Leaders and the Nation (Matthew 21:28-22:14 par.; Luke 13:6-9)," by Allan W Martens (pp. 151-76); and "On Being Ready (Matthew 25:1-46)," by Richard T. France (pp. 177-95). Martens' essay shed light on Matthean and Lucan's redactional activities, both "subtle" and "blatant," giving perspective on how early Christians felt a bit of freedom to assume Jesus' words, sometimes in quite controversial manners.

Section 4, "Parables of the Christian Life," is made up of five essays: "Parables on God's Love and Forgiveness (Luke 15:1-32)," by Stephen C. Barton (pp. 199-216); "Parables on Poverty and Riches (Luke 12:13-21; 16:1-13; 16:19-31)," by Stephen I. Wright (pp. 217- 39); "Parables on Prayer (Luke 11:5-13; 18:1-14)," by Walter L. Liefeld (pp. 240-62); "Strange Neighbors and Risky Care (Matthew 18:21-35; Luke 14:7-14; Luke 10:25-37)," by Sylvia C. Keesmaat (pp. 263-85); and "'Everyone Who Hears These Words of Mine': Parables on Discipleship (Matthew 7:24-27 || Luke 6:47-49; Luke 14:28-33; Luke 17:7-10; Matthew 20:1-16)," by Michael P. Knowles (pp. 286-305). Wright made a good use of William Herzog's *Parables as Subversive Speech: Jesus as Pedagogue of the Oppressed* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1994) to explore the social situation in the "Shrewd Manager" parable, a setting that interpreters often downplay search for "spiritual" messages.

I would definitely recommend this book. Anyone who wants to increase their knowledge in understanding the parables and how to read them. On page 33, Robert H. Stein was shedding light on the genre of parables and he exerts, "The threefold division of parables into "similitudes," "parables" in the narrow sense, and "exemplary stories" has been followed by a number of writers. He brought strong arguments to support his claim.