



Interpreting the Parables: God's Good News for the World

Craig L. Blomberg

[Download now](#)

[Read Online](#) 

Interpreting the Parables: God's Good News for the World

Craig L. Blomberg

Interpreting the Parables: God's Good News for the World Craig L. Blomberg

The classic works of C. H. Dodd and Joachim Jeremias set the direction for nearly all further parable studies in this century. Embodied in both scholar's approaches are at least two assumptions that, for the most part, have gone unchallenged: (1) Parables make one and only one main point. (2) They are not allegories. But can these assumptions be supported by the evidence? In this introductory text, Craig Blomberg surveys and evaluates contemporary critical approaches to the parables, challenging the prevailing consensus and making his own important new contribution to parable studies. Within proper definitions and limits, he argues, the parables are in fact best seen as allegories. In support of his thesis, he not only sets forth theoretical considerations but devotes attention to all the major parables, providing brief interpretations that highlight the insights to be gained from his distinctive method. A concluding chapter examines the implications of the parables for Christology and our understanding of the kingdom of God. This groundbreaking book will be of value not only to students but to pastors and other serious readers of Scripture.

Interpreting the Parables: God's Good News for the World Details

Date : Published January 24th 1990 by IVP Academic

ISBN : 9780830812714

Author : Craig L. Blomberg

Format : Paperback 333 pages

Genre : Religion, Theology

 [Download Interpreting the Parables: God's Good News for the ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online Interpreting the Parables: God's Good News for t ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online Interpreting the Parables: God's Good News for the World Craig L. Blomberg

David says

A bit dry at times, but overall a very accessible, careful, and solid evangelical treatment of the parables.

Graham says

A bit unbalanced. Some parts are very helpful, others needlessly drawn out or repetitive. The first half is mostly history of interpretation, and methodology discussion. He engages with a ton of secondary sources, and is rigorous in his defense of reading parables as at least mostly allegory. The second half is basically a commentary on the parables, focusing on the allegorical elements. It'd be helpful if he did a more broad interpretation of each, and cut down some of the first half. But overall a helpful piece of scholarship.

Wesley Storks says

Excellent work here with a balanced approach to the parables. It's an enriching study for sure.

David Campton says

Unashamedly evangelical, but academically rigorous treatment of Jesus' parables, offering a much more dynamic picture than the previous generation of literary-critics' "one point" approach to parables. Pity his own writing wasn't so dynamic.

Kendall says

3.5 really. very thorough.

Stephen says

I probably give this close to 3.5 stars. There are certain sections of this book that are extremely y interesting and helpful (talk on new hermeneutics and post-structuralism in parable studies) but other portions that seem to drag (redaction and form criticism chapters). That being said the commentary on individual parables is helpful and Blombergs' proposal of breaking the parable up into three separate meanings based upon controlled allegorical interpretation of the main characters of the parables is useful.

Craig Hurst says

People like to tell stories and they like to listen to them. They like listening to the retelling of history in story form and the telling of made-up stories for the purpose of making a point. While interpreting the retelling of

history is fairly straight forward the interpreting of made-up stories is not. Many people groups and religions use stories for various and similar purposes. Christianity is no different. Stories that are made-up with the intent of teaching a lesson are typically called parables. While there are few parables within the Old Testament the Gospels in the New Testament are saturated with them.

Following a long line of contributions to the field of hermeneutics and parables, and amidst a myriad of proposals, Craig Blomberg has updated his original work on the parables with the second edition of his *Interpreting the Parables* by IVP. In many ways this is two books in one as it deals with both the history of hermeneutical method and a discussion of proper hermeneutical method. Further, as one reads the book it becomes apparent that the book serves as more of a handbook (though a rather long one) than a straightforward theology of the parables since there is only one chapter dealing with the theology of the parables and the section dealing with Blomberg's proposed hermeneutical method is not exhaustive (though extremely helpful).

History of Method

The first section addresses the history of methods that have been employed by various interpreters of the parables. Blomberg points out that the various methods that have been proposed have been so varied because interpreters have landed in different places when it comes to defining the nature of parable and allegory. Parables have basically been thought of as a story told with "one main point of comparison between the activity in the story and Jesus' understanding of the kingdom of God, and thus they teach one primary lesson." (p. 33) Allegories on the other hand are "more complex stories that require numerous details in them to be 'decoded'." (p. 34) The point at which such varied interpretations of the parables has arisen is in seeking to answer the question as to how much of the parables or an individual parable is to be interpreted allegorically, if at all. In an effort to better grasp the point to which the parables are allegorical in nature, Blomberg looks at the contemporary literature of the Gospels and rabbinical literature. In the final analysis of each, Blomberg concludes that the parables contained in the Gospels are "sufficiently similar to other demonstrably allegorical works that many of the too must probably be recognized as allegorical." (p. 79)

Following this introduction to the hermeneutical debate upon which interpretation of the parables hinges, Blomberg spends three chapters discussing and critiquing the attempts of form and redaction criticism and the new literary hermeneutical methods. In conclusion to this section Blomberg summarizes the debates and methods with eighteen summary statements a few of which are worth noting:

1. In summarizing the contributions of all methods, "A better approach distinguishes among various degrees of allegorical interpretation, recognizing that every parable of Jesus contains certain elements that point to a second level of meaning and others that do not." (p. 192)
2. Following #1 – To avoid the errors of past allegorizers, modern interpreters must also assign meanings to the details of parables that Jesus' original audiences could have been expected to discern." (p. 192)
3. In regards to interpreting the meaning of a parable – "No interpreter captures it all, but some do better than others." (193)
4. "The Synoptic parables may be accepted as authentic sayings of Jesus, assuming that authenticity is defined in terms of *ipsissima vox* Jesus and not just *ipsissima verba* Jesus." (p. 193)
5. "Differences between parallel accounts of the same parable nevertheless prove that both oral tradition and the evangelists in their editorial activity have modified the exact wording of Jesus' original speech." (p. 193)
6. Following #5 – "But these differences serve only to improve the style and intelligibility and to highlight distinctive redactional themes; they do not in any way distort what Jesus originally said or meant." (p. 193)

Interpreting the Parables

In his attempt to lay out for the interpreter a balanced hermeneutical approach to the parables, Blomberg categorizes the parables into four groups: simple three-point, complex three-point, two point and one point.

In these categories the word “point” refers to the focus(es) of the parables. The following is a brief description of each group with examples.

1. Simple three-point – These include an authority figure with two contrasting subordinates. Examples include the prodigal son (Lk. 15:11-32) with the father as the authority figure and the sons as the contrasting subordinates and the two debtors (Lk. 7:41-43) with the creditor as the authority figure and the two men forgiven different amounts as the subordinates.
2. Complex three-point – These “have more than three main characters or groups of characters but ultimately display the same triangular structure” as simple three-point parables. (p. 269) Examples include the talents (Mt. 25:14-30; Lk. 19:12-27) with a master and a wicked servant and a good servant who himself also has good and bad servants.
3. Two-point – These parables have either two contrasting figures with no authority or an authority and one subordinate. Included is the wise man and the foolish man who build their houses on different foundations (Mt. 7:24-27; Lk. 6:47-49) and the unjust judge (Lk. 18:1-8).
4. One-point – While hard to distinguish from two-point parables, these parables “seem to be so brief and to concentrate so intensively on the protagonist of the plot that they may be grouped into a distinct category of parables.” (p. 381) These include the mustard seed and the leaven (Lk. 13:18-21) and the sheep and the goats (Mt. 25:31-46)

What is so helpful about Blomberg’s approach is the simplicity these four groups can bring to informing ones interpretation of the parables. They are not meant to flatten the parables but rather point out the inherent structure of the parables to make interpretation easier and more anchored in the text. This in turn helps to control ones allegorizing of the parables in order to keep one from interpretations that the original readers would have never imagined nor could have since they were intended to be understood by them. Blomberg offers many insights into each parable he discusses (which is most of them) and shows why some interpretations cannot fit with the intent of the passage.

A Theology of the Parables

Arguably, the primary theological focus of the parables is the kingdom of God. Underneath the focus on the kingdom of God are three smaller supporting lenses through which the parables can be seen: God, His people and those who are not His people. Since there is a time element wrapped in the parables, Blomberg rightly points out both the already and not yet aspects of the kingdom. Further, one cannot help but discuss the nature of the kingdom as it relates to the reign of Christ in regards to one’s millennial views. Feeling that neither postmillennialism, amillennialism nor classic dispensational premillennialism get it right, Blomberg champions the historic premillennial understanding of the kingdom and millennial reign of Christ (p. 425). This kingdom of God focus of the parables is best described as “God’s dynamic, personal rule through the universe, a rule that fashions a community of faithful flowers to model his mandates for creation.” (p. 445) Regardless of one’s millennial view of the kingdom of God, any adherents to the various views could agree with most or all of Blomberg’s definition whether or not they see it being played out in the same manner.

Conclusion

Interpreting the Parables is a great place to start a study on the parables for a few reasons. First, the overview of the history of interpretation will help readers see and appreciate the varied interpretational methods others have employed. While it may be right to snicker at overly allegorical interpretations of the parables, one has to appreciate the desire others have had to truly grasp their meaning – it is not always an easy task. When he clearly disagrees with an interpreter he does so respectfully. Second, while this is not an exhaustive treatment of the parables, the discussion Blomberg does provide will help to anchor readers of the text to the text itself with an eye to the original audience. Blomberg does a good job of modeling responsible use of allegorical understandings of the parables. Most of the parables are discussed and many of them have several pages of helpful discussion and exegesis. Third, in the final chapter on the theology of the parables, Blomberg helpfully synthesizes the main theological ideas addressed within them. He shows how the varied parables

contribute to the whole message of the kingdom of God.

This is a helpful and responsible book for pastors, students and laymen alike.

NOTE: I received this book for free from IVP and was under no obligation to provide a favorable review.
The words and thoughts expressed are my own.
