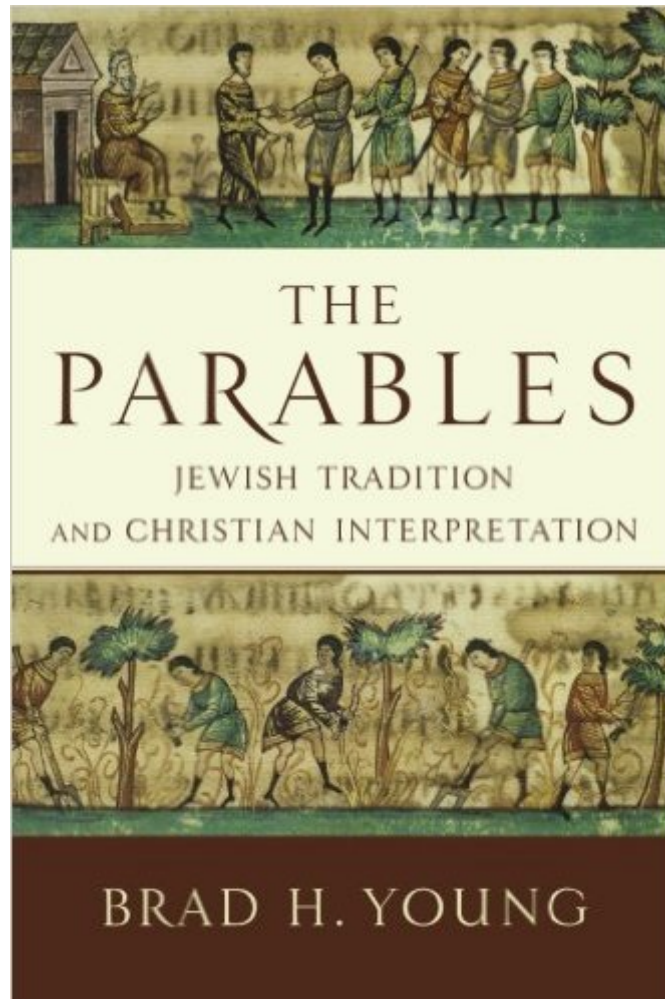


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# The Parables: Jewish Tradition And Christian Interpretation



## Synopsis

Fully one-third of Jesus' words in the Synoptic Gospels occur in parables. It could be said that knowing the parables is essential for understanding the person of Christ. In this work, Brad Young displays his unique perspective as a scholar steeped in both Jewish and Christian studies. While parables have timeless messages, reinterpretations in new contexts throughout the centuries have distorted the original meanings and undermined the essence of what Jesus intended for his initial listeners. Young examines the parables that best illustrate the parallels between the rabbinic and Gospel parables. He challenges readers to remember that first-century Judaism was not merely the backdrop for Jesus' teachings but the very stage from which Jesus delivered the message of the kingdom. Jesus' ethics and theology can be properly understood only in the light of first-century Jewish teachings. Young focuses on the historical development and theological significance of parables in both traditions and examines five theological subjects that are dealt with in parables: prayer, grace, reconciliation, calling, and sovereignty.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Having grown up in the American Protestant Church, I have found myself increasingly dismayed at the inability of our commentators to accurately nail down what Jesus is saying in many of his parables. While the primary lesson from such parables as, "The Good Samaritan" are universally understood, the undercurrents of Jesus' words would not have escaped his first century audience; they do however, slip past us unnoticed. Why a Priest, Levite, and Samaritan? Why not a Butcher, a

Baker and a Candlestick maker? Wouldn't they have sufficed as the 3 main actors in the story? Western pastors and teachers by in large try to apply our thinking and culture to Jesus' words and time period; severely distorting his message. This book takes an approach of viewing Jesus' Parables through the lens of First Century Second Temple period Judaism - this is after all the time Jesus lived in; it covers the major Christian interpretations of these same Parables and how they would better be viewed in light of Jesus' own culture, people, locales and conditions. From the Parable of the Good Samaritan, to the Parable of the Day Laborers or perhaps better called, The Generous Landowner to the Parable of the Unjust Steward (this has bothered me for years!) and The Prodigal Son or more appropriately called The Parable of the two lost Sons (just to tease you, the Parable isn't primarily about the younger [prodigal] son), Jesus' words come alive when First Century Jewish locales, culture, rabbinic thought are finally used to cull up the real intention behind these teaching stories.

A full one-third of Jesus' teachings are in the form of parables - the Good Samaritan | the Prodigal Son | the Persistent Widow. These teachings are some of the most beloved and also some of the most confusing in the whole Bible. In *The Parables: Jewish Tradition and Christian Interpretation*, Brad Young offers a fresh engagement with these core teachings of Jesus. Young argues that Jesus' parables come out of the context of the Pharisaic movement in Second Temple Judaism. Parables were a common teaching tool for Rabbis. Many of these early parables are recorded in the Talmud and the Mishnah. Young believes that we can gain a deeper understanding of the teaching of Jesus by understanding the function of parables in the first century and comparing the Gospel parables to their rabbinic parallels. This work helps us understand what the parables' first hearers would have assumed and expected of the parable. Understanding these expectations can help us see where Jesus is affirming them and where he uses surprise elements to challenge his hearers and reveal the character of God. Young applies this approach to a number of Jesus' parables in the New Testament. In each analysis, he emphasizes the Jewish context for the original hearing and attempts to draw insights from how it would have been heard in the first century. I learned a lot in reading *The Parables* and found many of his insights invaluable for approaching the parables. To highlight even a few of them would be beyond the scope of this review, but one of the most compelling was that the parables are about God. One of the biggest strengths Young draws from this Jewish context is the purpose of the parables itself. A parable reveals the character of God.

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