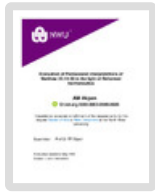


Evaluation of Pentecostal interpretations of Matthew 25:14-30 in the light of Reformed hermeneutics



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Abstract

This study seeks to evaluate Pentecostal interpretations of Matthew 25:14-30 in the light of Reformed hermeneutics. This research interest is informed by a combination of two main assumptions, namely: (1) That in interpreting Scriptures, most Pentecostals seek for the immediate meaning(s) of the text, and do so in such a way that it fits their experience and serves their pragmatic agendas. This is counterbalanced with Reformed approach to Scripture, which in recent times is said to combine a number of diachronic and synchronic approaches to generate meaning of biblical passages and therefore believes that although its interpretation is not infallible, it is nonetheless as close as possible to the communicative intent of the text and is therefore reliable. (2) That in the history of interpretation of the Gospel parables in general, they are understood differently; that Matthew 25:14-30 in particular is interpreted variously, mostly without recourse to its literary or cultural context; and that the concepts in the parable are interpreted anachronistically. The study therefore proceeds with the central theoretical argument that when viewed in the light of Reformed hermeneutics, some Pentecostal interpretations of Matthew 25:14-30 are unacceptable and therefore implausible. Chapter 2 shows that parables constitute a distinct genre in the Synoptic Gospels and are central in Jesus' teaching. "Parable" in the New Testament traces its roots to transliterated "mashal" in the Hebrew Bible and παραβολή (transliterated "parabolē?") in the Septuagint. Parables are extended figures of speech whose narrative claim(s) is (are) fictional but verisimilar in the narrated world, and whose truth-significance is realistic in the referenced world. They elucidate, metaphorically transfer meaning from one domain of understanding (usually the natural world) to another domain (usually the religious world), prophetically call God's people to change their ways and return to God, and sometimes function as weapons of conflict. They presuppose the kingdom of God, seek to explain different motifs of the kingdom, and in fact make sense only against the backdrop of the message of the kingdom. Chapter 3 treats the theory of "biblical hermeneutics" in general and of "Pentecostal hermeneutics" in particular. On the assumption that the Bible lends itself to human interpretation but also demands correct interpretation, it understands biblical hermeneutics as the discipline that harnesses all necessary tools to validly and effectively interpret biblical texts. On the other hand, it sees Pentecostal hermeneutics as an experience-oriented, narrative-oriented, and praxis-oriented practice of biblical interpretation that emphasises the active role of the Holy Spirit in generating meaning from the canonical texts, and in such a way that promotes the identity and meets the needs of the Pentecostal community. Pentecostal hermeneutics emphasises the immanence of God, the narrativity of the Scriptures, the role of the charismatic community, and the role of the Holy Spirit. In addition to the authority of Scripture, Pentecostals have regard for personal experience. A major hermeneutical approach among Pentecostals is "Bible Reading Method", an inductive reading that partly involves a synchronic strategy and partly involves a modified proof-text approach. Chapter 4 examines forty (40) sample Pentecostal interpretations (SPIs) of Matthew 25:14-30 randomly picked from various sample source types (STs). In consideration of the context of interpretation (CoI) and the actual interpretation of each of them, the SPIs are found to diverge widely, with 17 samples (42.5%) apparently focusing on finance/success/wealth, 6 samples (15.0%) on Christ's second coming, and the rest on a variety of other interests. Chapter 5 attempts a Reformed interpretation (RI) of Matthew 25:14-30, comprehensively and critically combining both synchronic and diachronic tools. Among other factors, the text and its context are primarily determinative of meaning. Being a parable, such Reformed principles as its theological significance, its meaning in historical and literary contexts, as well as its meaning in relation to its frames and other neighbouring parables, are explored for generating its meaning. The conclusion reached is that Matthew 25:14-30 is a parable about the parousia of Christ and of ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν [= "the kingdom of heaven"], and that it seeks to call the disciples of Christ to be vigilant/watchful/ready for the parousia, in view of the fact that the exact time of its advent is not known by any man. It also concludes that these disciples need to serve Christ faithfully and profitably while waiting for this event. In the light of the conclusion of Chapter 5, Chapter 6 seeks to know if the SPIs focused on the motif of vigilance for the parousia of ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν. This is done by comparing and contrasting the conclusions of the SPIs with the conclusion of the RI. In the end, it is found that none of the 40 SPIs addresses the motif of the parousia of ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν but rather focus on a variety of other subjects that neither the text nor its context suggests. The investigation also makes clear that the methods used by these Pentecostals are anachronistic, allegorical, as well as a good deal of eisegesis. Chapter 6 therefore reaches a conclusion that confirms the central theoretical argument of this research, namely, that some Pentecostal interpretations of Matthew 25:14-30, when examined in the light of Reformed hermeneutics, produce questionable results and are therefore implausible. Finally, Chapter 7 summarises the arguments that lead up to the conclusion that the SPIs of Matthew 25:14-30 investigated in this study are unacceptable, insofar as they do not focus on the eschatological ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν. It therefore recommends that while it is needful to do further Reformed study on Matthew 25:14-30, as well as to investigate more Pentecostal interpretations of the passage, the available evidence simply indicates that Pentecostals need to stop and re-assess their hermeneutical methods. They need to learn from the insights of Reformed principles for interpreting parables in particular, as well as from general Reformed hermeneutical procedures that Chapter 5 of this study clearly highlights. These recommendations are motivated by, inter alia, the warning of Paul to Timothy to do everything within his power to "correctly [handle] the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15).

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This article endeavours to evaluate an integrated understanding and interpretation of the Bible, which simultaneously takes cognisance of the self-understanding of the Bible, complies with academic standards, and is helpful to the church in its service to bring the Word of God to the (post)modern world. Therefore a 3-circles-model has been developed, tested in. The use of pilgrimage as a paradigm in the interpretation of the Bible should be understood as Groome has been doing by taking pilgrimage as a paradigm in his Shared Christian Praxis approach. Read more. Article. Hermeneutics is the art of interpreting the text. It is a theory imported from the West and has been implemented mostly to interpret the Bible. 25:14-30). A rich man delegates the management of his wealth to his servants, much as investors in today's markets do. He gives five talents (a large unit of money)[1] to the first servant, two talents to the second, and one talent to the third. Two of the servants earn 100 percent returns by trading with the funds, but the third servant hides the money in the ground and earns nothing. The rich man returns, rewards the two who made money, but severely punishes the servant who did nothing. Film Producer Says: If We're Responsible with Our Funds, God Will Open Doors (Click to Watch). View Pentecostal Hermeneutics Research Papers on Academia.edu for free. This bibliography is intended as an exercise in the early stage of my preliminary research on the intersection between Pentecostal theology and biblical interpretation. It's a working draft and it should grow not only in length, but also in focus and quality. Before proceeding you should know this