


The Challenge of Jesus: Rediscovering Who Jesus Was and Is

By N. T. Wright



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Today a renewed and vigorous scholarly quest for the historical Jesus is underway. In the midst of well-publicized and controversial books on Jesus, N. T. Wright's lectures and writings have been widely recognized for providing a fresh, provocative and historically credible portrait. Now this paperback edition of Wright's classic work contains the same original content plus even more insight with an all-new introduction by the author. Out of his own commitment to both historical scholarship and Christian ministry, Wright challenges us to roll up our sleeves and take seriously the study of the historical Jesus. He writes, "Many Christians have been, frankly, sloppy in their thinking and talking about Jesus, and hence, sadly, in their praying and in their practice of discipleship. We cannot assume that by saying the word *Jesus*, still less the word *Christ*, we are automatically in touch with the real Jesus who walked and talked in first-century Palestine. . . . Only by hard, historical work can we move toward a fuller comprehension of what the Gospels themselves were trying to say." *The Challenge of Jesus* poses a double-edged challenge: to grow in our understanding of the historical Jesus within the Palestinian world of the first century, and to follow Jesus more faithfully into the postmodern world of the twenty-first century.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

"We cannot assume that by saying the word *Jesus*," writes N.T. Wright--Canon Theologian of Westminster Abbey and formerly Dean of Lichfield Cathedral--"still less the word *Christ*, we are automatically in touch with the real Jesus who talked in first-century Palestine." Even less are we automatically in touch with "the Jesus who ... is the same yesterday, today and forever." Wright's goal in this volume is to present in a simplified form the findings that are occupying him in his monumental six-volume series entitled *Christian Origins and the Question of God*, and in particular in the second volume, already published, *Jesus and the Victory of God*. Distinguishing himself from the "Jesus Seminar" theologians, who question the literalness of the resurrection (among other things), Wright affirms the absolute centrality of both the Last Supper and the Easter experience as historical events. Through these experiences with Jesus, Wright suggests, the early Christians came to see that "Jesus--and then, very quickly, Jesus' people--were now the true Temple, and the actual building in Jerusalem was thereby redundant."

Written with refreshing clarity and passion, *The Challenge of Jesus* serves as an excellent introduction to the thinking of this influential New Testament historian. --*Doug Thorpe*

From Publishers Weekly

Here, prolific Anglican theologian and historical Jesus quester Wright makes accessible to lay readers the arguments he laid out in his scholarly tome *Jesus and the Victory of God*. But Wright does more than just rehash old arguments; he adds a discussion of the resurrection, absent from *Victory*, and addresses the prickly problem of relevance. In the first six chapters, Wright tackles many of the questions of the historical Jesus debate: Did Jesus believe the Kingdom of God was "now" or "later"? (Both, says Wright.) Did He know He was God in the same way "that one knows one is hungry or thirsty"? ("It was not a mathematical knowledge.... It was more like the knowledge that I have that I am loved by those closest to me.") What exactly happened on Easter? (Jesus' body seemed both physical and transphysical.) Wright then addresses how all these historical-cum-theological musings are significant for Christians living in a postmodern world. This superb addition to Wright's oeuvre will prove fruitful reading for neophytes as well as for those already familiar with his approach. (Jan.)

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From Library Journal

Attempting to provide a fresh look at the Gospel through honest historical study and to produce a firm *sitz im leben* for Jesus, Wright (dean, Lichfield Cathedral) uses this portrait to motivate Christians to follow a "Jesus-shaped" model of discipleship. He has propounded a new orthodoxy that has caused many of his historical colleagues to call him a "fundamentalist," even as fundamentalists are calling him a "compromised pseudo-liberal." That aside, Wright has produced a work of frankly evangelical faith with strong historical integrity, because both are necessary for serious study, uncomfortable as that may be. While he believes that the quest for the historical Jesus is necessary, he is sharply critical of modern, skeptical scholarship. Wright closes with a rousing call for an active, Jesus-like involvement in the world. A refreshing and inspiring read for those who take both conservative faith and historical scholarship seriously. Recommended for academic and public libraries.

-*Eugene O. Bowser, Univ. of Northern Colorado, Greeley*

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