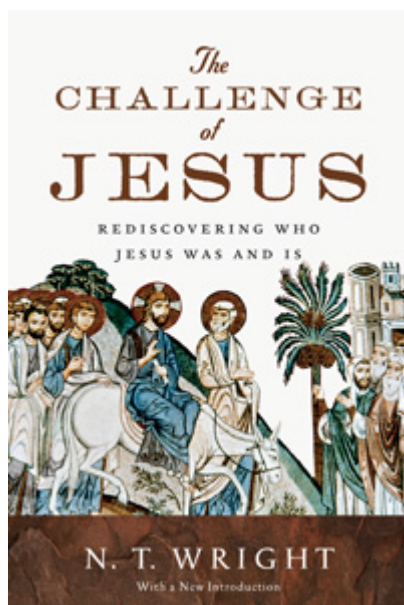


Book Review: The Challenge of Jesus

March 27, 2015

[*The Challenge of Jesus*](#) by N.T. Wright (IVP)

Many thanks to IVP for releasing this new edition of a powerful 1999 N.T. Wright book. Wright challenges readers to consider Jesus within the context of first-century Palestine and in light of the 21st century postmodern world.



Jesus spoke to an audience of Second Temple Jews who looked for a Messiah to lead them out of exile and bring in the kingdom of God. That understanding influenced Jesus' own self-awareness of his identity and vocation, Wright asserts. Jesus came to inaugurate the kingdom of God, but it was neither the political/military kingdom his Jewish contemporaries expected nor the abstract otherworldly kingdom of philosophical thought.

Wright views the terms “son of man” and “son of God” as titles belonging to the Messiah, not titles of divinity in themselves. However, Jesus viewed his calling—his vocation—as doing what God alone could do. The Jews in his day saw the Temple as the place where heaven touched earth and God was present with humanity; Jesus saw himself as the new Temple. The Jews expected a return from exile and dispersion; Jesus arrived to reconstitute the people of God in a new community. To the Jews, a Messiah who suffered crucifixion was, by definition, a failed Messiah; to Jesus,

crucifixion served as the ultimate act of self-giving love and the victory of God.

This time of year, Wright's chapter on "The Challenge of Easter" and the post-Resurrection appearances of Christ seem particularly powerful and poignant. He emphasizes Easter Sunday as "the first day of God's new creation" and "the birthday of God's new world."

Give this important book the attention it rightly deserves.

Ken Camp, managing editor

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