



# **Jesus & the Restoration of Israel: A Critical Assessment of N. T. Wright's Jesus & the Victory of God**

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N. T. Wright's *Jesus and the Victory of God* is widely heralded as one of the most significant and brilliantly argued works in the current "third quest" of the historical Jesus. In this second volume of his multivolume investigation entitled *Christian Origins and the Question of God*, Wright uncovers a Jesus that most historians and believers have never met.

Rooted and engaged in the soil of Israel's history, its first-century plight and its prophetic hope, Wright's portrait of Jesus has set new terms of discourse and debate. Through Wright's lens, familiar sayings and actions of Jesus have fresh meaning. But in the midst of all that is new, Wright also offers a profile of Jesus that bears striking lines of continuity with the Jesus of Christian belief and worship. This resemblance has captured the attention of confessing Christian biblical scholars and theologians.

Wright's work thus far is of such consequence that it seemed timely and strategic to publish a scholarly engagement with his reconstruction of the historical Jesus. Like all works in progress, Wright's proposal is still under construction. But its cornerstone has been laid, the foundation has been formed, the pillars and walls are going up, and even if we cannot yet see how the ceiling, roof and parapets will look, there is quite enough to engage the minds of colleagues, critics and other curious onlookers. For the purposes of this book (and in keeping with IVP's own evangelical identity), editor Carey Newman invited scholars who are committed to Christian belief as it has been classically defined to engage Wright's *Jesus and the Victory of God*.

Newman sets the stage with an introduction, and Craig Blomberg offers a critical and appreciative overview of *Jesus and the Victory of God*. Various facets of Wright's proposal are then investigated by contributors:

- Paul Eddy on Jesus as prophet, Messiah and embodiment of Yahweh
- Klyne Snodgrass on the parables
- Craig Evans on Israel under continuing exile
- Darrell Bock on the trial and death of Jesus
- Dale Allison on apocalyptic language
- Richard Hays on ethics
- Alister McGrath on the implications for evangelical theology
- Stephen Evans on methodological naturalism in historical biblical scholarship
- Luke Timothy Johnson on Wright's historiography

To these essayists Wright extends his "grateful dialogue." He gives this spirited and illuminating reply to his interlocutors: "The high compliment of having a whole book devoted to the discussion of one's work is finely balanced by the probing, intelligent questions and by the occasional thud of a blunt instrument on the back of one's head. . . . Only once did I look up my lawyer's telephone number."

After Wright takes his turn, his good friend and frequent partner in debate Marcus Borg offers his "appreciative disagreement." Newman then concludes the dialogue with his own reflections on moving from

Wright's reconstruction of the historical Jesus to the church's Christ.

A book assessing a scholar's work is usually an end-of-career event. But in this case interested readers can look forward with eager anticipation to Wright's next volume in Christian Origins and the Question of God--this one on the resurrection of Jesus.

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