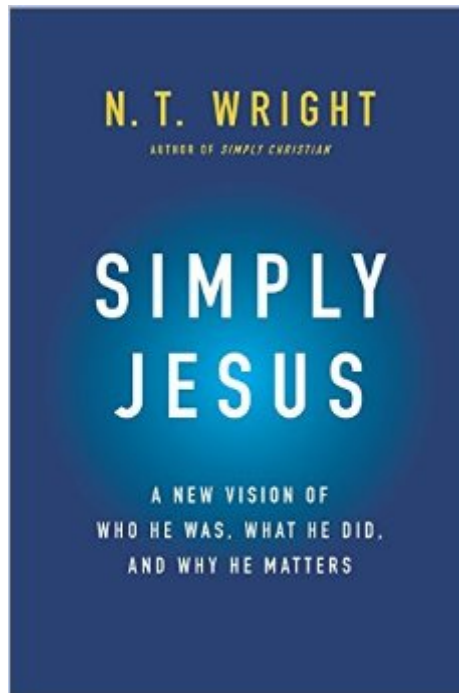


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# Simply Jesus: A New Vision Of Who He Was, What He Did, And Why He Matters



## Synopsis

In *Simply Jesus*, bestselling author and leading Bible scholar N.T. Wright summarizes 200 years of modern Biblical scholarship and models how Christians can best retell the story of Jesus today. In a style similar to C.S. Lewis's popular works, Wright breaks down the barriers that prevent Christians from fully engaging with the story of Jesus. For believers confronting the challenge of connecting with their faith today, and for readers of Timothy Keller's *The Reason for God*, Wright's *Simply Jesus* offers a provocative new picture of how to understand who Jesus was and how Christians should relate to him today.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

N.T. Wright's latest book, *"Simply Jesus,"* claims to be a new vision of who Jesus is and what He did. Ultimately, the book is what it claims. It's a sometimes brilliant and inspiring re-presentation of who Jesus is and what He came to do. But unfortunately, Wright doesn't make this clear until the end of Chapter 11. A good summary of Wright's major theme is this sentence from Chapter 11: "The gospels are not about 'how Jesus turned out to be God.' They are about how God became king on earth as in heaven." Put another way: the Good News of Jesus Christ has to do with much more than people simply escaping earth for heaven. Wright develops this theme throughout and does, indeed, offer a fresh and invigorating vision of Jesus Christ. But the book is marred by the fact that Wright's best and most important ideas aren't clear until so late in the book that they would be easy to miss. In fact, I would highly recommend reading Chapters 11, 13, 14, and 15 first so that the rest

of the book may be more profitable! Because of the wonderful, challenging insights in the final few chapters, I give the book 4 stars, despite a very slow and not particularly refreshing beginning. Chapter 1 is very slow going and doesn't do much to present Jesus in a new light or help us to see Him any better. In Chapter 2, Wright presents 3 puzzles understanding Jesus represents: Jesus' world is foreign to us; Jesus' God is strange to us; and Jesus spoke and acted as if he was in charge. Chapter 2 wasn't particularly insightful. Chapter 3 discusses what Wright terms the distortions of skepticism and conservatism. He's wrong, however, to put the two on the same level; one proceeds from faith and is an honest attempt to accept the Christ of the Gospels - the other isn't.

I'll never forget what it was like having my mind blown. I thought that twenty years of growing up in the church and an undergraduate degree in Christian ministry with a heavy emphasis on biblical text had given me a pretty good grasp of the Bible, particularly the New Testament. Then I was assigned N.T. Wright's *The New Testament and the People of God* for my first graduate class, "Advanced Introduction to the New Testament." It only took a couple pages and my mind was blown. Wright revolutionized my understanding of the Jewishness of Jesus, turned upside down my ideas about the Pharisees, and opened my eyes to the gospel's rightful place within the story of God and God's people, Israel. So began my journey with Wright that has played a pivotal role in my overarching journey of faith and ministry. It is thus with great anticipation that I approach each new contribution to Wright's canon. I don't so much expect to have my mind blown again; before I was navigating scripture with a completely different map than Wright, now I think I'm looking at and using the same map. However, I do expect to have my understanding refined, my eyes opened to things I've previously overlooked, and some of my conclusions challenged. *Simply Jesus: A New Vision of Who He Was, What He Did, and Why He Matters* has done precisely that. Cutting through the fog that destroys communication between skeptics and conservatives and mapping with clarity a way through the challenging terrain of historic complexity, Wright lays out the contest that is underlying, overlaying, and surrounding any conversation about Jesus: Roman aspirations for dominance, Jewish longings for liberation, and God's intention of establishing God's kingdom on earth as in heaven.

*Simply Jesus* by N. T. Wright may simply be the best book about Jesus I have ever read. But the book is not just about Jesus. It is about the church, the Gospel, the Kingdom of God, Israel, history, government, social involvement, eschatology, and a mind-numbing array of other topics, all of which

swirl around and center upon the person and work of Jesus Christ. But don't be scared. N. T. Wright may be one of the world's leading New Testament scholars, but this book is highly readable. Unlike some of his academic-level books (such as *The Resurrection of the Son of God*), this book contains almost no footnotes, scholarly discussion of Greek words, or involved critique of ideas from other scholars. If you have been hearing about N. T. Wright and are curious about his ideas, but have not wanted to tackle the 800 pages of *The Resurrection of the Son of God* or the 800 pages of *Jesus and the Victory of God*, this book is the place to start. It is a concise summary of everything written up to this point by N. T. Wright about Israel as the people of God, Jesus as the Son of God, the significance of His resurrection, and the role of the church within the Kingdom of God. Here, briefly, is what he argues: There were numerous cultural, political, and theological winds swirling around Israel in the years before and after the ministry of Jesus Christ. Most of these winds led Israel to expect a Messiah who would overthrow Rome through military conquest and set Israel up as the nation that ruled the world in peace and justice. When Jesus began saying and doing the things He said and did, He was not fulfilling any of the expectations, which confused many people, and eventually, led to His crucifixion. (Whew! I'm skipping a lot in there!)

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