



## **Judas and the Gospel of Jesus: Have We Missed the Truth about Christianity?**

*N.T. Wright*

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# From Reader Review Judas and the Gospel of Jesus: Have We Missed the Truth about Christianity? for online ebook

## Glory says

Incredible! This is the first book I've read inside two hours. Which goes to show for its size. It's a small book and easy to read. I've never read N.T. Wright, but his style and accessibility is easy to feel. The book is not technical, very conversational and honest, and quite informative on the context, modern and ancient, of the newly-found Gospel of Judas. Wright doesn't go into analysis of the gospel's individual text, but he nicely expounds upon the cultural milieu in which the gospel emerged, highlighting the Gnostic sect that changed Biblical villains into heroes and vice-versa. He explains how the early church fathers were not out to promote their ecumenical power, since orthodox Christians were the ones being persecuted, not the quite assimilated Gnostics. No power could be grabbed when the subjects of your power are dwindling through martyrdom. Wright also emphasizes how the modern culture is quite willing to uncritically accept these new Gnostic gospels, with its modern beliefs in self-expression and self-discovery. Very enlightening.

Wright is quite fair in his analysis, and he quotes Pagels and other Gnostic-proponents very often. I learned a lot from the book, and I'm glad I got to read it in such a short time.

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## Jacob Aitken says

In many ways this book is vintage Wright. He has the same witticisms, arguments, and style that readers have come to expect. Wright acknowledges that the so-called "Gospel of Judas" is an authentic copy from circa 250 A. D. He briefly touches on the scholarly circus in who actually got to publish it (and more humorously, who didn't and what they thought about it!).

Wright gives the reader a brief overview of the various gnosticism(s) in late antiquity. He shows whatever one's view on the Gospel of Judas may be, in no way may it be reconciled to Christianity. His argument follows:

1. The Christian gospels spoke of the in-breaking of YHWH's kingdom to the world, giving the world life and justice and forgiveness--what we call "salvation." The Christian mythos of salvation reaffirms the goodness of creation. The Gnostic gospel, on the other hand, trashes creation.
2. The Christian gospel maintains deep continuity with the Old Testament, proclaiming the fulfilment of Israel's promises in the person of Jesus the Messiah. It is deeply Jewish (or Old Testament Jewish, anyway). The Gnostic gospels, on the other hand, are anti-semitic, ridiculing the God of the Old Testament and those who worship him.
3. Historically, the Christian gospels led its adherents to martyrdom. Wright carefully and skillfully dismantles the biggest argument of the Gnostics: that the Christians conspired with political power and suppressed "other Christianities." Wright shows the opposite is the case. The early Christians went to their deaths because the gospels forbade the collusion with Caesar and because God's kingdom had a claim on this world (a claim that Caesar would soon acknowledge in the person of Constantine). Because this world mattered, and because God claimed Lordship over it, the Christians couldn't compromise. The Gnostics, on the other hand, could. If this world were only trash, and what really mattered was the "spark of the divine"

within me, what do I care what happens to it? If anything, it was the Gnostics who colluded with Empire.

All in all, a superb book. I will leave with one of Wright's witticisms: The Gnostic view of salvation makes sense only if one turns the world upside down. That is why neo-Gnostics make the villains into the victims. Their good news is backwards. It is like a messenger going to a prison camp and proclaiming that the war is over and all of the prisoners are to be killed!

The gnostic gospels do not give you good news, but good advice (and not so good at that).

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### **Gregory says**

This is a fantastic little book. I just read it for the second time. Wright manages to explain early Gnosticism, how the Gospel of Judas can't possibly be an accurate portrayal of anything Jesus actually taught, debunk the debunkers of the historical Jesus, and show how Gnosticism is still very much present in American Christianity. All in 150 pgs.!

What I most enjoy about Wright is ability to simplify tons of material and relate the ancient world to our own. Additionally, while he criticizes other scholars pretty sharply, he always does it in a respectful fashion.

You may not agree with Wright's entire theological project, but he has led the way in a winsome, scholarly, and still critical engagement with "radical" scholars who attempt to undermine the canonical/historical Jesus.

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### **Curtis says**

Having read Bart Ehrman's popular book on the Gospel of Judas this was a welcome follow-up and helped to frame the discussion in a much larger context as well as explain the parts Ehrman conveniently left out. One of those parts is the way in which the authors of the initial discovery gloss over important distinctions of what constitutes a 'gospel' in terms of genre and character. By seeing the texts for their style and different intents helps to determine their place in the debate. Wright takes the opportunity of this ancient discovery to explore just how different (in worldview, salvation, future hope, and present reality) early Christianity, deeply rooted in Judaism, is from the Gnostic forms that attempt to appropriate Jesus and his story towards their own ends. In addition, he explores the development arc of modern day Gnosticism and its acceptance within Western society (albeit deviated substantially from second century expressions). Much is packed into this brief volume and is well worth the read, even for those only slightly interested in this discovery and surrounding 'controversy'.

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### **Joshua Ray says**

Great little book. Wright explains the Gospel of Judas, outlines Gnosticism and how it differs from the canonical Gospels, discusses the distinctives of the Gospel of Thomas, and does it all on a popular and accessible level. A quick read (I finished it in a few hours) and a good introduction to the topic.

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### **J.D. says**

This was a short book about the Gospel of Judas that has recently come to the forefront and garnered much attention. Wright takes time analyzing why people cling to "new discoveries" and what this implies in our culture. He then goes on to explain what this material does bring to light and then what it does not by specifically responding to much writing by Gnostics.

I am certainly no theologian(just enjoy it as a lowly layman) and so this was not something that really came across my radar. If I was not so invested in reading everything that Wright has done, it would have been even longer before I heard about it. That said, I did not have too much invested in hearing specifically on the topic so while I did enjoy it, it was certainly not one of my favorite of his.

I am very thankful to be hearing of this from a source I enjoy/trust so much, though.

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### **Graham says**

This a good introduction to the issue of the Gnostic text of the "Gospel of Judas". It's brief, succinct, and accessible to a more casual reader or armchair theologian. Wright is a reliable source on Early Christianity, and so I get the impression he (or his publishers) wanted his response on the shelf, so this is not an in depth study, but a concise response to the hype surrounding the publication of the ancient manuscript. Not the be all and end all on the subject, but a concise response from the orthodox Christian perspective.

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### **David S. T. says**

This was written back when the Gospel of Judas was making headlines and all of the books and TV shows about it were coming out. Wright was pretty shocked at the attention it was getting and the publicity as a new view Judas (one where Jesus secretly asks Judas to betray him and then Jesus mocks the lack of understanding of the other disciples). In this book he does a very quick primer on Gnosticism and why Judas isn't in line with Orthodox Christianity. I think that anyone who has sat down and read any of the Gnostic scriptures can quickly see just how unorthodox they are. After discussing them, Wright goes on to talk about how God wants to bring heaven down to earth. Anyways, this is a good short introduction if someone wants to read an Orthodox view of Gnosticism.

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### **Ryk says**

Motherf\*\*\*\*\* writes like the discovery of these lost gospels was meant as a huge inconvenience just for him. What a blow-hard, grumpy-face.

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### **Jonathan B says**

This book doesn't just provide a good overview of The Gospel of Judas and a refutation of it's legitimacy (as

a valid perspective on Jesus), but it also provides a good general introduction to gnosticism itself (I've mapped some summaries here: <http://remingtonscove.wordpress.com/c...>).

My one point of criticism would be that I would have liked to see a more direct treatment of the issue of sin and atonement contrasted with the gnostic idea of sin. Wright could have done this in his final chapter where he does attempt something like this, except with his typical New Perspective on Paul twist. Wright talks about our need for rescuing (p. 144) and about the "Jewish Messiah" "carry[ing] out that saving purpose" (p. 145). But that's about as much as he touches on the issue. As expected, he talks more about putting "the world to rights" and says that "in the biblical tradition judgment is emphatically good news, not bad. It means that the creator God has promised to make the world right at last, to sort it out, to sift it and straighten it and heal its ancient wounds and wrongs. It is, in particular, good news for the poor and the oppressed" (p. 139). But that strikes me not only as liable to be misunderstood but as downright misleading. Judgment isn't good news for the poor and the oppressed if they stand equally guilty before the judge as the rich and the oppressor. And they do.

Judgement per se isn't good news for anyone, for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. The poor and oppressed should fear judgment just as much as the rich. The good news isn't found in God's coming to put the world to rights in that sense. The good news is found in God's righteous judgement being satisfied in Christ on our behalf. This is an area the New Perspectives on Paul have failed to clearly affirm and in some cases outright denied. (Notice I said New Perscives, plural. I recognize that Wright isn't Sanders or Dunn, etc. and I'm not trying to lump him in with them, wholesale.)

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### **Adam says**

This book was a surprise for me. I had always been a little interested in the Gospel of Judas since it's announcement in 2006, and this small explanatory/responsive book was just the thing I needed. Wright does a good job explaining the document, the Gnostic movement, and responding to it in our postmodern world. There where some excellent remarks concerning neo-gnosticism, and it's appearance in recent protestantism. That hit home for me, because I've always felt like the Christian branch I grew up in was missing the point, or something just didn't feel right. The remarks made about it near the end of the book made quite an impact. Classic Christianity didn't just view Jesus as a "ticket to paradise" (which seems to be what we tell our young people - follow Jesus so you will go to heaven). And so many Christian thoughts are almost quasi-gnostic. For example, This world is totally evil and you should just be concerned with your own inner spiritual path so you can transcend this world and leave it behind. Very Gnostic.

To summarize this summary, it's a really short book but Wright puts a lot of thought-provoking commentary in there. A definite must-read!

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### **Frank Peters says**

This was a short book that discussed the (then recent) publication of the "Gospel of Judas". At the time, the publishers were trying to claim that this "Gospel" should be considered equivalent, or even superior to the canonical gospels. Wright systematically discusses how the "Gospel of Judas" actually fits historically, as a pretty typically Gnostic publication. He reminds the reader what Gnosticism was all about, and especially how it sought to fit in with, or conform to society. Thus, when the modern anti-Christian writer suggests that

Gnosticism was edgy and counter cultural, as opposed to Orthodox Christianity, those writers are historically just wrong. After contrasting the Gnostic thought of the “Gospel of Judas” with real Christianity, Wright points out where Gnostic thought has infected not only the modern anti-Christian movement, but also much of dispensational fundamentalist Christianity. He takes aim at the “Left Behind” phenomenon, that (at least implicitly) teaches the Gnostic ideas that nature doesn't matter (so we can destroy it), as we will be leaving this evil world anyway for heaven. This part of the book will not make him friends, but I believe it is important and needs to be said.

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### **Wade Stotts says**

Really good.

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### **Rod says**

What a great little book. A fast read as well.

It's amazing when scholars attempt to make the bad guys of the Bible good - and the good guys Bad. What is really amazing is that many people in the church fall for it. I say let them. If the Gospel of Judas is what some people really want - then it's all yours.

The problem is: This Gospel is poorly preserved, missing bits, and a theological mess. What kind of God would want to reveal his Truth in that fashion? He's not worthy of my worship or obedience.

And N.T. Wright tells us why this Gospel is not worth our Love. It's not even Good News. Mr. Wright's book is a blessing. Thanks N.T.

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### **Eric says**

There's nothing particularly earth shattering here. If not for the strained over exertions of a few scholars trying to make a splash by raising controversy, this book wouldn't be necessary. Gnosticism is a different religion than Christianity. It occasionally attempts to co-opt Jesus as part of its theology, but it's a very different Jesus. Wright combats these voices, and does so effectively. But pointlessly. People who would like to believe the gnostic narrative are going to believe it in order to swim counter to the forever weakening mainstream Christian current. People who don't care about texts beyond the Bible don't care about any of this and don't need to be convinced. There are very few people who fall into that middle ground; those who know that the Bible is not a monolithic document handed down on stone tablets, but aren't necessarily rabid anti-establishment conspiracy theorists.

I fall into that category, and still wasn't all that impressed. Wright, here, turned the crank and popped out a book. He could have conveyed the same information in a 9 page pamphlet. He should have.

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