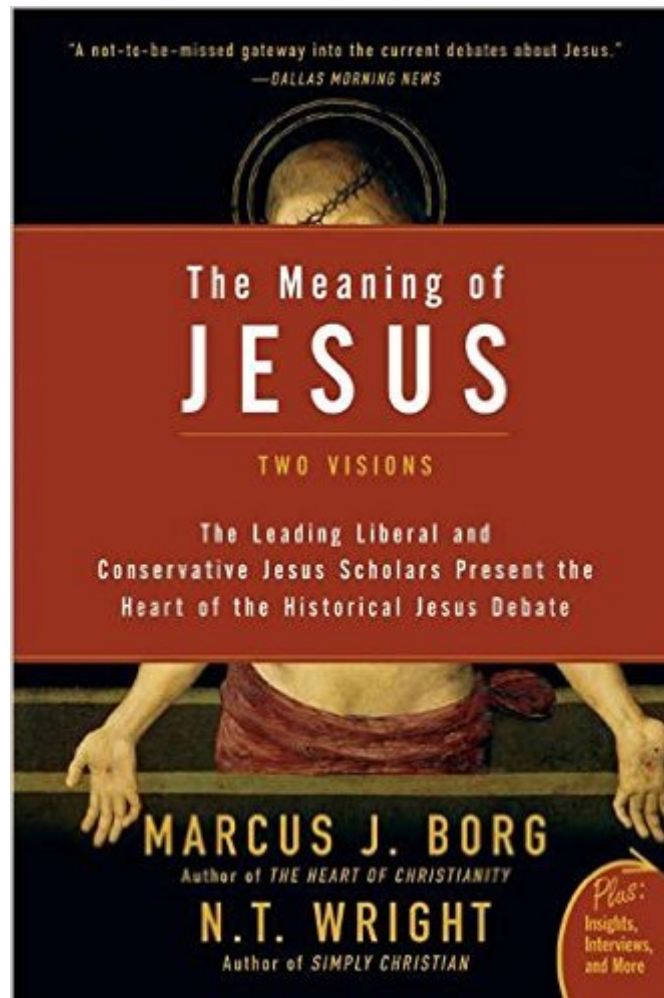


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# The Meaning Of Jesus: Two Visions



## Synopsis

Was Jesus born of a virgin? Did he know he was the Messiah? Was he bodily resurrected from the dead? Did he intentionally die to redeem humankind? Was Jesus God? Two leading Jesus scholars with widely divergent views go right to the heart of these questions and others, presenting the opposing visions of Jesus that shape our faith today.

## Book Information

Paperback: 320 pages

Publisher: HarperOne; 2nd edition (September 7, 2007)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0061285544

ISBN-13: 978-0061285547

Product Dimensions: 5.3 x 0.7 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 10.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (108 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #42,448 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #44 in [Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Bible Study & Reference > Criticism & Interpretation > New Testament](#) #72 in [Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Theology > Christology](#) #216 in [Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Bible Study & Reference > New Testament](#)

## Customer Reviews

This book brought a lump to my throat. What rare respect. I have read many "Jesus books" and I am tired of all the biting criticism of opposing views. Here we have a book that presents two very different views without rancor. It is so handy to have these views presented in a single volume. I am surprised and extremely pleased to see that two Christians with such different views of Jesus are good friends and respect the other's views. Borg and Wright have had many personal discussions with one another, so each is very familiar with the other's arguments. Bravo to both of them. I especially liked the following two quotations: By Wright: "And the way to solve all such questions, whether to do with Jesus or to do with the sources, is once more the scientific method of hypothesis and verification." By Borg: "My point is not to deny an afterlife. But it wasn't central to Jesus' teaching. The vision of the Christian life that flows out of taking him seriously is about a relationship with the Spirit of God that transforms our lives in the present, not about a reward that only comes later." THIS IS THE IDEAL WAY TO DEBATE SUCH ISSUES. Why can't other scholars show similar respect for opposing views?

I enjoyed the book tremendously. I am a Christian who also wants to be intellectually honest in my beliefs. To me, it was refreshing to see two devoted Christians with significantly different views of the historical Jesus engaged in respectful dialogue in which neither accuses the other of heresy. This book presents competing views of the historical Jesus by two writers the editors label as "the leading liberal and conservative Jesus scholars." That might be a bit overbilled, since other scholars such as Meier, Sanders and Crossan come at least as readily to mind. But Wright and Borg are excellent. The "Liberal" and "Conservative" labels are also a bit overdone. Both scholars accept the discipline of rigorous critical scholarship and, again, both are committed Christians-- so they are not so far apart as these labels might imply. It's not as if a Fundamentalist and an Agnostic are going at each other. But these complaints are with the billing for the book and not for the book itself, which I found excellent. Wright, the conservative, sees Jesus as a prophet inaugurating the Kingdom of God who indicated at least in a cryptic way that he was the Messiah of God. He sees the bodily resurrection and the empty tomb as historical events that are foundational for the Christian faith. Borg, the liberal, views Jesus as a social prophet and a healer, a man who called people to a new way of seeing and a new way of living. For him, whether the tomb was empty or not is irrelevant. He believes the Messianic claims contained in the New Testament come from the early Church rather than the historical Jesus. Nevertheless, he sees Jesus as the image of the invisible God. I recommend this book for anyone sympathetic to Christianity who is sincerely interested in the Historical Jesus debate.

Let's face it, there are loads of Jesus books out there. For one who wants to begin with taking a look at real scholarship and not metaphysical fairy tales about Jesus, it's hard to find a good place to start. Before this book was published, the best introduction was *The Jesus Quest* by Ben Witherington III, which looked @ the many modern scholars of Jesus scholarship. Its weakness was that it summarized views in Witherington's words which were often harshly critical because of his evangelical bias. Borg is the 'liberal' and is a powerful representative for the camp. Wright is the most exciting scholar right now who powerfully supports and challenges orthodoxy simultaneously. Wright is the superior scholar here in my opinion, but the great thing about the book is that you can decide for yourselves looking at the authors' own writings.

'The Meaning of Jesus' has seemed to take a new approach in its genre. This is most likely a result of the two men's friendship. It can be read by anyone without too much knowledge of the historical

Jesus. NT Wright does use some intellectual language which might be frightening to some, but his point is not missed. Marcus Borg writes in plain old english which makes for easy reading without sacrificing to much meaningful content. This book is definitely an introduction and nothing written in it is new. It does cover many issues on several different topics. I'd reccomend this book to anyone who is casually interested in the case for the historical Jesus. I think you'll find it a very rewarding read.

This book is not geared toward those who are already familiar with the issues involved in the debate over who Jesus of Nazareth really was. Instead, it was written to introduce people to the discussion and give a general representation of the two opposing perspectives. N.T. Wright presents the conservative view, which means that he believes the gospels give us generally reliable history, that Jesus made outrageous claims to divinity, performed miracles, rose from the dead, and is indeed divine as taught by traditional Christianity. Marcus Borg gives the liberal side. He believes the gospels contain far more myth than history, that Jesus did not claim anything out of the ordinary in regards to a unique relationship to God, and that he did not physically rise from the dead. Neither writer is really able to give detailed arguments for their views because of the large amount of ground they attempt to cover in this book. I did like the book's format. Each section addressed a specific topic (reliability of gospels, divinity claims, etc.), with each writer devoting a chapter to the subject at hand. They then rotated which writer was first for each topic. This prevented one person from always getting the last word. If you're already familiar with the historical Jesus debate, then I'd give it two stars (and recommend passing on this one). However, if you're new to the issue I'd say its worthy of four stars and suggest it as a good introduction to a fascinating debate.

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