

Simply Good News: Why the Gospel Is News and What Makes It Good

N.T. Wright

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The bishop, Bible scholar, modern heir to C. S. Lewis, and revered author of *Simply Christian* and *Simply Jesus* offers a fresh look at the Gospel, explaining why Jesus' message is "good news" and why it is more timely and transforming today than we know.

The Gospel means good news. But if the message has been around for 2,000 years, what makes it significant today? What's so "good" about stories involving damnation, violence, and a God who sacrifices his only son?

Noted Bible scholar N.T. Wright shows us how Christians today have lost sight of what the "good news" of the gospel really is. In *Simply Good News*, he takes us back in time to reveal how the people of the first-century—the gospel's original audience—would have received Jesus' message. He offer a clear and thoughtful analysis of what the "good news" really is, and applies it to our lives today, revealing its power to transform us.

Simply Good News: Why the Gospel Is News and What Makes It Good Details


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From Reader Review Simply Good News: Why the Gospel Is News and What Makes It Good for online ebook

Shawn Gearhart says

An excellent book! I think all those in America who call themselves Christians should read it for a good perspective of the Good News of God's Kingdom coming to earth and of God Himself. Definitely a refreshing read for me.

Sarah says

I started this yesterday and finished it today, which is no small feat for a Wright book.

I loved the simplicity N. T. brings to the table. He speaks conversationally, yet tackles deep philosophical issues in a method reminiscent of Socratic dialogues. I was a bit confused by his treatment of the Reformers. Did they successfully handle medieval misconceptions about God and the sacred/secular divide or not? He seems inconclusive, or at least takes for granted that his readers will know what he's talking about; which is odd, given that the majority of this book could be easily read by an unbeliever unschooled in church history. Most beautiful, though, was how Wright's love for his gracious Father spills over in delighted prose. Here's someone with a grasp on truly good news and a breathless impatience to tell anybody who will hear.

Frank Peters says

This may possibly be my favourite book by N.T. Wright so far. It is closest in my eyes to “Surprised by Hope”. As in that book, Wright is dealing with a topic that while basic to Christianity is often misinterpreted and misunderstood. In this book, while dealing with the Good News or Gospel, Wright is excellent. He rather gently points out the false gospels of the world as well as the incomplete gospels that can be embraced by well-meaning Christians – myself included. Unusual for Wright, this particular book was fairly easy to read, so I can actually recommend it to a much wider audience than normal. I had hoped that this would be a 5-star book, but alas it was not. Similar to “Surprised by Hope”, Wright never seems to complete what he has started. Thus, he has helped with the intellectual articulation of what the Gospel really is, he provides little or no help in how this Gospel can best be communicated in the world we live in. Similarly, while outlining where typical “Christian” views of the second coming are faulty, he completely neglects any articulation of what the second coming actually stands for, or any view of the end times. On the other hand, his final chapter on praying the Gospel was a wonderful end to the book, and should be helpful to the spiritual growth of any Christian who wants this.

Matthew says

It is not that I didn't like this book, in many ways I really did. But, it is my second lay level book that I have read for NT Wright and I am just not appreciating the level of writing he does intended for mass audiences. I would rather read his more technical stuff. I agreed with much of what he had to write in this book. It took me getting through 80% of the book to realize that his ultimate thesis in the book is actually making a case

for a version of postmillennialism. Although, he never actually uses this word, but I am unsure if he doesn't because of the book's audience not being able to handle big theological words or because he doesn't quite subscribe himself to all the category might mean?

I did not care for the fact that the book was extremely light on Scripture and actual historical information (again lay level book vs technical book) and no footnotes or endnotes. It is not so much that I disagreed with his premises, but because he did not offer any real support for them, they really were just assertions.

Anyway, agreed with much of the book. Didn't care for the presentation.

James says

This is one of Wright's popular level books (Lite Wright). But it packs a wallop. Covering much the same ground as Scot McKnight's *King Jesus Gospel*, Wright pushes his readers to enlarge their picture of what the good news really is. He sets Jesus in the context of Israel's hope; he sets the plan of salvation in the context of the renewal of all creation; he roots heaven in the experience of resurrection and the way the kingdom breaks into the present; he looks forward to Christ's return and the fullness of new creation.

Wright is prolific, and for someone so prolific it amazes me that his books are so consistently good. My favorite chapter is the final one, where he looks at the Lord's prayer as a way of 'praying the good news.' He brings us in the back door with the final line (*Don't bring us into trial but rescue us from evil*). Walking backwards through the prayer (as most of us often prayer) he talks about these as a prayer for help, a prayer for forgiveness, a prayer for bread, a prayer for God's will and kingdom to come, a prayer honoring and glorifying God, a prayer to our host, the Father. As we learn to pray this (forwards) we embody more and more what it means to be the good news people

Nathan Schneider says

Wright couches the gospel in the larger view of God's redemptive plan for salvation. He argues that the gospel is news about an event, the resurrection, and that it finds most significance in light of Israel's longing for a Messiah. Very helpful to think of salvation in terms of God's greater story, rather than just personal justification. He does address personal response to the gospel, but could have been more detailed in how someone is to respond.

James says

It's NT Wright and it's about the most important news ever. 'nuf said.

Nick says

This book does a great job of capturing so many of Wright's major concepts clearly and simply. Having read a lot of his books at this point, and having listened to dozens of his lectures online, I didn't really encounter any new material here. What he did well with this book was condense, simplify, and illustrate with examples from history and current events.

Adam Shields says

Short Review: While I think Simply Good News is probably going to be my suggestion for the best entry point for Wright, none of Wright's books are perfect. He has a tendency to over state his case a bit and while that is less here than most books, it is still here. I think while his point is to complicate the story and make it richer, more meaningful and more whole, there are times when he needs more summary to make sure everyone is following along.

Overall if you are new to NT Wright, this is a great place to start. If you are familiar with NT Wright and have read Scot McKnight's King Jesus Gospel, you will not find much new material here, but this is a good summary of why Wright's project is important, not only for Pauline studies or New Testament studies but for the basic theology and practice of the church.

My full (about 850 word) review of Simply Good News is on my blog at <http://bookwi.se/simply-good-news/>

Madonna says

Simply Good News: Why the Gospel Is News and What Makes It Good by N.T. Wright was sent to me through the Good Reads program. First of all thanks for letting me read your book.

This book is one I will study for some time to come. I loved the way the Gospel was presented here and how the Good News was explained. Many of the verses were explained in ways I had not heard before and helps me to understand them much better. I really like hearing things in different ways because even when they are said with different meanings; it helps my understanding. I will let others read this book, but I want it back to study further. Am planning to look for some more of N.T. Wrights books.

Thanks again!

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John says

This is a "gospel" book, in the mold of "What is the Gospel?", "The King Jesus Gospel", "The World-Tilting Gospel" and others. While I have some reservations about this book, I do believe this is the best of the few that I've read because Wright has some out of the ordinary kinds of things to say. All the writers agree that the gospel is "good news" but the question is what that means.

Where Gilbert confuses the gospel with salvation, as McKnight says, it is a "de-storified" gospel, Wright builds the story in ways that none of the others do. But McKnight falls short in delivering a satisfactory "storification" of the gospel.

Dan Phillips in "The World-Tilting Gospel" provides the story, but it doesn't really pack the punch that Wright offers. Wright has a deeper, richer biblical-theological understanding of the Old Testament and the New Covenant fulfillment in Christ and is therefore able to take his readers deeper, challenging us to think new thoughts and engaging his readers in ways Phillips simply cannot do.

Wright begins with many of the same concerns that McKnight has with the way Christians have articulated the gospel. Wright argues that "In many churches, the good news has subtly changed into good advice..." As Wright himself says, "there's nothing wrong with good advice... But it isn't the same thing as news." p. 4

For Wright, the gospel must be news--"Something had happened. Something would happen. And in between, something powerful and mysterious was happening in the lives of all those who found themselves caught up in it. If we want to recapture the dynamic of the original early Christian gospel, we need to recapture this triple vision, and to see in particular what this tells us about the meaning of the word God." p. 34

Wright defines this good news: "The good news is about the living God overcoming all the powers of the world to establish his rule of justice and peace, on earth as in heaven. Not in heaven, later on. And that victory is won not by superior power of the same kind but by a different sort of power altogether." p.43 Or, more simply "The good news is that the one true God has now taken charge of the world, in and through Jesus and his death and resurrection." p. 56

Now, I expect that this is where Gilbert, and others like him get hung up, for this is simply not a sufficiently "systematic" presentation of the gospel which must "...say something about sin and the need for salvation from God's wrath against it?" (Gilbert, "What is the Gospel" p. 17 But this is precisely where Gilbert goes awry--confusing the gospel with soteriology. But Wright is clear that the gospel is much bigger than that--including "the restoration and transformation of all creation" p. 71 and is "much more like a coronation than a sacrifice." p. 72

Wright is also clear that it does also include the soteriology, including "Jesus died for me", it must include that, but it is not only that. Now, to many this may seem to be nit-picky or contentious, but the rest of the book demonstrates that if we don't properly define the gospel, the power of the gospel is diminished. This is where Gilbert's "What is the Gospel" falls flat. His chapter "The Power of the Gospel" is seven pages long and has little to say beyond believe the gospel and speak the gospel. Again, the problem here is not what is said, but rather what isn't said.

Gilbert's gospel isn't powerful enough for him to confidently say things like, "... the living God is indeed establishing his kingdom on earth as in heaven, through the finished work of Jesus, and is inviting people of all sorts to share not only in the benefits of this kingdom but also in the work through which it will come to its ultimate completion." Wright, p. 164

Wright has much more to say, of course. Fortunately, this is one of Wright's shorter books where his editors have an incentive to reduce, rather than increase Wright's page count. Wright riffs on the distinction between "the final vision of the Christian gospel" as "going to heaven when you die" versus "the rescue and renewal of the whole creation." p. 90 Again, the truncated, pietistic gospel doesn't have such a holistic vision. This answers the compelling human need for meaning in this life--for vocation. If God's kingdom has begun, this gives new meaning to what we do on earth in the here and now.

It is at this point that Wright takes a chapter to expound upon the future. He knows that if we do not properly understand what the Bible says about the future that we will not live biblically in the present. Chapter 6, "Wrong Future, Wrong Present" is about understanding what so many believe to be predictions of "final punishment in the New Testament" instead "a majority of the sayings... do not mean what people have assumed they mean." p. 109

Wright is opposing those in the church that "shrug their shoulders and say there's nothign we can do to make the world a better place until Jesus returns." That "All we can do is alleviate some of the worst evils and look after those who are suffering." As Wright says, "This simply ignores the New Testament's emphasis." Instead, he reminds us that "The risen Jesus already claims all authority in heaven and on earth." p. 114

Wright argues that we can, and must learn from the early church that "real and lasting change is costly." "...the basic victory has been won on the cross." p. 117 As Jesus states of the church, "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Matt. 16:18 It is the church that is on the offense, with hell on the defensive. Wright understands this and wants to help the church remember.

Wright concludes with a chapter on the Lord's Prayer--showing how following Jesus' words help us properly orient ourselves to our world. The prayer begins "May your kingdom come, may your will be done, on earth as in heaven." God is re-making earth, and he has told us to pray and labor for this now, not just for a final victorious act at the end of history.

It is here, at the end that Wright offers his final definition of the gospel:

"The good news is that the living God is indeed establishing his kingdom on earth as in heaven, through the finished work of Jesus, and is inviting people of all sorts to share not only in the benefits of this kingdom but also in the work through which it will come to its ultimate completion." p. 164

The result of this fuller gospel-vision will be God-centered prayers for God's kingdom, that replace "our self-centered prayers (for help, for rescue, for forgiveness, and for bread). For our prayers will begin with God's kingdom and allowing "God himself [to] reshape what that means..." p. 161

Tim says

Perspective changing

I really liked Wright's emphasis on the lesser thought about, lesser presented aspects of the Gospel. Very enlightening read, will check out some of the author's other books sometime.

Ken says

I appreciate NT Wright's big idea that the Gospel encompasses more than our individual salvations but includes the broader story of the restoration of the world. His points around our future not being far away in the sweet by and by but rather Heaven meets Earth and the Kingdom of God grows to fill the earth are well taken. He is easy to read and illustrates his points well.

My criticisms would be as follows:

He tends to create caricatures of others' positions

He tends to gloss over and not directly address potential problems with his own position

In his push to make the kingdom of God and God makes all things new the central point of the Gospel - He, to a fault, minimizes the benefits of the Gospel in rescuing sinners.

While he does present a compelling aspect of what the Gospel does (remaking and restoring all things) I would disagree that this piece is more central to the Gospel than the saving and rescuing of souls to knowing God as a loving Father.

I would say that at the center of the Gospel is the Joy of Knowing God - Wright's point is an expansion of this point but not more central. God's rule over all things and eventual restoration and renewal of all things is Good News to me when I also believe the more central truth that I have been provided entrance to the His Kingdom as a beloved Son. This seems entirely dismissed by Wright.

His theology has the potential to lend itself to a "work harder, do more" theology in order to make sure I am truly kingdom bound.

Here is a summary quote from the book that highlights both the good and the bad.

"The good news isn't primarily about us receiving help when we need it (though that's included), rescue when we're under intense pressure (though that comes, too), forgiveness (though we need it and will be given it, as long as we, too, become forgiving people), or food for the journey (though that will be provided). It isn't primarily even about God's kingdom coming and his will being done on earth as in heaven, though that remains central. The good news is primarily that God - the generous God, the loving God - is being honored, will be honored, has been utterly and supremely honored, in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus."

Tom says

I try not to give out a lot of 5 stars (simply b/c i don't think there are many books that deserve that high of rating)..so when I do, I honestly think it is an important and good book. To me, Wright summarizes succinctly many themes and ideas found in several other of his works (both popular and scholarly). If one wants to understand Wright and where he comes from and where he is going...at least on a general level...One MUST read this book.
