

Who did Jesus Think He Was

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In chapter 10, of *The New Testament in its World*, speaks about, who Jesus was and what others thought about Him. Many during Jesus' time would ask themselves and others who this person was. He was a man that would teach, have men, women and children follow Him. He willfully performed many miracles. Many considered Him as a teacher, a prophet or an incarnation of Elijah. Jesus Himself knew that questions about Him had arisen. He at one point took His disciples to Caesarea Philippi and asked them, Who do people say I am? Some responded that He was John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah or one of the prophets (Mat. 16:14).

Wright and Bird state that, "The proper starting-place for understanding Jesus is as a 'prophet'" (218). Jesus indeed was more than a prophet. He was God with us (Immanuel). As a prophet He proved to truly be the awaited Messiah. All His followers left their homes, their families, ambitions, dreams and even took up their cross (219). He Himself was fully aware of His part in the establishment of His kingdom on earth. Though Jesus was conscious of the fact that He was a prophet and others considered like so, He understood His part in preaching the kingdom of God.

He was the Son of man (*ben adam*), meaning 'human being'. Matthew gives full authority to Jesus as a man. Jesus the Christ is given total authority on earth to heal, perform miracles and forgive sins. In chapter 7 of the book of Daniel, Jesus is given, "He is given authority, glory and sovereign power..." Jesus is given ALL authority as not only a prophet, the Son of man but as the Messiah and as God.

The Death of the Messiah

In chapter 11, Wright and Bird explain the motives as to why Jesus had to die. Many are inclined to say that Jesus died to redeem us from our sins. The gospels approach this question in a more historical manner. In the Roman world death by crucifixion was seen as humiliating. Death by crucifixion served as a warning to anyone who dared to challenge the authorities. Jesus was crucified, but apparently everyone knew He really wasn't guilty of all charges.

Jesus foresaw His betrayal and His own death. At the 'Last Supper', the night before His death, He broke the bread symbolizing His body and the wine with his own blood. This would be associated with the Passover, sacrifice, and covenant and His upcoming death (254). The gospels seem to accentuate Jesus' death as an event that would somehow make an impact on the renewal of the covenant; that is the return from exile.

Wright and Bird emphasize that Jesus had declared that the only way to the kingdom was through peace, love and the cross. Jesus decided to take it upon Himself to take this road of peace, love and the cross in order to save His people. He made it His ultimate goal to "do for Israel what Israel could not do for itself. He would fulfill Israel's vocation that it should be the servant-people, the light of the world" (259).

In Matthew 16: 24, Jesus tells His disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up His cross and follow me." Just as he advises all to take up their cross, He too took up his own cross. No longer would He see the cross as Roman oppression, but of the way of love and peace (260). Wright and Bird state that this cross would become a symbol of God's victory.