

In our reading this week Wright presents a vivid and a very enlightening piece on “who did Jesus think he was” and The death of the Messiah. Both chapters gave a lot of food for thought. Chapter ten opens with the question “who do people say I am?” A question according to Wright goes back to the earliest days of Jesus’ ministry. The question to some degree is still being asked today. I read a piece in Time magazine a few years ago asking the same question on who Jesus was. This question seems to arise around the Easter holiday where most interest are peaked due to the many church events. However, chapter ten offers insight into the eighteenth century skeptics and their view of the gospel accounts of Jesus’ ministry, crucifixion, and resurrection.

Jesus’ ministry started after John the Baptist ministry and gained traction thereafter. As a result this caused an uproar with the Jewish leaders who sought him at every opportunity to discredit and ultimately kill him. But Jesus' ministry wasn't like any other. He came with a Kingdom message that promoted a better way of living, not just morally but spiritually as well. A message that seems different from what is written in the laws of those who wrote it. The sermon on the Mt. in Matthew’s Gospel stated blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for there is the Kingdom of heaven. Who are they who will do the persecution? Were they the same ones that would persecute Jesus for his claim as the son of God? It was for this very reason the disciples needed to know Jesus’ identity because it was connected to their ministry as well. Both in the Gospel of Matthew and Mark record Jesus’ teaching on the Pharisees’ and Sadducces’ leaven was a segway into the warning of their doctrine. Although Wright stated “Jesus acted and spoke like several different leadership types: rabbi, prophet, healer, priest, sage, royal leader, exorcist, cynic philosopher, and miracle-worker” he arrived at the conclusion “let’s forget about the titles for a moment”. A moment that would allow us to consider Wright's

statement that “Jesus of Nazareth was conscious of a vocation: a vocation given to him by the one he knew as father, to enact in himself what, in Israel’s scriptures, God had promised to accomplish all by himself”. He was more than who they thought he was but a promise that came in human flesh to bear the sins not just for those who believe in who he said he was but for the ones that didn’t.

In Chapter 11 Wright moves on to “The Death of the Messiah” as a result of those who didn’t believe. In this chapter we are brought into the charges against Jesus at his trial which lead to his death. A death that was brutal and barbaric. A death that was terrifying in so much that it would leave its onlookers with irrepressible memories of naked half- dead men dying a protracted death for days on end according to Wright. He goes on to describe a very graphic scene of bodies covered in blood and flies with rats gnawing at their flesh. I was so overwhelmed by his description that I was hoping it was a hyperbole at best but discovered as I continued my reading that crucifixion in this manner was a powerful symbol throughout the Roman world. As a result this aligned with what the prophet Isaiah spoke of when he described Jesus’ suffering. A suffering that would result in his forthcoming death called the Last Supper. I pleased how Wright, draw the parallel between the Jewish Passover meals which was a celebration of Israel’s liberation from Slavery in Egypt. Liberation that came at the hands of the same God that would deliver them not as Moses did but through the cross. A cross that was seen as justification by his enemies but a victory of God for all those who believed.