

Surprised by Hope

Prepared by Pastor Andy Smothers

Please read chapter 2, and answer these questions as you read.

Chapter 2

- I. Have you been to a Christian funeral or even a non-Christian funeral and been surprised by what was shared in the service? What statements have surprised you?
- II. Are there consequences in death? If so, what are some of them?
- III. The New Testament indicates that we as Christians have already passed from death to life. What do you think this means? Do you think it makes actual death less terrifying?
- IV. In the process of sanctification in this life, we grow in knowledge of God and in personal holiness. What has this meant for you? Do you think it continues after death?

V. John Donne, Dean of St. Paul's, writes that at death we enter a short sleep, which is followed by eternal waking. Have you heard this before? What do you think?

VI. In the beginning of section 2, Wright writes how we oscillate between two poles in our belief. Do you see death more as a horrid enemy or as a friend? Why and how?

VII. How would you describe...

A. Heaven

B. Hell

VIII. Do you look forward to heaven? Do you imagine it as a boring place? Do you object to heaven as a place where God just wants to be adored by people?

IX. Who do you believe goes to heaven?

X. Have you noticed statements in hymns that surprised you? Do remember the hymn and/or what it claimed? Have you found this in contemporary Christian music?



XI. Karl Marx describes religion as the opium of the people. Oppressive rulers could use a promise of a joyful future life to stop the masses from rising in revolt. Wright agrees that if people believe they just need to wait for heaven as a separate place and everything will be perfect in that other place, they have little reason to revolt. Wright, though, writes of heaven being this world transformed into God's perfect world — into the Kingdom of Heaven. Will people refrain as much from revolt if this is true? Why or why not?

XII. Wright claims he attempts to reflect the Lord's prayer where it says, "thy kingdom come, {thy will be done}, on earth as it is in heaven". What would it look like if God's kingdom came here today? What would it look like if God's will was done here today? Does this look like heaven?

This study guide is written to guide study and discussions of *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* by N. T. Wright. The full set of study guides is available at <https://livingintograce.com/2022/02/21/study-guide-questions-for-surprised-by-hope-rethinking-heaven-the-resurrection-and-the-mission-of-the-church-by-n-t-wright/>. While based on the book, this guide was not prepared in cooperation with the author, N. T. Wright, nor the publishers (SPCK and HarperOne).



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