

Surprised by Hope

Chapter 4 Study Questions

Prepared by Pastor Andy Smothers

Please read chapter 4, and answer these questions as you read.

Chapter 4

- I. Do you think the presentation of women as the first eyewitnesses in the Easter story is a significant or compelling reason to believe the story? Why or why not?
- II. Wright summarizes seven “smaller arguments” against the truth of the resurrection. Which have you heard? Are any particularly intriguing or challenging to you?
- III. Jesus gives three smaller arguments that Jesus DID rise from the dead. What are they? How convincing are they to you?

IV. Do you agree with the following statement by Wright? Why or why not?

Far and away the best historical explanation is that Jesus of Nazareth, having been thoroughly dead and buried, really was raised to life on the third day with a renewed body (not a mere 'resuscitated corpse', as people sometimes dismissively say), a new kind of physical body which left an empty tomb behind it because it had 'used up' the material of Jesus' original body, and which possessed new properties which nobody had expected or imagined but which generated significant mutations in the thinking of those who encountered it.

V. Wright claims science studies the repeatable, and history studies the unrepeatable. Do you think either science or history disprove the resurrection? What do you think of Wright's arguments? Why or why not?

VI. Wright states that the challenge in evaluating truth in the resurrection is not between an ancient and modern worldview (foundational/core set of beliefs) as the ancients generally didn't believe in resurrection — consistent with most people today. The challenge is between a worldview that allows for a God of creation and justice and those worldviews that do not. What do you think?



VII. “The world cannot cope with a Jesus who comes out of the tomb, who inaugurates God’s new creation right within the middle of the old one,” states Wright. What do you think of Wright’s statement? How do you imagine the powerful and less powerful each responding to this claim? When you look around the world, where do you see this world at odds with this claim?

VIII. The Enlightenment claims that unlike people of ancient days, we now know that people don’t rise from the dead and that Jesus’ resurrection didn’t happen because of this (in part). Wright claims our world believes this, in part, because the world (especially those in power) would much prefer to think that they are in control and not subject to outside interference (by God) including that they are held to higher or external standards. What do you think?

A. Who does Wright claim would be most fearful of the dead being raised? Why?

- B. What might it look like if the church was living as if its members would be raised from the dead if the tyrants chose to kill them?

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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