

## Faith & Reason Discussion Questions

September 29, 2023

1. The moderator introduces what he describes as two worthy religious objections – 1) the challenge of science, 2) the problem of evil – to which Wright responds. **Which of these (or any other) do you most wrestle with? How has personal experience factored?**
2. Wright rejects open-mindedness as an ultimate end, quoting G.K. Chesterton: “The purpose of an open mind is like the purpose of an open mouth; to shut it against something solid.” Others have spoken out against rote tolerance and skepticism with respect to truth claims. C.S. Lewis famously said, “To see through everything is to see nothing at all.” Timothy Keller pointed out how the claim “All religions are equally worthy paths to God” is about as narrow and uncompromising of a truth claim as can be made. However, loving tolerance and sincere open-mindedness are both virtuous and indispensable tactics to finding better beliefs – both for us and others. **How do you respond when pressured to give up truth convictions in the name of tolerance or open-mindedness?**
3. Jesus’ resurrection is the centerpoint of Christian hope. N.T. Wright is one of today’s leading New Testament scholars and apologists for the historicity of Jesus’ bodily resurrection. He begins to defend it here. Even secular scholars, who reject bodily resurrections out of hand, have struggled for ages to construct a plausible naturalistic explanation for what are called the “minimal facts” that even historians skeptical of Gospel narratives support:
  - Jesus was executed under Pontius Pilate
  - Jesus was buried in a known tomb
  - Jesus’ tomb was found empty on the third day
  - Jesus thereafter bodily appeared to women, his disciples, and named others

Even the above facts are an enigma for the naturalistically-committed historian. Perhaps more remarkably, Jesus’ disciples immediately and otherwise inexplicably went from despondent suspects to empowered evangelists. Even as committed Jews, they inverted their theology – without any other conceivable source material or influences – from an **earthly** kingdom, **conquering human** messiah, and the resurrection of **all people** at the **end of days** ... to a **heavenly** kingdom, **suffering [yet] divine** messiah, and **recent** bodily resurrected **individual** – and they shared the good news of all this to their deaths.

**What do you make of all this? Where are you most convinced, curious, skeptical?**

4. Wright introduces a number of examples (i.e., Jesus bringing a new kingdom vs. personal salvation, gospels being news vs. advice, Christianity fulfilling an old religion vs. creating a new one ... later in the Q&A how apocalyptic writings were more for current events than future cosmic eschatology) where he claims contemporary Western Christianity has lost the beat on historical and biblical faith. Do you agree with these accusations? **Where do you think early historical and biblical Christian faith is most different from how it is practiced and represented today?**