

## *Meeting Jesus: His Life & Times*

### Worksheet for Week 7

#### N. T. Wright on Resurrection<sup>1</sup>

[This is from a sermon on Luke 20:27-38. Sadducees have approached Jesus with a hypothetical about the place of marriage and children if there is a resurrection of the dead. They want to show the absurdity of the idea. You might read the passage before reading on.]

“It’s well known the Sadducees denied the resurrection. This was not because they were what we would call liberals (today we think maybe it was the liberals who denied the resurrection); it was because they were what we would call conservatives. They regarded the resurrection as a new-fangled doctrine. They claimed that it wasn’t taught in the Torah, the five books of Moses, Genesis to Deuteronomy. It only appears in what the Sadducees regarded as late and perhaps dangerous books, particularly ones like Daniel and Ezekiel. So they mocked the doctrine.”

“Jesus explains that the resurrection life will be significantly different from the present one. It won’t just be coming back into the same sort of life that we have now. It isn’t that it’s a form of reincarnation. That’s not what resurrection is about, just coming back on a karma wheel into the same sort of life. Rather, resurrection is about going *on through* death and whatever lies immediately beyond death, *through* that, into a newly embodied existence which death cannot touch. For that reason, [Jesus] says . . . we can see this: procreation of children is irrelevant in the new age. Hence, the present institution of marriage won’t be relevant either. Once you go into a world where death is no more, there is no need to go on propagating the species. That’s what we’ll do *here*, not there. The question is based on a mistake. He undercuts the force of their [the Sadducees] quaint little story. It’s a rhetorical point, but a revealing one.”

“Within the mainstream Jewish worldview . . . Jews believed and believe – and sometimes they put us Christians to shame in this – that life, bodily life, life on this good earth, was God’s gift. They weren’t Platonists who thought that the world was a dark and awful place and the best thing to do was to escape it as soon possible. No, if people still existed somewhere within the love and care of God after death, it could only be because God was going to make a new world and give them new bodies to live within that new world. Resurrection was never a general term for life after death. It was always a term for a newly embodied life, after life, after death, whatever that might be.”

“God is indeed making a new world. That new world began when Jesus came out of the tomb on Easter morning. In that new world, all those who have died in the faith and hope of Jesus and the love of God will be raised, vindicated, given new bodies to share and enjoy God’s new world. This is the basic, personal, Christian hope. Don’t let anyone rob you of it with specious or skeptical arguments.”

“With the resurrection of Jesus, God created a new world and sent Jesus’ followers off to announce it to the world. If you go to the resurrection chapters in Luke 24, or in Matthew, or Mark, or John, and say, “What do the evangelists think this stuff means; why are we telling this story?” The answer is not, “Jesus is risen again, therefore, we can go to heaven when we die and be with him.” It’s interesting they never say that, those resurrection chapters. Rather, they say, “Jesus is risen from the dead. Therefore, God’s new creation has begun, and you are commissioned to go off and make it happen.” That’s the emphasis. And it’s a new world of justice and freedom; it’s the exodus world, the return-from-exile world, the world where Jesus already reigns as Lord, it’s the world with good news for all, especially as in the New Testament, for the poor.”

“. . . we are here today, on Sunday, the resurrection day, to celebrate and proclaim to the world the fact that Jesus Christ is risen from the dead. We live by this truth and we shall die by this truth. We comfort each other by this truth and we are stirred to love and devotion and service by this truth. Let us therefore settle it in our minds and hearts that we will allow the truth of the resurrection to propel us to be true revolutionaries. Not the cheap and easy kind of revolutionary, those who want to use violence to overthrow the present order and simply turn it upside down and replace it with one of their own. No, we’ve had plenty of those and it doesn’t work. No, we are like Jesus and, in his love and power to be double revolutionaries, celebrating his victory over death and sin, and finding through prayer and politics and Bible study and campaigning and love and fellowship and celebration and truth – finding the way to bring that victory to birth, both in the dark corners of our own private and personal lives and in the dark corners of God’s suffering world.”

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<sup>1</sup> The quoted material is copyrighted by N. T. Wright, 2001.

## Bible Readings for Week 7<sup>2</sup>

Before reading each passage, take a few minutes to get a sense of the context. Your study bible should help. Jot down a few questions that come to mind from your reading of the passage. What do you find most surprising in these readings?

<p><b>Day 1 John 1:1-18 The Prologue (spend some time with this!)</b></p>	<p><b>Day 2 John 1:19-4:54 Initial days of Jesus' ministry; themes of replacement and reactions to Jesus</b></p>
<p><b>Day 3 John 5-7 Jesus replaces the Sabbath; Jesus, the bread of life replaces Passover</b></p>	<p><b>Day 4 John 8-10 Jesus replaces the water and light ceremonies at the tabernacle; Jesus is consecrated in place of the Temple altar</b></p>
<p><b>Day 5 John 11-12 The raising of Lazarus and the aftermath</b></p>	<p><b>Weekly Prayer Concerns</b></p>

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<sup>2</sup> This outline is from Raymond E. Brown's *Introduction to the New Testament*, Doubleday, 1997.