

Common Ground for Theologians

To establish our common theological ground.

August 2020.

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- Session One** – The Biblical story.
- Session Two** – The Cross.
- Session Three** – The Resurrection.
- Session Four** – Our Common Ground.

Session One – The Biblical story

Preparation:

Create a summary of the Biblical story. Or, read the summary below.

The summary:

Jesus the Jewish Messiah, who was crucified, buried, and bodily raised from the dead: is Lord of heaven and of earth.

Conversation exercise:

Let us expand the summary for clarity. Do we agree upon the expanded summary? If so, re-consolidate the summary. Continue to expand and re-consolidate the summary upon agreement.

Content:

Discuss N.T. Wright's 5-act narrative metaphor of the Bible.¹

- I. creation
- II. "the fall"
- III. Israel
- IV. Christ (cross)
- V. (resurrection) church

Include the 5-act narrative metaphor in the expanded summary of the Biblical story. In particular, include acts I, II and III. Note, Session Two explores Act IV further, and Session Three explores Act V further.

¹ Professor N.T. Wright develops the 5-act narrative metaphor for the Biblical story in several of his written works. His textbook, *The New Testament and the People of God* presents the metaphor in the "Tools for the Task" section (see Wright, N.T., 1992: 29–144). See also *Scripture and the Authority of God* (Wright, N.T. 2005: 89–93) and *Paul: Fresh Perspectives* (Wright, N.T. 2005b: 170–173). Note, Session One does not assume that these resources have been read.

Session Two – The Cross.

Preparation:

If possible, watch the DVD “Evil” by Tom Wright (Wright, N.T., 2006). In the presentation, Tom contextualises the cross within the historical story of Israel and the surrounding historical events of the first century.

The summary (again):

Jesus the Jewish Messiah, who was crucified, buried, and bodily raised from the dead: is Lord of heaven and of earth.

Conversation exercise:

Discuss the summary, and the cross in particular. Expand the summary with the 5-act narrative metaphor again, and discuss the content below.

Content:

Discuss the tension of God’s own faithfulness to the covenant. What was the tension?²

Discuss the role of the law.³

Discuss the theme of representative messiahship.⁴ What does representative messiahship mean?

Also, discuss the Jewish temple as the microcosm of creation.⁵ Consider the theme of creation and the cross.

² See also <https://davidstansfield.id.au/story/#tension>

³ See e.g. Rom 5:20, “But law came in, with the result that the trespass multiplied; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more”.

⁴ See e.g. Wright, N.T., 2013, p. 405, Jesus “was Israel’s representative Messiah, who summed up the life and story of the people in himself, brought Israel’s history to its appointed if shocking and unexpected climax, and formed in himself the nucleus of the ‘people’ who, called now from all nations, were to inherit the promises and take forward the purposes of the one God.”

⁵ See e.g. Wright, N.T., 2013, p. 101-3, “We do not have many artefacts from the second-Temple period with which to form an impression of the visual symbolic world of the day, but we have enough descriptions of the Temple to know that it was quite deliberately constructed so as to reflect the whole creation, the stars in the heavens on the one hand and the multiplicity of beautiful vegetation on the other.”

Session Three – The Resurrection.

Preparation:

If possible, watch the DVD “Resurrection” by Tom Wright (Wright, N.T., 2006b). In the presentation, Tom contextualises the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ, within the historical story of Israel and the surrounding historical events of the first century.

The summary (again):

Jesus the Jewish Messiah, who was crucified, buried, and bodily raised from the dead: is Lord of heaven and of earth.

Conversation exercise:

Discuss the summary, and the resurrection in particular. Expand the summary with the 5-act narrative metaphor again, and discuss the content below.

Content:

Discuss the theme of representative messiahship, again. What does representative messiahship mean, now?⁶

Consider the revelation of the justice of God.

Also, discuss the Jewish temple as the microcosm of creation, again. Discuss the theme of new creation and the resurrection.

⁶ See e.g. Wright, N.T., 2013, p. 408, “A crucified Messiah means a crucified Israel. Yes, and a resurrected Messiah means a completely renewed Israel.”

Session Four – Our Common Ground.

Preparation:

Contemplate Jesus' "transformed physical" resurrected body.

The summary (again):

Jesus the Jewish Messiah, who was crucified, buried, and bodily raised from the dead: is Lord of heaven and of earth.

Conversation exercise:

Discuss the summary. Expand the summary with the 5-act narrative metaphor again, and discuss the content below.

Discuss our common ground, and our differences.

Content:

Discuss the theme of past, present and future.

References

Wright, N.T. (1992). *The New Testament and the people of God, Christian origins and the question of God, vol. 1*. London: Fortress Press

Wright, N.T. (2005). *Paul: fresh perspectives*. London: SPCK

Wright, N.T. (2005b). *Scripture and the authority of God*. London: SPCK

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