

## 326 Wright on Good News

This is such an amazing journey, and I feel privileged to be part of it – I do hope you sense that too. And for me that journey has just reached another stage, thanks to Tom Wright; this time it's his *Simply Good News*.

Where is the journey from and to? It's from 'what we've always been taught' to something hopefully *nearer to what Jesus and the early church taught (proclaimed?)*. Given all the terrible things that have been done over the centuries in the name of Jesus, I've struggled to understand how we have got things so terribly wrong. Mind you, the Bible is so full of all sorts of 'stuff' that anyone can pick out bits (each quoted in a suitable translation!) and use them to support whatever wacky ideas they might have.

Many find the Old Testament problematic and tend to stick to the New, but do you see how ironic that is? For Jesus and the early church that *was* the Bible – their *only* Bible – on which they based their preaching and teaching.

As I've travelled, I've kept getting the sense that 'the gospel' (as received) is very narrow. Thankfully, I now see the Good News as much more all-encompassing. Thanks, Tom!

When I started, I was reacting *against* the idea of God as a punisher (albeit a loving one), who provides a mechanism for escaping hell and getting to heaven. My first step away was Rohr's *Divine Dance* – the Christian faith really *is* a relationship. That excited me and motivated me, but I was still way off Wright's Good News.

I fought for ages against the evil beast of penal substitution, thinking that was what had led us astray – but no, the problem is far deeper. I had moved from salvation as an escape mechanism to it being a relationship but it was still in Wright's word just (good) 'advice'; it's about how *I* can relate to God – it's about *me*: 'an option you might like to take up, if you feel so inclined,' says Wright.

No, he insists, the Good News is an **announcement** about something that *has happened* (the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus the King), about what *is going to happen* (the return of Jesus the King, bringing heaven to earth), and that 'something powerful and mysterious *was happening* in the lives of all those who found themselves caught up in it'.

Can you see how totally different that is from what we've been taught? Our 'gospel' is simply advice about personal faith, how better to relate to God, how to pray, read the Bible, serve other people. That's all good and important stuff, says Wright, but it's still just personal advice, not the earth-shattering announcement that changed the first century world: '*Excuse me, folks, but actually Jesus is God; Caesar isn't!*'

I bet that went down well (not). But by God's power it actually *did* change the world. Amazing... and scary!