



Surprised by Hope by Tom Wright – Book Review by Heather Rawling

‘This world is not my home I’m just a-passing through’

‘When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation and take me home....’

Sound familiar? Just two of the songs/hymns that we regularly sing in our churches, reinforcing the idea that ‘heaven’ is where we are all headed and earth is just the place we inhabit until we get there. Tom Wright turns this idea on its head, suggesting that this idea is erroneous, and that we are supposed to be bringing God’s kingdom here to earth - thy kingdom come thy will be done **on earth as it is in heaven** - in anticipation of when Jesus returns and comes to reign on the new earth.

The premise of the book is that if we can just take this idea on board, our view of mission, new creation, life before and life after death would be transformed. The ‘social gospel’ and ‘evangelism’ would be held together in tension rather than being seen as opposite ends of a scale which are often regarded as at odds with one another.

Another interesting element of the book is the thought that there is in fact a ‘waiting place’ where those who have died spend their time between ‘death’ and the ‘resurrection of the body’ which will happen when Christ returns. Whilst not labelling this waiting time as purgatory, he is very clear that there are two separate states of being after death.

There are so many things to take in and think about in the book that this review can only be a taster, but Tom Wright has produced a book that makes you think about many cherished beliefs, whether you are a so-called ‘liberal’ or ‘conservative’, and illustrates how these beliefs are often reinforced through music, art and the general zeitgeist, often without any biblical basis.

I would thoroughly recommend it, though be prepared to be challenged!!