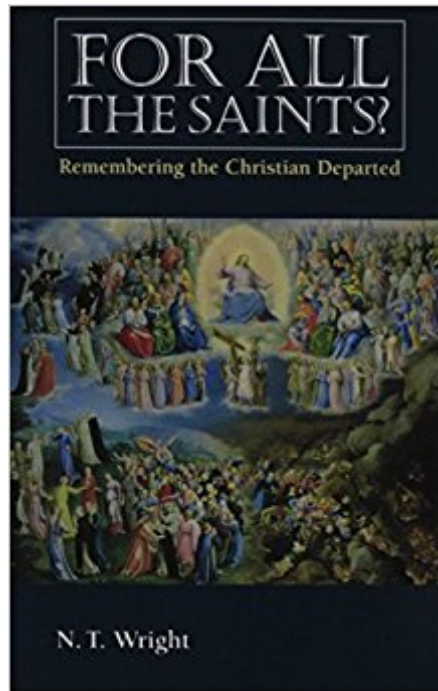




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# **For All The Saints: Remembering The Christian Departed**



## Synopsis

"We have been drifting into a muddle and a mess, putting together bits and pieces of traditions, ideas and practices in the hope that they will make sense. They don't. There may be times when a typical Anglican fudge is a pleasant, chewy sort of thing, but this isn't one of them. It's time to think and speak clearly and act decisively." With these robust words Tom Wright, Bishop of Durham, throws down a challenge to current liturgy and practice surrounding All Saints' and All Souls' Days, and sets out to clarify our thinking about what happens to people after they die. Heaven, Hell, and Purgatory, what it means to pray for the dead, what (and who) are the saints, are all addressed in this invigorating and rigorously argued book.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"In challenging the existence of an eternal soul and questioning the traditional view of Heaven, Dr. Wright is taking a more biblical approach than most of his more liberal contemporaries. More often it has been the liberalism of Bishops of Durham that shocked the establishment."

N. T. (Tom) Wright is the Bishop of Durham in the Church of England. He is a prolific author and noted New Testament scholar. He has written more than thirty books, both at the scholarly level (including *Jesus and the Victory of God*, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, and *The Meaning of Jesus*) and for a popular audience (including *Simply Christian*, *The Meal Jesus Gave Us* (WJK), and *Who Was Jesus?*).

I have seen some reviews stating that this is the true Anglican view of life after death, but no this is what the Bible actually teaches about life after death. This is an excellent little book with only one draw back and that is it gets too much into the Church calendar and discussing it as if Wright is reacting to a recent celebration of All Saints Day or All Souls Day. Regardless, this book is great for those who do not have the time (but I must say it is well worth the time) to read his larger work "The Resurrection of the Son of God." This book is very short (could be considered a long pamphlet) and can be read in a couple of hours.

Thought provoking , very appropriate for my current journey .

A wonderful and helpful read. N. T. Wright is a practical and readable writer.

This was a very fast read. You can finish reading it in an hour. Its got more packed into a small space than most any other book ive read. What is the Christian hope? Wright lays ot all out plain and clear.

I love N.T. Wright, and this little book didn't disappoint. Quick read, but very insightful and definitely worth it. I recommend it.

I found this to be a good read. N. T. Wright is probably the foremost theologian of our time, and the book is his take on who the saints are and what likely transpires for them after death on this earth. Though his outlook is considerably different from the ultraconservative view I had been exposed to earlier, I found this an interesting read and intend to become more familiar with his writing and thinking.

I eagerly anticipated this book, from the brief reference in *Surprised by Hope*. "Surprised by Hope" is a deep treatise, incomplete only in that it doesn't really address what happens to people when they die. In "Surprised" N.T. Wright only obliquely refers to our time between death and resurrection, referring the reader to more detail in his book "For All the Saints?". Since this was the primary thing I was struggling to understand, I was excited to obtain this book from a friend and devour it. Wright's initial question in the book is, "Where are they now?" Where are those loved ones who left us, now? Quite obviously, they do not go to Heaven when they did. Are they in Sheol? Are

they experiencing psychopannychism? Are they in Paradise, a place where souls are with God until the Resurrection? Wright begins with this question, and then says we need to investigate a number of other issues before we can answer it. He then ends with the question- \*without ever answering it\*! His preparatory investigations are very good, and very helpful, but he never gets around to the stated point of the book. He'll mention the idea that we will be in paradise after death, without defining it. He'll mention the thief on the cross, but with no discussion of where the Greek word "today" might fit into Jesus' sentence, lacking punctuation in the original. There is little to no thought for what happens at death to those who will be on the wrong side on Judgment Day, since if they pass on straight to Hell (contrary to the teaching of scripture), then the game is up and Judgment Day becomes just a rubber stamp on reality. Wright ends with a more poetic than theological passing reference to "resting in peace and being raised in glory". This is all very true. But it doesn't really get to the heart of the matter. In between he addresses a number of other issues. He very fittingly harps on the tragic misunderstanding of Heaven by Christendom, pointing out how clearly the Gospels, Paul, and the Early Church all point to the Kingdom as God's reign, on Earth and Heaven, now and in the future. Wright gives a very helpful corrective to the practice of praying to or through the "saints", as not something forbidden as much as lacking scriptural support and something somewhat sad, as people take a step away from the immediate connection to God explicitly offered by Jesus through himself. And most of all, Wright helps us remember that the whole point is not what happens when we die- it's what happens after what happens when we die. It's all about resurrection of the body. That's what ultimately brings meaning to creation, that's the point of Jesus coming to Earth, that's what ends the tyranny of sin and death, that's our ultimate hope. Without that, we have no reason for being, and as Paul says, are more to be pitied than all others. Unfortunately, in this work, Wright has a tendency to get bogged down. There are far too many references to his other works, as if the reader is supposed to have a stack of Wright books in front of him in order to understand this one slim volume. The long chapter on liturgy will really only relate to the High Church, as Wright makes a number of points based on how the Anglican Church feasts are arranged. It is important to have meaning for high holy days, and this is important for Anglicans, but for many Christians, this aspect is rather irrelevant and perplexing, as we haven't the faintest notion of the regular cycle of feasts. Please do not misunderstand me. I think Wright says some good things here- some things that need to be said. But there isn't enough in 75 pages. He could have greatly expanded this if he didn't have all the references to other books, and indeed, I believe he did- it's a more recent book entitled "Surprised by Hope". And it would be a much better book with a different starting point. This is not a book that answers "Where is my departed loved

one?" It answers "What is our ultimate hope." But only in the most cursory manner. This is the preface to "Surprised by Hope". Go read that.

With fewer than 100 pages, this is a quick read. The subject of this book is twofold: First, what happens to Christians when they die? Second, what about the modern liturgies of All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day? N.T. Wright clearly argues that our final destination is not "heaven", but rather, resurrection in the context of the new heavens and new earth. Wright dismantles traditional and modern misunderstandings on the issue, and argues that Christians who die today will be in "paradise", or "heaven" (a place that St. Paul spoke highly of, a place with Jesus, where the faithful will await their final resurrection). My favorite part in the book was when he traced the historical development of purgatory. Consequently, the modern liturgy of All Saints' and All Souls' Days rests on deeply flawed principles. N.T. Wright's criticisms here were rather strong for a British academic: "I regard these arguments as based on thin air, advancing by illegitimate steps, and reaching unwarranted conclusions." (pg 48) One of my reasons for only giving this book 4 stars is the relative obscurity of the core issue: All Souls' Day is not of immediate relevance to any of the people I know, and I'm inclined to think it's probably not a very big issue at all in Protestant circles.

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