

Introduction:

John Dickson:

Let's begin with a trip to first-century Samaria, a well on a hillside, where Jesus is meeting a woman no one will have anything to do with...

[YouTube - The Chosen](#)

That's a scene from the immensely popular crowd-funded production, *The Chosen*. We've featured it once before - it's one of Director Mark's favs. Apparently, he doesn't just watch Sci-Fi.

And this is arguably one of its most moving scenes - an interpretation of Jesus meeting 'the woman at the well', as it's often called.

Part of the emotional power of the scene is in the acceptance of a woman the rest of the world rejects - a Samaritan, a social outcast, a sinner.

Part of the power also comes from *who* it is that is accepting her - God's chosen one, the Christ, the Messiah.

Jews and the Samaritans both believed God would one day send a deliverer who would restore His people and lead them into an age of peace - peace with each other, with the earth, and with God himself.

It was *that* prophet, that representative of God on earth, who was offering this woman at the well a place in the Kingdom of God.

That's the point at the heart of this episode.

We can look at Jesus as an incredible teacher, arguably the most influential in history.

We could see him as a social revolutionary, a healer or even a miracle worker - and all of that would be true.

But leaving it there - with Jesus simply as a first-century teacher and healer - we've plucked him out of his true context. We've ripped the foreground away from the background - the New Testament away from the Old Testament.

So, today, we're going to try and put these things back together.

We're going to explore the controversial claim – certainly controversial to any Jewish listeners and perhaps unbelievable to my sceptical listeners - the claim that the Jesus of the New Testament Gospels *in fact* inhabits all the pages that came before – every story, every prophecy, every ritual, every law ... of what Christians call the Old Testament.

I sometimes meet people who tell me they are “New Testament Christians” – by which I think they mean they just stick with Jesus and don't worry about all that spooky stuff in the OT. Or else I meet people who wouldn't call themselves Christians but who insist that, while Jesus and the NT are probably admirable, the sooner we forget the OT the better.

The fact is: there's no such thing as a “New Testament Christian”, and, while I get the popular scepticism about parts of the OT, I find myself convinced by the arguments of my guest today: Christ isn't just the hero of the NT ... He is *everywhere* in the Old Testament.

Part 1

John Dickson:

It's late morning Australian time, in the lead-up to my move to America, and I'm having a virtual chat with Professor Tremper Longman the third.

Apart from the cool name, Tremper is an Old Testament scholar, Emeritus Professor of Biblical Studies and a Distinguished Scholar of Biblical Studies at Westmont College in Santa Barbara, California.

He has a doctorate in ancient near eastern studies from Yale University and has written or co-authored more than twenty books on history and historiography while serving as a consultant on popular translations of the Bible like the little know, much-loved, Holman Standard Bible.

JD: *I've gotta ask you about what you do as an Old Testament scholar or how you describe it to others. Let's imagine you're at a lovely dinner party. I know how much you and I both like good food and wine. And someone who doesn't believe says, “Oh, what do you do?” How do you explain?*

TL: It's funny, John, I've been in that situation many times and I say, "I am a professor of biblical studies", and then say Old Testament studies. And to be honest, even with my non-believing secular friends, it's kinda like, "Well that's very interesting, why would you go into that field"? But they think it's interesting because here in the Washington DC area where I live, everybody else is a lawyer. So, kind of a different thing. But on the other hand, if we get into it, I will talk about how the Old Testament is not only fascinating from a historical literary perspective, but it's also really important from a theological perspective...

John Dickson:

Tremper's fascination is on full display as one of the contributors to the newly published, *Five Views of Christ in the Old Testament: Genre, Authorial Intent, and the Nature of Scripture*. His view (among the five) is described as the Christotelic view (something we'll hear more about later).

The *Five Views* was written to discuss a lively debate about how Christ relates to the 39 books of the OT.

JD: *Let's change to the Christian who says to you, "Oh, I'm doing perfectly well in my faith, loving God-loving neighbour. But I never read the Old Testament because I'm really, really a New Testament Christian."*

Tremper Longman:

Well, first of all, I'll often tell him you're like my father who went to a movie and ... When I was young, my father would take me and my sisters to a movie, but he never checked the time when it started. So sometimes, I remember one early James Bond movie, this would've been the sixties where we went and there were 20 minutes left and it was really, really exciting. But I had no idea what was going on. And I would tell them that really the Old Testament is 77% of the Bible. There are indeed a lot of obstacles for us as 21st-century western Christians to deal with as we study the Old Testament. But it really is the all-important backstory to Christ. You really can't understand Christ - after all, it's talking about creation, the fall and the history of redemption, which leads up to Christ.

John Dickson:

There is a 21st-century awkwardness about the Old Testament.

The creation story, the large-scale miracles and massacres, the apparently low view of women... and some pretty strange laws.

Tremper gets the hesitation many of us feel.

Tremper Longman:

Sure, I do. But part of me wants to also say, you should feel awkward about the New Testament too. There's a lot in the New Testament that doesn't comport with your 21st-century values. And indeed, there's a lot more unity and coherence between the Old Testament and the New Testament than you probably think because you're likely kind of sanitizing the New Testament message as well as struggling with the Old Testament. But I do have sympathy and understanding for why it's more difficult for Christians.

JD: *One of the effective arguments of the New Atheists - some would say the only effective argument of the new atheists 10 or 15 years ago - was their claim that the God of the Old Testament was a vindictive, genocidal, narcissist. And I've met people who have abandoned any kind of faith precisely because of this argument. What do you say to this claim about the God of the Old Testament?*

TL: Well, I would say it's a stereotype and it is misrepresenting the God of the Old Testament, but picking up on some truths of the Old Testament that God is a God who judges sin, who never is genocidal. I mean, there's not this particular ethnicity or race I'm going to eradicate. And even when it comes to the Canaanites, it's not a matter of racial or ethnic, but it's the type of obscene religion that they practice in the land that God rightly is concerned about: the fact that his people might be attracted to it, the kind of perverted sexual and other kinds of practices. I mean, not to say that there aren't ethical issues that I continue to feel about some aspects of the Old Testament, but I think that one of the reasons why ... it's kind of paradoxical actually as I think about it because the whole "God is a judge" presentation is related to the issue of justice.

And on the one hand, 21st-century people, westerners are big on justice, but somehow they feel repelled by the fact that God exercises justice from his position. Though I was telling somebody that it's interesting to chart the trajectory of ethical concern, I've been working on the issue of God as a warrior since 1980 and until 9-11, no one really was troubled by the idea that God judged sinful people. But at 9-11, it became problematic because people thought they saw a connection between what somebody like Osama Bin Laden was saying and what, say, the book of Joshua was doing...

John Dickson:

Tremper is referring to parallels drawn after 9-11 between the extremist ideology of Osama bin Laden and that expressed at God's command against the Canaanite nations in the OT books of Deuteronomy and Joshua.

It's a huge topic - we've talked about, in passing, many times before. And we're going to do a whole episode on it.

In the meantime, check out another book Tremper has contributed to, titled, *Show Them No Mercy: Four Views on God and the Canaanite Genocide*.

We've also got some food for thought in episode 55 from last year, titled Just War.

Anyway, then there are those scary songs in the book of Psalms!!!

Excerpt - Psalm 109

*Appoint someone evil to oppose my enemy;
let an accuser stand at his right hand.
When he is tried, let him be found guilty,
and may his prayers condemn him.
May his days be few;
may another take his place of leadership.
May his children be fatherless
and his wife a widow.
May his children be wandering beggars;
may they be driven[a] from their ruined homes.
May a creditor seize all he has;
may strangers plunder the fruits of his labour.
May no one extend kindness to him
or take pity on his fatherless children.
May his descendants be cut off,
their names blotted out from the next generation.
May the iniquity of his fathers be remembered before the Lord;
may the sin of his mother never be blotted out.
May their sins always remain before the Lord,
that he may blot out their name from the earth.*

Tremper Longman:

I've also noted an interesting more recent turn when I was talking to my priest, I'm an Anglican, and I was talking to my priest after he preached on Psalm 109, which contains a rather dramatic imprecation or curse.

And he brought up Vladimir Putin and I said: "You know what? It's a lot easier to talk about God's judgment in the light of somebody like Vladimir Putin who is doing such atrocities in Ukraine."

I also - I won't take the time but I could if you wanted me to quote Miroslav Volf the wonderful Yale theologian who grew up in the former Yugoslavia and so saw such atrocities there and he has a really moving statement about how in the light of those atrocities, he couldn't believe in God unless God was a God of judgment.

John Dickson:

Miroslav Volf is a friend of the show and he's known for cutting through the Western aversion to a judgmental God.

Here's how he puts it (read by our favourite voice actor Yannick Lawry):

"I used to think that wrath was unworthy of God. Isn't God love? Shouldn't divine love be beyond wrath? God is love, and God loves every person and every creature. That's exactly why God is wrathful against some of them. My last resistance to the idea of God's wrath was a casualty of the war in former Yugoslavia, the region from which I come. According to some estimates, 200,000 people were killed and over "I used to think that wrath was unworthy of God. Isn't God love? Shouldn't divine love be beyond wrath? God is love, and God loves every person and every creature. That's exactly why God is wrathful against some of them.

My last resistance to the idea of God's wrath was a casualty of the war in former Yugoslavia, the region from which I come. According to some estimates, 200,000 people were killed and over 3,000,000 were displaced. My villages and cities were destroyed, my people shelled day in and day out, some of them brutalized beyond imagination, and I could not imagine God not being angry. Or think of Rwanda in the last decade of the past century, where 800,000 people were hacked to death in one hundred days! How did God react to the carnage? By doting on the perpetrators in a grandparently fashion? By refusing to condemn the bloodbath but instead affirming the perpetrator's basic goodness? Wasn't God fiercely angry with them? Though I used to complain about the indecency of the idea of God's wrath, I came to think that I would

have to rebel against a God who wasn't wrathful at the sight of the world's evil. God isn't wrathful in spite of being love. God is wrathful because God is love."

Whoa!

Back to Tremper - and some other problems with the OT.

JD: *I wanna just hover around the striking differences people confront between the kind of literature the Old Testament is compared to the New Testament. So the New Testament feels safe because it's historical biographies and letters, mainly, and we know those genres. But why is there almost nothing like that in the Old Testament? And what are those weird genres in the Old Testament?*

TL: Yeah, so thought I would broaden the genre of historical biography to say theological history. So you have Genesis through Esther, which isn't all that dissimilar from, say, generically from the Gospels and Acts. We don't have any book which is a letter, though there are a couple of letters embedded in historical books. But we have the wonderful book of Psalms, which is a collection of - you can call them poems or prayers or songs - you've got wisdom books like Proverbs that are helping you become wise, which on one level means emotionally intelligent and also ethical as well as fearing God and the prophets.

I mean, again, if you're interested in justice, social justice, you wanna read the prophets. They're calling Israel to task for their systemic abuses of the poor and others. And well, you also have Daniel which strikes us as a weird apocalyptic book. But then again you have Revelation in the New Testament. My most recent book which came out two months ago is '*Revelation Through Old Testament Eyes*'. So people often, if they have trouble with the Old Testament, usually end up having trouble with the Book of Revelation and certain apocalyptic parts of the New Testament as well.

JD: *I'm sure that's true, but do you have sympathy for those who say the Old Testament? I mean, just the little rundown you gave of the different literary styles? It's just too much hard work.*

TL: You're right, it does take harder work because we are distanced from the Old Testament chronologically. We're distanced from the Old Testament even more than the New Testament culturally, it's an ancient near Eastern text. We're distanced from its redemptiveness historically because there is a major transformation that happens when Christ appears and fulfils much of the Old Testament. And it's also, as I say, it's 77% of your Bible. So it's long and there are multiple genres and you gotta learn how to read those multiple genres.

Sometimes I get worried it's a very - well, I'll say American since I'm American, but it might be a Western thing - that the Bible "ought to be" something. And I will expect it to be immediately accessible to me and easy to understand. And now on the other hand, I wanna emphasize the fact that the really important things that are essential to salvation are easy to understand in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. For instance, it's really, really clear and not hard to understand that Genesis one and two are telling us that God created everything including human beings. But what's not perfectly clear is whether or not Genesis one and two are telling us anything about how God created everything, I would say it's pretty clear that it's not. But other people wanna say that it is. And I think that leads to all kinds of problems.

John Dickson:

We've talked about Genesis a LOT at Undeceptions, so I won't unpack that particular controversy here. Producer Kaley will put some helpful links in the show notes to get you started.

But I wanted to ask Tremper a broader question about the OT and Jesus. Did Jesus even have an OT?

JD: Okay, the first question really is are you sure that he even had in his possession in the first century what we call the Old Testament? And are we sure he loved it?

TL: Well, sure he had it, and here's why I think he had it and why there are differences between our Catholic and Orthodox brothers and sisters about the extent of the Old Testament. And I respect them, but I disagree with them...

John Dickson:

Just a quick chime to say that the Old Testament used by the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches has half a dozen extra books that you don't find in the Protestant churches.

Tobit, Judith, 1 & 2 Maccabees, Ben Sirach and so on.

They were never in the early Hebrew versions of the OT. That's why Jews don't have these books, either.

But they were in the ancient Greek translation of the OT - the Septuagint - and the Catholic church maintained those books because, from the earliest centuries, most Christians spoke Greek and used that slightly larger Greek Bible.

Back to Tremper...

Tremper Longman:

What Jesus embraced as the Old Testament was the Hebrew Bible was the narrower Protestant canon. And that's because Jesus with his many disagreements with the Pharisees doesn't seem to disagree about the scope of what is scripture. And we know from a lot of evidence what the Pharisees accepted as scripture. And it is essentially what is exactly the Protestant Old Testament. So Jesus does affirm the Old Testament, and I never see him rejecting anything in the Old Testament.

Now, there are some interesting comments that I think we ought to pay attention to. What comes immediately to mind is Matthew 19 when he's being asked about divorce and he says, Divorce should only happen the matter of sexual infidelity. And the response is, that's not what Moses said, but notice what Jesus says. He doesn't say Moses was wrong. I think it's Deuteronomy 24. He doesn't say you misunderstand Moses. He says, "Moses said that because of the hardness of your heart". So on some issues like divorce, and I would throw in say slavery, polygamy, and patriarchy, God takes the people where they are and moves them toward his creation ideal. But there's nothing in the New Testament where you would see Jesus disputing the Old Testament.

JD: *One passage that is misunderstood is the: 'You have heard that it was said... but I tell you etc' right? And this is in Christ, in Christianese, this is translated as that Old Testament got it wrong and I'm here to save you from it. Right?*

John Dickson:

Jesus taught;

"You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.' But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also...

"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous...

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart...

“It has been said, ‘Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.’ But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, makes her the victim of adultery, and anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery...”

Tremper Longman:

So what I think he's saying there is since the Old Testament does talk about lust and the 10th commandment ... I would say that what Jesus is disputing is “what you've heard your Rabbis say as opposed to what the Old Testament teaches and God wants from you”.

John Dickson:

Makes sense. Jesus didn't say, “You have read in your Bibles ... but I tell you”. He says “You have heard that it was said (about those passages) ... but I tell you”. He's not against the Jewish Scriptures, but the interpretation of those Scriptures among the Pharisees (especially).

But Christianity has traditionally said much more than that Jesus liked the Old Testament and used it from time to time.

Christianity has always said - well, apart from a couple of wobbles in the second century I'll mention later - that the Old Testament is, in a sense, about Jesus. It foreshadows his life, teaching, healing, death, and resurrection.

The Gospel of Matthew, for example, presents Jesus' coming as a fulfilment of centuries-old predictions.

Matthew chapter 1, verses 22 and 23;

“All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had said through the prophet: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel (which means ‘God with us’).”

Matthew chapter 2, verses 14 and 15;

“So [Joseph] got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: “Out of Egypt I called my son.”

And there are many more besides.

The New Testament writers came to see Jesus as the fulfilment of God's message to humanity.

One of the spookiest OT passages fulfilled by Jesus is from the book of Isaiah - written centuries before Jesus - chapter 53. It speaks of a suffering servant in whose suffering God's purposes unfold!

Excerpt - Isaiah 53

*Who has believed our message
and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?
He grew up before him like a tender shoot,
and like a root out of the dry ground.
He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him,
nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.
He was despised and rejected by mankind,
a man of suffering, and familiar with pain.
Like one from whom people hide their faces,
he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.*

*Surely he took up our pain
and bore our suffering,
yet we considered him punished by God,
stricken by him, and afflicted.
But he was pierced for our transgressions,
he was crushed for our iniquities;
the punishment that brought us peace was on him,
and by his wounds, we are healed.
We all, like sheep, have gone astray,
each of us has turned to our own way;
and the Lord has laid on him
the iniquity of us all ...
Yet it was the LORD'S will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD
makes his life an offering for sin, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the
will of the LORD will prosper in his hand.*

John Dickson:

But we're talking about more than just 'prophecies' in this episode. That is a kind of piecemeal way to approach the OT.

Theologians like Tremper call our attention to prefigurements of Christ - like the mighty King David or the powerful prophet Elijah - 'types' that would one day find their quintessence in Jesus.

There are foreshadowings of Jesus' activity and meaning in Old Testament rituals and events - like the sacrifice of a lamb at Passover or the Day of Atonement where Israel's sins were forgiven.

Tremper goes even further - as I think we must - He sees everything - *everything* - in the Old Testament as, in some very real sense, a signpost to Jesus.

JD: *Can we do a rapid-fire round with some Old Testament passages or stories? I wanna throw them at you and I want you to tell me how on earth they point to Jesus in your estimation. Right. Here we go.*

The Israelites wandered the desert and failed God for 40 years before entering the Promised land.

TL: Jesus is the obedient son of God in contrast to the disobedient sons of God, as is demonstrated in the 40 days and 40 nights followed by the temptations which he obeys, which he resists when the Israelites succumb to them.

JD: *Okay, I think I might have to give you that one. All right, here we go. Joshua conquering the Canaanites. Surely there's no Jesus there.*

TL: Jesus is actually the divine warrior who heightens and intensifies the warfare and directs it toward the spiritual powers and authority but also will come back in the second coming to bring judgment against all human and spiritual evil. And the conquest is kind of, and the Old Testament violence toward human beings is a kind of preview of the final judgment.

JD: *The 150 poems or songs in the book of Psalms, I don't find many poems and songs on the lips of Jesus.*

TL: Yeah. Well, I wrote, so I can't do all 150 now, but fortunately, I wrote a commentary on the Psalms in the *Tindale Little Testament* commentary series where at the end of all 150, I talk about how Jesus is anticipated by this, whether it is a metaphor of God like Psalm 23, God is our shepherd, Jesus is our good shepherd. It doesn't have to be quoted in the New Testament. So yeah, I've written extensively about it but in particular, in my Psalms commentary, I give a Christological reading of all 150 Psalms.

JD: *Excellent. We'll read it from cover to cover in the show. What about my Old Testament reading just this morning, just a few hours ago before I saw your lovely face - it was 2 Kings chapter 17. And it's just a litany of the terrible things the Israelites did and how Shalmaneser the King of Assyria just booted them out. What's that got to do with Jesus?*

TL: Well, I think this connects to the warrior theme we just talked about, and God bringing judgment on his sinful people. And if you read the description of the sin of the Northern Kingdom at the time includes things like sacrificing their children and so forth that it anticipates Jesus coming as a judge at the end of the days.

JD: *Okay, final in our rapid-fire round the depressing book of Ecclesiastes, everything is meaningless and all that.*

TL: So this is the easiest one only because I've written on Ecclesiastes for 30 years. Romans 8:18 and the following talk about how God subjected creation to frustration. That word in Greek frustration is *mataiotes*, which is the word used to translate heavily in the book of Ecclesiastes, which is meaningless. So essentially, and I wish I had a little bit more time to talk about it, the book of Ecclesiastes has two voices. The preacher or the teacher is the one who's saying life is difficult, and then you die, and everything is meaningless. The second wise man comes in at the end and says, "you know what, my son, he's right. As long as you stay under the sun life is meaningless. But fear God, obey the commandments and live in the light of the future judgment".

And so what I see Paul pointing us to in Romans 8:18 and following is to say he's tried to find meaning in a fallen world. But Paul goes on to say that God subjected it because I think that was subjected as a divine passive in hope. And that hope is found in Jesus, who himself subjected himself to those things that most rendered life meaningless - especially death. Jesus died and was raised in order to give our lives meaning.

John Dickson:

There isn't any part of the Old Testament that doesn't somehow point to Jesus.

So does this mean the OT teaches things about Jesus that we don't learn in the NT?

Tremper Longman:

That's an interesting question, and I've never thought about that from that perspective. And I'll continue thinking about it. But my initial response is, no, I don't think so.

I do think the New Testament brings out more than the Old Testament does. And a lot of Jesus in the Old Testament becomes most recognizable to us looking at it through the prism of the resurrection. But I still think that it is incredibly edifying and helpful to see how Jesus is anticipated in the Old Testament. And I would also say there's more to the Trinity than just Jesus, of course. And we learn a lot about God - and indeed see a very rich picture of God - in the Old Testament as we reflect on God as a shepherd, God as a king, God as a mother, God as a father, and God as a warrior. You learn a lot about God in the Old Testament.

John Dickson:

But there is a question I wanted to ask Tremper that has long niggled. Why don't our Jewish friends see Jesus in the OT, what they call the Tanakh? I mean, it's their book, right? Are Christians doing something improper here, presuming to pinch the Tanakh and say "It's all about our Lord?"

That's sort of where we head ... after the break.

Part 2

Excerpt - Protestant Bible Scholarship: Antisemitism, Philosemitism and Anti-Judaism

For Jews ... at least throughout much of history, the Bible has been not at all about fall and redemption, but about how to live a faithful life in the ups and downs of the ongoing history of the people of Israel. The first eleven chapters of Genesis, from creation through Adam and down to Abraham, are a prologue to the history of Israel, rather than setting the main themes of the collection of books that follow. Christians have tended to treat all of the Old Testament as a kind of prophecy – the Psalms have often been read as predicting the Messiah, and the books of Moses, Genesis to Deuteronomy, have been mined for predictions. Jews by contrast tend to treat it all as a form of instruction in living a good and observant life, in other words as Torah...

The difference between the Christian scheme of fall and prophesied redemption, on the one hand, and the Jewish theme of providential guidance and instruction, on the other, means that it is indeed almost as though they were two different collections. Moshe Goshen-Gottstein summed the contrast up perfectly: for Christians, the Old Testament is about God, humanity, and salvation; for Jews, the Bible is about God, people, and land.

JD: *What do you say to Jewish friends, and indeed, Jewish scholars who might say that Christians are really perverting the Torah and the Old Testament to make it all point to Jesus that this defies the text itself?*

TL: Yeah. Well, I would have to sit down with my Jewish friends and look at text after text to justify my particular view on it. And it is true though, that we, Christians do read the Old Testament through the prism of the New Testament and Jews read it through the prism of later Jewish writings. I had a very fascinating discussion with a Jewish legal scholar about this, where we were both acknowledging that on the one hand, it might be hard to give a kind of slam dunk argument that will convince every Jewish person because actually, my own view is people become Christians for more than just rational arguments. I would wanna talk about how the perspective of my religion makes a broader sense of the world and so forth.

JD: *Yeah, I mean, it just dawned on me, I've taught in a Jewish studies department at University for over 10 years. Not that that's just dawned on me, but it's just dawned on me that one of the criticisms I've had from the Jewish scholars in that department about Christianity and why it's not a Jewish religion is that the Tanakh and the Jewish tradition are very positive about this world, this creation. Whereas Christianity is world-denying. What do you make of that? Because in their view, this is a breach.*

TL: Yeah. Well, I would agree that as Christians take that perspective, it is a breach. I mean, we should remember that the creation is God's creation and that we need to be very concerned about justice in this world, the care of our creation and our present lives as well as our future lives.

On the other hand, for Christians who spend so much time talking about this life and saying what the Bible tells us about the future life ... that's also an important biblical teaching that actually should motivate us to live well in this world, but also to expect suffering and humiliation. But the vision of the future should also motivate us to persist in our faith in spite of our present suffering.

Five Minute Jesus

This is probably the right place to say ... Let's press pause, I've got a 5-minute Jesus for us!

Christians have sometimes downplayed the goodness of creation. And sometimes it goes hand in hand with distancing ourselves from the Old Testament. The reason is clear: the Old Testament is where all the creation narratives appear, and so much of the OT story is set in the promised land, a kind of recapitulation of the garden of Eden and a pointer to new creation.

I think the New Testament doctrine of the incarnation, of God taking on flesh in Jesus Christ should also point to the importance of physical creation. But there is no doubt the Old Testament is the anchor for all of this.

And there were two early Christian movements that tried to dispense with this anchor, to cut themselves free from the Old Testament and its vision of the creator God.

You hear a lot about the so-called Gnostic gospels, those gospels of the second and third centuries which sought to correct the earlier 1st-century gospels in our New Testament. I'm talking about the gospel of Thomas, the gospel of Judas, the gospel of Phillip, and so on. The word gnostic refers to the secret "knowledge"/gnosis apparently revealed in these gospels. In short, they all say that Jesus came not from the Old Testament God, who got his hands grubby by being involved in the physical creation, but from the higher God who has nothing to do with physicality. Once you learn the special teachings contained in these gnostic gospels, your spirit will be free from being trapped inside a physical body and you will merge with the highest being for eternity. If it sounds a bit like Hinduism, that's because there were plenty of eastern influences behind Gnosticism.

But strongly allied to this denigration of physical creation was the complete rejection of the Old Testament. The gnostic Christians (if you can even think of them as Christians) were dead against the Old Testament. They thought Jesus came to deliver us from the Old Testament and from the God of the Old Testament. These gospels, quite unlike the earlier New Testament gospels, were almost antisemitic. We will do a full-blown episode on the gnostic gospels one day. So many fun topics ahead.

Another interesting movement in the 2nd century was led by a Roman priest named Marcion.

As part of his effort to reach the Roman world, he thought it best to jettison the Jewishness of Christianity and, in particular, the Old Testament. So his collection of

authoritative books, his canon, had no Old Testament. He also deleted most of the gospels, except for Luke (which even then he edited a bit). He did love the letters of Paul, though, especially the bits that seemed to draw a contrast between the Jewish law and the Christian gospel.

It was a much simpler version of Christianity. It was much easier to sell, certainly in the Roman world. And the movement Marcion founded lasted a century or more after he was kicked out of the Church of Rome in the 140s AD.

But those who debated him pointed out that you could hardly understand the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus apart from the Old Testament. And they showed that even in the bits of the NT Marcion retained, yes, in Paul, Christ is portrayed not as the contradiction of the Old Testament but as its completion. After all, it was Paul who said in the book of Romans (chap 3-4), “Do we, then, nullify the Jewish law by this Christian faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law. What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, discovered in this matter? What does Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness”. King David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the one to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: “Blessed are those whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered”.

The Christian gospel, said Paul – and all of the first Jewish Christians – is nothing other than the fulfilment of the promises of God in the OT.

Or, as Jesus himself put most succinctly (in Luke 24), “Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms ... This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations”.

There are gnostic and Marcionite tendencies today – people who want to dispense with the OT and have a “simpler” Christianity. But when you chuck out the OT, you not only chuck out a good creator of a good creation, you really chuck out Jesus himself.

You can press PLAY now ...

[YouTube - The Bible](#)

John Dickson:

That’s the rich and melodious voice of actor David Suchet - taken from his reading of the New International Version of the Bible.

He's not just a great actor - my darling Buff loves his Poirot - but he's also a gifted voice actor, and he strikes just the right tone of authority and kindness as God speaks to Moses from the burning bush, and reveals his personal name - I AM.

That phrase - I AM - ended up laden with profound meaning for the nation of Israel in the Old Testament. It was like the in-secret between the Lord of the universe and the chosen people.

So, when Jesus is recorded in the New Testament taking it for himself ... it was a scandal.

Jesus spoke to the woman at the well we heard about earlier: "I, the one speaking to you - I am."

And to Jews challenging him in the Jerusalem Temple, the same Gospel records, "Very truly I tell you, before Abraham was born (1800 BC) ... I am!"

For some, this reading is one of the climactic connecting themes of the Old and New Testaments. It's where the identity of the OT Creator becomes one with the identity of Jesus.

But for others that explanation is just too quick ... it sidesteps the important task of pausing and trying to understand what an OT passage (like the one we just heard) meant in its original setting to its original hearers, before rushing to say ... Jesus!

Tremper sort of has a 'middle view', so I asked him about some of the other approaches.

JD: *You're participating in an upcoming book published by Zondervan that has it's five views of Christ in the Old Testament. Of course, yours is the correct one that's clear. But can you summarize a couple of the alternatives for us - you don't have to name names, we're not gonna shame anyone here, but just tell us a couple of the views you don't agree with and why you don't agree with them.*

TL: Well, first of all, I think I begin with, we all agree that Christ that the Old Testament anticipates Christ in one way or another. And actually, I will name names because their names are in the book, and I respect all of them. But when I went into the project, I saw the five names. I'll say I'm gonna disagree the most with John Goldingay because John and I have been friends for years. We respect each other's scholarship. But John has

always been kind of critical of me for my Christological readings. And I've kind of urged him to maybe look that way more.

John Dickson:

Well, since Tremper has outed one author, I'm sure it can't do any harm to name them all.

John Goldingay is the David Allan Hubbard Professor Emeritus of Old Testament in the School of Theology of Fuller Theological Seminary in California.

And he and Tremper are joined by Jason DeRouchie, a research professor of Old Testament and biblical theology at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

There's Havilah Dharamraj, the Head of the Department of Old Testament at the South Asia Institute of Advanced Christian Studies, Bangalore, India.

And Craig Carter, Research Professor of Theology at Tyndale University in Toronto, Ontario.

Tremper Longman:

But the other three contributions were so quick to go to a Christological reading without appreciating and gaining insight from reading the Old Testament passages in its original setting that I came to much more appreciate John's view. John doesn't want to talk about Jesus being in the Old Testament, but he definitely sees the Old Testament as leading naturally to or leading to Christ. So I would say two things on two opposite sides. On the one hand, there are some people who are way too hesitant to talk about some kind of Christian reading of the Old Testament. And their biggest fear, which is a legitimate fear, is that we will not appreciate the Old Testament on its own terms. And on the other hand, you can go much too quickly to a Christological reading and lose all the richness of the Old Testament.

I think it's really important for Christians to do two readings of the Old Testament. One is to put yourself in the position of the original audience because these texts were written for contemporary audiences. As John Walton says - No book of the Bible was written to us. It was written for a contemporary audience. They were all written for us. They all have important messages for us and meaning for us. That's why we call them Canon. But we have to do two readings, one in its original setting and the other one from the perspective of the New Testament.

JD: *I have a final question for you, Tremper. Suppose we've got some doubting listeners who after hearing you are willing to give the Old Testament a try. Can you give us a few*

bits of the Old Testament you'd especially recommend that we read and a few tips for reading them?

TL: Yeah, so I don't know. It depends on the person, but I would say that I would read slowly through the narrative portion, starting with Genesis and warn you that you're gonna run into some rough spots. Then maybe a Psalm and a bit of Proverbs or a wisdom book and a bit of prophecy. Personally, my problem answering that is I think it's all so fascinating and interesting, but you may need help. Okay, first of all, the first thing, get a really readable, accurate translation, whether it's the NIV or the New Living Translation, which I'm one of the senior translators of or there are others as well. But those are two I would recommend. Don't try to read the King James version. It was readable back in the 17th century.

And then I would also say, get a good study Bible. Well, first of all, just read through it. You're gonna have a lot of questions when you go through it first, but try to get the big picture. So those are some suggestions.