

**MEDIA - [Capitol Hill Riots](#) - 0'00 - 0'40**

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**John Dickson (studio)**

On January 6, 2021, several thousand protestors marched on Capitol Hill - the seat of the American Congress - in Washington DC.

Broadly speaking, their aim was to interrupt a joint session of Congress from counting electoral college votes - and confirming the election of Joe Biden as President of the United States.

I think it's fair to say, things got crazy.

The angry mob clashed with authorities and eventually broke through police barricades and entered the Capitol Building itself, which you're definitely NOT meant to do!

The footage - like what we just heard from VICE News - was beamed around the world, showing rioters occupying some offices of politicians, as well as the House of Representatives and Senate.

By the time it all ended, over a hundred police officers were injured, and there were multiple deaths. According to Politifact, one rioter was shot and killed by Capitol Police, three others died from medical emergencies suffered during the riot, and a fifth person, a Capitol Police officer caught up in the riot, died the next day. Tragically, in the weeks that followed, two other officers died by suicide.

Among the mob were Christian activists – not a big number, but enough to raise serious questions.

People in the crowd held Bible verses on placards and displayed Christian symbols on signs and flags.

After the crowd entered the Senate, they even stopped for a moment of prayer. Luke Mogelson, a journalist for the *The New Yorker*, filmed it:

## **MEDIA - [Praying in the Senate](#)**

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### **John Dickson (Studio)**

In his letter to the church at Ephesus, the Apostle Paul warned Christians:

*“Our fight is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, and against spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.”*

Some on January 6 genuinely believed they were fighting these “powers”.

Other Christians were horrified.

So, what is this war against the “powers and principalities”? And how does it relate to our political battles? If Christ is “Lord of all” - as every Christian affirms, everywhere affirms - how does his Kingdom touch the kingdoms of this world?

... Oh, boy!!

I’m John Dickson, and this is Undeceptions

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## **INTRODUCTION**

This season of Undeceptions is sponsored by Zondervan Academic. Get discounts on MasterLectures video courses and exclusive samples of their books at [zondervanacademic.com/undeceptions](https://zondervanacademic.com/undeceptions).

Each episode we explore some aspect of life, faith, history, science, culture, or ethics that’s either much misunderstood or mostly forgotten.

## Season 12: Political Jesus

With the help of people who know what they're talking about, we're trying to 'undeceive ourselves', and let the truth 'out'.

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### John Dickson (Studio)

That's me meeting Tom Wright - better known as N.T. Wright - on a rainy Oxford morning when I visited recently.

Tom's an acclaimed New Testament scholar and theologian, and he served as Archbishop of Durham between 2003 - 2010 - that's a job that was established in the 7th century!

He now works at Oxford as a senior research fellow with Wycliffe Hall - and given he's published over 80 books in the field (which just doesn't seem possible)!

Also, a shout out here to the late Aussie Prime Minister Bob Hawke. You'll hear that Tom and I walked by the entrance to the Turf Tavern, where in 1954 Hawke - then an Aussie Rhodes scholar - skulled 1.4 litres of beer, or almost three pints, in 11 seconds! It was a world record at the time.

Hawke was one of the "powers" of his age - but he's not really the topic of our episode!

As soon as I entered his library, I remembered his wonderful reading stand, designed by Thomas Jefferson, with five separate book holders on a swivel. I've had one on my desk ever since I saw Tom's way back in 2005.

After showing me around a bit, it was time to get down to business.

We started with the "power" that ruled the world when Christianity first appeared.

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## TAPE

**JD:** Tom, can we start with, uh, ancient politics before we dare to talk about the modern world? Um, the Romans had a particular vision for their empire, though that's a debatable word, but their, their vision of being a world ruler. Can you, can you in a nutshell tell us what their vision was?

**N.T.Wright:** Yeah, yeah, it's an interesting question because it seems to have developed from, the days of the so-called Roman Republic, which ended, of course, with Julius Caesar becoming so big, so powerful, such an impressive military commander, charging around, France and so on.

The people in Rome realized that they were running something much larger than themselves. And they didn't, I think, have a big template to say, this is what we're aiming at. I mean, I don't think they had, say, ancient Athens in mind. Athens had its own sort of empire, in the Aegean Sea. But I think the Romans, having discovered that it was really rather nice to be ruling these far flung lands and getting tribute from them.

That was something that they then more or less had to consolidate. I mean, they, -They couldn't go backwards and say, okay, we will now release these, these poor provinces. So they had to have a system of ruling these provinces.

And then after the death of Julius Caesar, the rise of his adopted son who became Augustus - Uh, he claimed he was restoring the Republic, but of course, everybody knew that this was a legal fiction.

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### John Dickson (studio)

Following a brutal civil war, Roman Politician Augustus - previously known as Octavian - became Emperor of Rome in 27 BCE.

## Season 12: Political Jesus

He oversaw Rome's transformation from a triumvirate - where three rulers held sway - to an Empire, ruled by one person (himself, of course).

His reign also began what historians now call *Pax Romana* - the "Roman peace" - during which a majority of the vast Empire was relatively peaceful - because Augustus had crushed dissent.

Part of keeping the peace was keeping Roman citizens *fed*.

And that meant grain - lots of grain - about a third of it from Egypt.

Keeping Egypt secure was a must, but that meant controlling Egypt's northern neighbour Judaea and Judaea's northern neighbour Galilee and Syria. This had the added benefit of creating a giant buffer against Rome's scary eastern rivals, the Persians!

Anyway, my point is: much of the action of Gospel history occurred in this Roman buffer zone that was called Judaea and Galilee (or what the Romans would later call Palestine).

The Romans set a loyal 'puppet king' over Judaea, Herod the Great. You can hear all about him in episodes 54 (Between Testaments) and 117 (Jewish Jesus).

The important thing is: many Jews were not content with the Roman empire. They were waiting for the empire once promised to their own great biblical king, David.

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## TAPE

**JD:** Those Jewish people had a vision of their own empire, it's not the right word really, but a kingdom that had been promised originally to their King David. Um, can we talk about that first-century hope for a kingdom of God amongst some Jews in this period?

**N.T.Wright:** Yeah. Yeah, in a sense the Davidic promises, as in Psalm two actually are echoing the promises to Abraham. And there's a sense in which the Davidic vision of, um, I will give you the nation's as your inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth of your possession - Psalm two - that is echoing the language of Genesis 12, Genesis 15, Genesis 22, um, so that it's kind of retrieving "This is who we really are. The reason we're a special people is that God wants us to be a means of blessing to the rest of the world" .

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## READING

*Why do the nations conspire  
and the people's plot in vain?  
The kings of the earth rise up  
and the rulers band together  
against the Lord and against his anointed, saying,*

*"Let us break their chains  
and throw off their shackles."  
The One enthroned in heaven laughs;  
the Lord scoffs at them.*

*He rebukes them in his anger  
and terrifies them in his wrath, saying,  
"I have installed my king  
on Zion, my holy mountain."*

**Psalm 2: 1-6**

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## TAPE

Psalm 2 doesn't look particularly like blessing because it goes on, you will break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. And some of the other Davidic Psalms like Psalm 110 is also

## Season 12: Political Jesus

pretty bloodthirsty in terms of how this Davidic king is going to rule. But The central vision is of God, the creator, choosing a people through whom he's going to call his world to order.

And I put it like that because calling to order is both doing justice and sorting out the mess and all of that. And then, of course, that dream goes horribly wrong because through the period of the kings, ah, kings of Israel and Judah, um, Israel, according to the prophets, goes from bad to worse, and worships idols, and bad things happen, and the kingdom gets divided, the northern kingdom gets taken away into exile, etc.

And they end up, or quite a lot of them end up, in Babylon, which is the last place you want to be, but there they are. And it might look as though that Davidic dream has died, but in the context of exile, you get prophets like, um, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, who are very much aware of what a tragedy this is, but are pointing forward to a new, and a new Davidic reality, um, in which there will come a king who will sort it all out.

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### **John Dickson (studio)**

Tom is talking here about the Babylonian exile.

Jerusalem was overrun by the invading Babylonians in around 586/7 BC, after which a proportion of the population was deported to Babylon (in modern-day Iraq).

It wouldn't be until 50 years later - around 539 BC - that these Jews would be allowed to return, thanks to an edict from the Babylonian-conquering Persian King Cyrus. Again, episode 54 "Between Testaments" is your friend here!!

Beneath all this turmoil was the hope that God's coming King would restore the nation of Israel to her former glory.

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But what that would look like – and when it would happen – was anyone's guess.

The prophecies of the Old Testament books of Isaiah and Zechariah were solid (there would be such a king) but they were also vague.

Tom, however, reckons that some Jews were desperately trying to calculate exactly *when* this King would arrive - the answer is in the mysterious book of Daniel.

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### READING

*While I was speaking and praying, confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel and making my request to the LORD my God for his holy hill— while I was still in prayer, Gabriel, the man I had seen in the earlier vision, came to me in swift flight about the time of the evening sacrifice. He instructed me and said to me, "Daniel, I have now come to give you insight and understanding. As soon as you began to pray, a word went out, which I have come to tell you, for you are highly esteemed. Therefore, consider the word and understand the vision:*

*"Seventy 'sevens' are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the Most Holy Place.*

*"Know and understand this: From the time the word goes out to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven 'sevens,' and sixty-two 'sevens.' It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble. After the sixty-two 'sevens,' the Anointed One will be put to death and will have nothing. The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed.*

**Daniel 9: 20-26**



## Tape

**N.T. Wright:** Well chapter 9 says Yes, you will be going back home from exile and God will put everything right - It's going to take longer than we originally thought Jeremiah had said 70 years But Daniel 9 says 70 weeks of years 70 times 7 so you've got 490 years from the exile and we know from several documents that Jews in the time of Jesus were calculating when the 490 years would be up.

Um, and that some of them, were reckoning it would be roughly around the time we think of as the time of Herod the Great. But when Jesus comes and turns up and says the time is fulfilled.

It looks as though he's invoking that promise.-We've been waiting a long time. We've been saying our prayers. We've been singing the Psalms. This is the time when God is going to become king. And so that idea of the kingdom of God, uh, Josephus says that was what then drove the Jews to revolt in 66 to 70 against Rome.

So, I'm fascinated by the, the undesigned parallel. The Jewish people had been clinging on to this hope long before Rome had what it called an imperium or an empire. And the Romans developed their ideas of empire. So you've got, very interestingly, the undesigned coincidence of these two dreams of world domination at the same time with somebody called Jesus in the middle of it being put to death by Roman soldiers.

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## John Dickson (studio)

The Jewish Revolt was an absolute disaster for the Judeans.

## Season 12: Political Jesus

Like all wars, there were loads of factors that culminated in the outbreak of violence, but one of them was the expectation that the time for God's chosen King to show up *had arrived*.

Here's the first-century Jewish writer Josephus complaining that his own people misunderstood their own biblical prophecies. Isaiah, Zechariah and so on weren't talking about Jewish Lord of the world by a Roman lord who happened to be declared emperor (by his own soldiers) while in Judaea:

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### READING

*But now what did the most elevate them in undertaking this war, was an ambiguous oracle, that was also found in their sacred writings; how "About that time one, from their country, should become governor of the habitable earth." The Jews took this prediction to belong to themselves in particular: and many of the wise men were thereby deceived in their determination. Now this oracle certainly denoted the government of Vespasian: who was appointed emperor in Judea. However, it is not possible for men to avoid fate: although they see it beforehand. But these men interpreted some of these signals according to their own pleasure; and some of them they utterly despised: until their madness was demonstrated, both by the taking of their city, and their own destruction.*

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### John Dickson (studio)

The Romans destroyed Jerusalem and in AD 70, they levelled the Temple, leaving only a portion of the Western Wall remaining (you can still see it today).

It seemed like the ancient hopes for a Jewish king ruling all the world would have to be put off ... again.

Thus ended Second Temple Judaism.

Quite understandably, many Jews had been expecting their King to arrive and take over by military force.

This idea can be tracked not just in the Old Testament, but also in Jewish Apocryphal texts (writings that were important but didn't make it into the Old Testament).

Here's an example, from the Psalms of Solomon.

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## READING

*O Lord, You yourself are our king for ever and ever, For in You, O God, shall our soul boast. What is the span of man's life upon earth? Yet, throughout his life his hope is set upon himself; But we will hope in God our saviour, For the power of our God is for ever with mercy, And the kingdom of our God is over the nations in judgement. You, Lord, chose David as king over Israel, And swore to him concerning his posterity for ever, That his dynasty would not fail before you. But, for our sins, sinners rose up against us: They set upon us and drove us out (they to whom You gave no promise); They seized power with violence, and did not honour your glorious name. They established in splendour a monarchy in their pride, They laid waste the throne of David, in their arrogance usurping it. But you, O God, will overthrow them and remove their offspring from the land, When a man alien to our race rises up against them. According to their sins You will repay them, O God, So that what befalls them matches their deeds*

## Psalm of Solomon 17:1-8

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## John Dickson (studio)

Despite the name, the Psalms of Solomon weren't *actually* composed by Solomon.

It's thought they were written between the first and second centuries BC - that's about 900 years after Solomon, the third king of Israel, is believed to have lived.

Anyway, they were taken pretty seriously by religious leaders at the time - and they had *very* real political connotations.

That said, there was a small, but growing, movement of Jews who had no intention of putting off the future hope of a universal Jewish king. For them, the true Lord of the world had already come - four decades before the disaster of AD 70.

And he had announced the arrival of the 'kingdom of God'. It was a very different kingdom, though!!

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## READING

*"Blessed are the poor in spirit,  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

*Blessed are those who mourn,  
for they will be comforted.*

*Blessed are the meek,  
for they will inherit the earth.*

*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,  
for they will be filled.*

*Blessed are the merciful,  
for they will be shown mercy.*

*Blessed are the pure in heart,  
for they will see God.*

*Blessed are the peacemakers,  
for they will be called children of God.*

*Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

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## **TAPE**

**N.T. Wright:** Jesus kingdom vision in the Sermon on the Mount is, I think, this is how God is going to bring about the kingdom, through people who are pure in heart, who are peacemakers, who are hungry for justice, who are all of these extraordinary things.

And therefore, you've heard that it was said, But I'm telling you, we're going to do it differently. Uh, we're going to do it through this extraordinary vision of forgiveness and reconciliation and a message of healing. And as I look at, uh, the early Christian movement and then the Jewish dreams of the time, that's, I think, probably the most striking, standout difference.

And one of the sharp points of that, you see, when Jesus is being to the cross, Luke records that Jesus said, Father, forgive them, they don't know what they're doing. Now, if you know anything about the Jewish martyr tradition, that's not what martyrs say as they're being tortured. They say, well, you can torture me if you like, but God's going to come and get you, and it'll be much the worse for you.

Um, Jesus says, forgive them, this is a kind of a double revolution, which Jesus seems to have had as central to his kingdom vision, um, and which then informs everything else because, uh, as far as I know, the other people who are talking about the Jewish kingdom vision didn't have, um, this, this healing ministry, didn't have this feasting with sinners ministry that Jesus, uh, seems to have gone about doing.

And those things I see as outflowings of this central vision which Jesus has, and which puzzle people because that wasn't what they were expecting. Nevertheless, The healings themselves talked about new creation, which was the vision—And of course, that's why you get Jesus quoting Isaiah 35 when John the Baptist sends messengers to say, Hey,

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are you actually the right one? Or was I mistaken? Are we waiting for somebody else? And Jesus says, well, go and tell John, you know, what you've been seeing and hearing. And so there you have. The tension even between Jesus and his immediate forerunner, his own cousin, who doesn't quite understand that this could be what the coming of the kingdom could look like so Jesus is very comprehensible as a first-century Jew announcing this is the time for God to become king. Lots of people thought that, but he's saying yes to the kingdom, but not like you imagined it. This is what it's going to look like. And all of which lands up, of course, with the crucifixion.

**JD:** And that's why the crucifixion isn't a sign of the failed project?

**N.T. Wright:** It's only with the resurrection that Jesus is vindicated and that his followers say, this means he really was the Messiah after all, which is interesting in that. Resurrection is not something that in pre-Christian Judaism you associate with messianic prediction, because they didn't expect the Messiah to be killed.

Um, so, uh, I think that's the point at which they start re reading their scriptures and find things like 2 Samuel 7, where God says, I will raise up your seed after you. So it's a sudden rushing together of insight, which makes sense in the light of the resurrection, but it makes sense of The messianic aspirations, which people had had for Jesus, and which Jesus himself, I believe, had held beforehand.

**JD:** But in light of the resurrection, what does the cross mean For Jesus' vision of the kingdom.

**N.T.Wright:** The cross means that when Jesus died on the cross, this really was the victory over the powers of evil. And you see it in John 12, it's a very interesting passage that people don't always invoke when they're talking about the meaning of the crucifixion. When, you remember how it goes, when some Greeks say we want to see Jesus. And Jesus, as usual, sort of answers the question behind the question, rather than the question itself.

## READING

*Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the festival. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. "Sir," they said, "we would like to see Jesus." Philip went to tell Andrew; Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus.*

*Jesus replied, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honour the one who serves me.*

## John 12: 20-26

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### Tape

**N.T. Wright:** So he, he, um, sees the fact that there are Greeks wanting to come as a sign that things are closing in. It's all now happening. And then he says, now is the ruler of this world cast out. Now is, uh, now is the time I'm going to win the victory. And if I'm lifted up from the earth, I will draw all people to myself.

In other words, -What I am going to do will open a new world of being in which it will be possible for the pagans, the Greeks to come in.

So victory over the dark powers means victory over the sins which had stopped all humans from being able to be God's people. And so how then you can ask all sorts of questions about how does that Quote-unquote "work" and there are all sorts of theories but I see the heart of it as the messianic victory Redefined in that it's not the victory over the Syrians or the greeks or the Romans or the Egyptians or

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whatever it's the victory over the dark powers that stand behind them and then and kept them apart from one another and from God kept them apart from one another and from God and kept them, as the letter to the Hebrews says, um, in the fear of death and suddenly there is a new sort of victory over a redefined...

**JD:** Because it's a reconciliation of humanity to each other and humanity to God and therefore a universal Kingdom of a very different character

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### John Dickson (studio)

A Jewish text written just after the Romans took control of Judaea – and so just before Jesus - reads, “The kingdom of our God is forever over the nations in judgment ... See, Lord, and raise up for Israel their king, the son of David, to destroy the unrighteous rulers, to purge Jerusalem from gentiles, to destroy the unlawful nations with the word of his mouth.”

The vision is clearly political.

By contrast with Jesus is striking.

Jesus said stuff like, ““The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. 32 Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches.” (Matt 13). And ““Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. 4 Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.” (Matt 18)

So, what is this ‘kingdom’ that’s like a mustard seed and requires its citizens to be lowly like children? Is this a kingdom with no political implications.

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## TAPE

**JD:** Um, let's talk about the kingdom and, and, and politics. Um, this notion of the 'kingdom come' can lead to passivity amongst some brands of Christians. You know, just leave it all to God. This world's gonna hell and God will make all thing well.

On the other hand, it can lead to a kind of authoritarian activism, Christians who think let's build the kingdom of God now.

Okay, so they're the two caricatures. But my question is, does that mean the kingdom of God concept is sort of useless because it's so flexible as to be perverted in two directions?

**N.T.Wright:** In a sense, it has to be in order to be itself.

Jesus vision was always vulnerable to misinterpretation and misunderstanding. people thinking, ah, I know what kingdom should really be. Jesus isn't quite saying it, but we'll help him this way or that. Um, and indeed what you just said about the different options can be mapped onto the first century with, um, the Essenes saying, we're just going to go down here in the desert and we'll say our prayers and wait for God to act.

Um, the Sadducees saying we're just clinging onto political power and that's how it's going to be. And the Pharisees divided between The live and let live people like Gamaliel, and the people like, um, Eliezer Ben Hirkanos in the second half of the first century, for whom that's not good enough. We're going to be zealous.

Um, and zeal means swords, and zeal means saying your prayers, of course, but then getting ready to act. So In a sense, no surprises if in Christianity, I remember it's in Henry Chadwick's book on the early church, which curiously I just pulled off the shelf last night for quite other reasons.

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But he says that by the fourth century, the church had divided between those who wanted to rule the world and those who wanted to renounce it. So you've got the papacy and you've got the monastic movement.

Um, Paul says at the end of his address to the Ephesian elders, um, those we've gone about preaching the kingdom, you know, that that's what he thinks he's been doing. What does it look like? It looks like the establishment of little or not-so-little cells of Jesus' followers who being transformed themselves are becoming transformers in their society.

And it's fascinating to look at the rise of the early church and see how that worked out. Uh, another favourite book of mine, Rodney Stark's book, *The Rise of Christianity*: What Stark shows is very ordinary people being Christian on their street and being the sort of people that other people like to have as their neighbours.

And then the other people saying, what is it about you lot? You know, you do some rather odd things. You meet in these funny groups on the first day of the week when the rest of us are going off to work and you're meeting with women and slaves and what what's that all about? And so the sheer oddity of early Christianity and the fact that, well, the two the two things I've often preached on this, the two things that Galen, the great doctor knew about the early Christians were one, they believed in the resurrection of the body and two, they didn't sleep around.

And on both counts, he thought they were crazy, but he respected them because ... and what we see there is they were people who valued the human body because God had made it and God was going to raise it from the dead. Therefore, you don't mess around with your body and other people's, and therefore you do believe in a great future, which is going to be the resurrection, not just a pie in the sky when you die, but God's new creation.

But, it's, it's those things, which then At a time when the Romans are doing their best to stamp this out, um, these things make sense.

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They make sense on the street where a community of love and forgiveness and healing and reconciliation is being established. I mean, Rodney Stark refers to Um, if a plague would strike a city or a town, um, everyone else would get out and run. Certainly the rich and certainly the doctors, but the Christians would stay and nurse people.

Why did you do that? You know, some of you died, but why? Well, we follow this man called Jesus, and he went about healing people, so that's what we do. And in a sense, it's unreflective. Um, it is informed by the great theologians. But it's, it's ordinary people being, um, Sermon on the Mount people in ordinary

**JD:** they saw it as a little sign of the kingdom, didn't they?

**Wright:** Yeah, exactly. Exactly.

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### John Dickson (studio)

Galen of Pergamum, the doctor that Tom mentions, lived in Rome in the 2nd Century AD.

He wrote *loads* of stuff on a range of subjects, from benign medical things like the unvarying lengths of eyelashes (shout out to our doctor friends listening) to summarising entire Platonic dialogues!  
Like I said ..... varied!

His writings give us an interesting window into how the Romans – some of them, anyway – saw Christians in those first few centuries.

Galen didn't like the Christian emphasis on faith, he *did* admire the Christians' commitment to ethics. In his *Summary of Platonic Dialogues* he wrote:

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## READING 6

## Season 12: Political Jesus

*'We may infer that the people called Christians derive their faith from signs and miracles. Also, sometimes, they show such behavior as is adopted by philosophers; for fearlessness of death and the hereafter is something we witness in them every day. The same is true of abstention from sexual intercourse. Some of them, both men and women, go their whole life without sexual intercourse. There are among them those who possess such a measure of self-control with regard to food and drink and who are so bent on justice, that they do not fall short of those who profess philosophy in truth.'*

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### John Dickson (studio)

It was everyday acts that caused people like Galen to notice Christians. And there's plenty of ancient evidence just like this.

Even staunch critics of Christianity like the pagan emperor Julian (we really need to do an episode on him) knew that what caused Christianity to grow was their terrible 'philanthropy', Julian wrote, 'their care for the graves of the dead' and their 'feeding the poor'.

Christians were active in society—that's clear. But the methods of their kingdom were weird.

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### TAPE

**JD:** This is my next question. This is a recurring phrase through the book. Okay. Uh, We are not building the kingdom. We're not simply waiting for the kingdom to come and do everything. We are building For the kingdom and, and I'd love you to explain to my listeners what you mean by that, right?

**N.T.Wright:** Well, the basic answer is that God builds God's kingdom and, and we must back off from any arrogance of saying, uh, okay, now we've seen what the blueprint is. We're just going to go out there and do

## Season 12: Political Jesus

it. Because God always surprises us. We dream our dreams, and we see our visions, and we think maybe God is calling us to do A, B, and C, and the example I've often used is Paul really believed God was calling him to go to Spain.

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### John Dickson (studio)

You can read about Paul's desire to go to Spain at the end of Romans chapter 15.

We don't know if he got there. A couple of second century texts say he did ... Irenaeus and the Muratorian Canon ... but ...

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### TAPE

We don't know whether he ever got to Spain or not. The people in Spain would love to think he did, but there's no actual hard evidence of that. I think God allowed Paul to dream of going to Spain so that he would write Romans because he wrote Romans as he was saying to the Roman church, please support me.

And here's here's why this is who I am This is what I teach etc, etc. Now I think insofar as I can read God's mind, which is a very dangerous thing to try to do, I think God allowed Paul to dream of Spain because God wanted him to write Romans. Whether he got Spain Not really didn't matter but writing Romans is one of the most extraordinary things that's ever happened in the world - that document has just transformed so much.

And I think that when we are doing our best to be obedient to the vision that we think God has given us, then it may be that actually in God's mind, a byproduct of that vision, which may or may not happen is something which is what God is really doing, and so there's a kind of humility about it in building for the kingdom.

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We believe we've got to do A and B and C. God may actually have in mind X and Y and Z, which we've never imagined, but some of what we do in trying to be obedient to what we see will be, please God, part of that larger project which God has in mind.

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### **BREAK 1**

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### **Media - Post Office Scandal**

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#### **John Dickson (studio)**

That's a clip from *Sky News* covering what's become known as the British Post Office Scandal.

It saw over 900 subpostmasters wrongly convicted of theft between 1999 - 2015, as a result of glitchy software that calculated workers owed money.

More than 200 workers were wrongly imprisoned. Tragically, four people took their own lives as a result of the ordeal.

*The Economist* dubbed the entire thing Britain's "worst miscarriage of justice".

Some listeners (at least those in Britain) might know the show *Mr Bates vs the Post Office*, which debuted in January 2024. It's coming to the US in April. It's a dramatisation of the Post Office scandal and it's been pretty well-received by critics. It gets 92% in Rotten Tomatoes.

Anyway, Tom Wright points to the British Post Office Scandal as an example of the "powers" at play in the world - and not all of them are necessarily *of* this world.

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## TAPE

**JD:** You've mentioned the powers a couple of times, and of course it's in the title of the book. Can you give me, you know, the cheat's guide to what on earth the powers are? Are they spooky demons or are they political leaders that we could name? Or yes, both?

**N.T.Wright:** Well, it's both plus and minus. Um, I don't think that when Paul rattles off a list, the principalities, the powers, the rulers, the authorities, the this, the that, the other, I don't think, if we sat Paul down, he could give us an exact separate definition for all those.

I think, just as I think we perceive evil today, evil is murky and messy and it hides behind systems, systems which may be okay in themselves, but when certain people are running them for their own benefit, they become demonic.

And you get Kafka-esque scenes of people who find themselves drawn into battles with, uh, the bank or the tax authorities or whatever it is, um, where they just don't seem to be able to get anywhere and they're just going down long corridors with getting darker and darker.

And, um, We've had it in this country just this last decade, I don't know if you picked up the news item about the post office scandal where the sub postmasters, um, running the, the post offices in rural communities and so on, they had a computer system put in, which was faulty.

But the people, the post office authorities insisted the system was working fine. And, uh, there were several hundred of those postmasters and postmistresses who went to prison, uh, and in some cases committed suicide because they were accused of embezzling funds. And when, uh, It all came out. It turned out that the computer system was faulty and that people knew it was faulty, but they went on prosecuting these, these poor people.

And, and even now, even though that's all come to light several years ago the people involved have not been properly compensated. And

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when I see that, I think, um, the and powers are at work here. And I don't care whether this was a principality or a power or a ruler, it was the murky, messy system of people in power, people with big salaries, people who had a vested interest in making the system work, and in denying that there was a flaw in the system, when in fact there was.

And so, one of the key things about the principalities and powers is it's a web of lies. This is why in Ephesians Paul talks about truth, fastening the belt of truth around your waist. And he talks about truth elsewhere. The truth is about God's good creation and the fact that God is going to restore his good creation and do justice in the process.

And when we find - through governments, through businesses, through whatever it is, through this, the system - that there's a web of lies being spun, and ordinary people are getting caught and trapped and hurt and killed in the middle of that, then, I think you have to say, this is more than just the sum total of a few wicked people doing wicked things.

It accumulates. And I think Paul would say that when you're dealing with that, you're dealing with the father of lies. And I think Paul does believe in, uh, a shadowy figure. I, I don't like using human language about the devil because I think that glorifies that creature. That's why I refer to it in my works as "it", but I think there is this dark force, which is basically opposed to creation, to the goodness of creation, and to the justice which God wants to be in creation.

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### John Dickson (studio)

"There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils," CS Lewis wrote. "One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight."



## Season 12: Political Jesus

It's a fair warning for what Tom is about to say next about the 'dark powers'!!!

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### TAPE

**JD:** Modern Christians hardly ever talk about the powers, even though it's obviously a New Testament thing.

**N.T.Wright:** Yeah, I think that's, I think that's probably because we're afraid of going down the road into kind of the movie territory of the exorcist and so on. And there've been one or two well publicized scandals, including in this country, where some particular church leader has said, Oh, this person who's suffering from such and such really they need to be exorcised and so we're going to call in and then it all goes horribly wrong and somebody dies and it gets in the newspapers and then leading theologians are trotted out to say oh we don't believe in that silly stuff

I would say - strange, dark things happen. When I was practicing as a bishop I had a team of diocesan exorcists there were three clergy in the diocese who worked absolutely under the radar and it was deeply confidential but they reported back to me,

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### John Dickson (studio)

Umm ... Tom Wright had a crack team of exorcists when he was bishop of Durham. I needed a little pause when I heard him say that ... I think we'll give you one ...

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### TAPE

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... it was deeply confidential but they reported back to me, and from time to time, strange things happen, and one of them would go in with people praying for them and would do whatever was required, whether it was a building or a person or whatever, that was afflicted.

And they would say, this was a real thing, and the power of Christ is stronger, but people who get excited about these things can easily think that, “ooh, we've got a demon here, right, we're going to go and do the business”. And then, that is, if anything, even worse than the failure to ... you know, C. S. Lewis, when he wrote *The Screwtape Letters*, he said, there's two mistakes you can make. Either you can ignore it, or you can make too much of a fuss about it. Um, he says, somewhere in between lies the path of wisdom.

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### **John Dickson (studio)**

My team insists this is the point I should share any personal experience of a similar kind. I'm not super comfortable. I don't think I've ever talked in public about it. And I'm not going to share the details here and now. I will say I have had just one experience of something I'm convinced was genuinely demonic in my entire time as a church minister – it was when I was a student minister at Moore College assigned to a church in Mosman Sydney. Both my College and my Church were about as far from being into mystical things like demons as Christian institutions can get. But with the senior pastor away, I got the call to speak to a mother and son – neither of whom was religious - who were plagued by something tangibly demonic. All I'll say is that I still get tingles down my spine when I mention it. I saw some very pedestrian, boring, Anglican Bible reading and prayer cast out a demon!

I can hardly believe I said it!!

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**JD:** I'm involved in a Really fun project at the moment, uh, working with Chris Tomlin, the famous songwriter, and Ben Fielding to revive the oldest Christian hymn. It's amongst the, um, Oxyrhynchus papyri. it's from mid 200s. It has musical notation on it. Pagan musical notation. But the middle line - the reason I'm raising it in this context - The middle line. So, it's asking all creation to be silent, da, da, da. But, but the important thing is, is, Father, Son, Holy Spirit. And then it talks about the powers,

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### John Dickson (studio)

I *sang* for Tom here - Sometimes I come out of retirement!

Anyway, if you want to hear me sing (and Tom talk some more about these particular powers), **YOU'LL HAVE TO SIGN UP FOR UNDECEPTIONS PLUS.**

How's that for brutal marketing.

Undeivers get all kinds of goodies, like access to our Facebook group, bonus episodes, uncut interviews ... and occasionally ... a Dickson song.

All this stuff might sound pretty nutty for our sceptical listeners (and perhaps for quite a few not-so-sceptical listeners as well).

The fact is, the resurrection of Jesus has, for me, pulled back the curtain on the universe. We are not just in a material universe. There are more things in heaven and on earth than today's philosophy wants to admit.

There are powers beyond!! And some of them are at work in the earthly powers.

And that's where the Church – with it's message from beyond – can help unmask the powers and point to another kingdom, a kingdom that has much to teach our earthly empires.

## **TAPE**

Right from Genesis one, God wants his world to be run, ruled, organized by human beings.

It's part of what it means to be made in God's image.

I've often said that Genesis 1 gives a picture of God as the deanthropic God, the God who wants to work through human beings. He wants to get stuff done, but he wants it to be done by people who are on the ground there, reflecting his love, wisdom, et cetera, into the world.

And this is so even when humans rebel. When humans rebel, God doesn't say, okay, we'll scrap that then. He calls Abraham, knowing that Abraham is a messed up person himself, but we will use him to bring about this purpose. And for me, the climax of that line of thought comes in John 19, when Pontius Pilate says to Jesus, Don't you realize I've got authority to have you killed?

And Jesus says, Actually, you could have no authority over me unless it were given you from above. Now, this is Jesus, the word made flesh, according to John, who is saying to Caesar's local representative, God has given you authority over me. Now, if Jesus can say that to Pontius Pilate, Paul can say it in Romans 13.

It doesn't mean that everything Pilate does is right, because Jesus goes on to say, the one who handed me over to you has the greatest sin. In other words, when you are given that responsibility under God, you are also going to be judged on it. You're going to be assessed. There will be an evaluation.

This is where we get it wrong in the modern West.

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We assume that if people have been voted into office because Vox Populi, Vox Dei, the voice of the people is the voice of God, therefore now you can do whatever you jolly well please. Whereas in the ancient world, they knew people came to power by a variety of interesting different ways by assassinating their predecessors or sometimes a popular vote or whatever.

But that didn't matter. What mattered is what they did once they were in power. And then they had these very sophisticated ways of analyzing what people were doing when they were in power. And maybe they were making little mistakes here and there. But right from the beginning, when God gives human beings power, responsibility, that brings with it the temptation to the abuse of power, and from quite early on in the Jewish tradition where you get power abused, you get power handed over to dark non human forces who stand behind the humans and who make use of human corruption and evil to do far worse things than the sum total of all human Uh, wickedness and we who have lived through the 20th century and now the 21st so far, we shouldn't be surprised at this, that there's a lot that goes on in the world, which really does seem to be more than the sum total of all individual human wickedness.

So that yes, God wants his world to be run by human beings, but yes, God will hold them to account. And when they go wrong then a superhuman, non human evil can come in and become in biblical language, bestial. And that's when the four beasts are coming up out of the sea in Daniel, which is then picked up in the book of Revelation. And when that happens, then the victory over those beasts is again through the victory of the lamb who was slain

**JD:** I mean, this is key, isn't it? Because people can read Revelation as justification for violent military takeover and so on.

**N.T.Wright:** time to up the military budget and, and go and fight those people. But I don't think that we have really articulated, I haven't seen it articulated, what it would look like to say what would a Christian response be? What would the Christian response really be? I mean, we're recording this when there's a war going on in Ukraine, a horrible

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war going on in Gaza, when there's a mess in the Red Sea, goodness knows, and all over, plenty of other places as well.

And what does the Christian response look like, and what do we advise governments? And I've talked to people of the former generation who were very much alive and thinking at the beginning of the Second World War, and Christian leaders who've said, we all just knew that this man, Hitler, had to be stopped, that we could not sit by and let him do to the world what he was doing, and I put my hands up. I have not had to make those decisions. I've not faced those things, and I pray for people who do have to make those decisions. Um, but the danger is that if we take up the beast's weapons in order to oppose the beast, we just become bestial ourselves.

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**\*\*BREAK 2\*\***

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### [MEDIA: Bonhoeffer](#)

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#### **John Dickson (studio)**

That's part of the trailer for the forthcoming feature film *Bonhoeffer*, coming in November this year through Angel Studios (they're the same crew who brought us the Biblical TV drama *The Chosen*).

As far as trailers go, it's pretty good - I reckon it does a decent job of capturing a sense of the danger and existential *bleakness* that must have hung in the air in Hitler's Germany.

The protagonist of the story is, of course, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German Christian leader who famously resisted the Nazi party.

He was part of the Confessing Church, a denomination that broke away from the Nazified German Evangelical Church in the 1930s.

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Bonhoeffer left Germany when Hitler first came to power, spending time in London working as a pastor.

But he eventually returned to Germany, writing to his sponsor that:

*"I will have no right to participate in the reconstruction of Christian life in Germany after the war if I do not share the trials of this time with my people."*

Bonhoeffer was eventually arrested for allegedly taking part in the famous "20 July Plot" - a failed assassination attempt on Hitler that involved a bomb planted in a suitcase.

His actions cost him his life, and he was executed on April 9, 1945, just 29 days before the Germans surrendered to the Allies.

Bonhoeffer is now famous for his *resistance* to the powers of his day.

His example raises an interesting question: When should the church step in and resist the state?

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## TAPE

**JD:** How does all of this relate to the famous motto, the separation of church and state?

**N.T.Wright:** The separation of church and state was an enlightenment vision from the 18th century designed to stop Christians fighting each other. Um, because we'd had wars of religion, uh, really ever since the 16th century. It's one of the great tragedies of the Reformation, that the Reformation, having split from Rome, then split across between itself and itself. And so you get different bits of reformed Christianity fighting one another. And we had our civil war in the 1640s, which was basically extreme Puritans versus ordinary, perhaps sort of high, what we would

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now call high church Anglicans with the presence of Rome just around the corner, as it were.

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### John Dickson (studio)

Tom's talking here about the English Civil Wars of the mid-17th century.

Religious persecution was one of several factors that contributed to that conflict.

It wouldn't be for another century - in the American Constitution in fact - that the idea of a separation of church and state would become codified in some way.

The First Amendment of that document states that:

*"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion".*

In other words, the government would *not* favour one religion over another.

The third President of the US Thomas Jefferson immortalized the actual phrase in a letter to the Danbury Baptist Association. Responding to their concerns of religious persecution, President Jefferson wrote that the First Amendment's free exercise and establishment clauses, taken together, built "a wall of separation between church and state".

It's complex though ...

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## TAPE

So-the two countries which really embraced that, France and America, they have both been working that out ever since. And um, it both does



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and doesn't work. And I don't know the French scene too well, but I know the American scene quite well.

And it's pretty obvious that actually, the separation of church and state both has and hasn't worked. They still have lots of sort of, in God we trust, God is on the dollar bill, um, uh, et cetera. And, uh, the, invoking of Christianity by American politicians is absolutely paramount. I mean quite different.

This is the irony that in this country, where we have an established church, we actually have a practicing Hindu as our Prime Minister. I don't think you would get a practicing Hindu elected as President of the United States. We've got a lot of secularists, we've got a lot of actually de facto deists, which they always had ever since George Washington actually.

But it's been a muddle, -is the answer, -and, uh, so the apparent clean lines of church over there, state over there, I mean, pragmatically it doesn't work, theologically it shouldn't work because a proper Christian theology of the state is that the state has a subsidiary role under God, owing allegiance to God, and the church's job is to speak truth to power and if the state says, Oh, no, no, we, we believe in the separation. So you, you, you stay off the map. Then it's the Christian's job to say, well, sorry, we are not trying to run the country. This is not a church takeover - that's what people are always frightened of - but it is our job. to remind you who God is and what his purposes for human beings are.

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### John Dickson (studio)

Some listeners might be rolling their eyes right now.

What Tom's saying though is that the church can't just keep quiet on issues - to do so would mean Christians would never speak up on important issues like education, healthcare, immigration, etc.

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The abolitionist movement - that brought down the Atlantic slave trade - would never have existed had Christians avoided political discourse. It was a very Christian movement.

Tom's past job as the Bishop of Durham - an important political position - better qualifies him than most to speak on this.

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### **TAPE**

Having been part of that system and having worked within that bishops in the house of lords, et cetera. I would say that's not about giving the church power over the state, nor is it about giving the state power over the church. It's making sure that there is a voice for God in the councils of power. And I think however you do that, that is an important thing, which America has tried to do in other ways. Actually, other countries around Europe have a concordat between church and state. Germany does, Italy does, um, et cetera, et cetera. So it's not nearly as clear cut as those clean lines of the Enlightenment liked to make it.

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### **John Dickson (studio)**

Tom (and his co-author Mike Bird) make a great case that a total separation of church and state isn't *really* possible.

The church and the state *should* be talking to each other.

However, there's no denying that there should be limits on how much the two are intertwined.

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**MEDIA:** [Christian Nationalism](#)

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## John Dickson (studio)

That clip, courtesy of the news station *PBS*, was an excerpt from an excellent story on the rise of Christian Nationalism in the USA.

Speaking there was Dr Bradley Onishi, who once identified as a Christian Nationalist, but has since walked it back, and now works as a religious scholar and author.

As he said there, American Christian nationalism is rooted in the idea that America is a “Christian Nation” - and therefore, its laws should reflect this.

Now, I want to be clear - we’re not talking about people who vote a certain way based on faith convictions; that kind of engagement is a *good* thing.

I also don’t agree with the overbroad definition of “Christian Nationalism” that some commentators are starting to use - as if it basically just means any traditional Christian!

Just a few weeks ago, *Politico* reporter Heidi Przybyla [PERZ-BULLA] said *MSNBC* that anyone who believed human rights derive from a creator was a “Christian Nationalist” ...

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## MEDIA

[Heidi Przybyla clip:](#)

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## John Dickson (studio)

That is crazy. I mean, it was the American founders who said our “unalienable rights” were endowed by the Creator. And it is just a

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historical fact that we wouldn't have developed the notion of human rights without the theology of God's creation and love of all.

I'm glad to say that Heidi later apologised for defining Christian Nationalism like this. She admitted she'd used "clumsy language". She noted there is a difference between a faith that informs engagement and the political movement known as Christian Nationalism.

I'm afraid, though, that this term is increasingly used just the way Heidi used it – but without her apology. Critics are using it as an umbrella term - a boo word - for anyone who strives for fundamental goods in society from a Christian perspective. I think it's a sad rhetorical development here in my new homeland of America.

To be perfectly clear: this is *not* what I mean by Christian Nationalism.

By Christian Nationalism I mean the movement that sees it as a divine mandate, a biblical expectation, that Christians are meant to take hold of the levers of societal power—the executive, the legislature, and the judiciary—in order to see Christ's kingdom *enacted* on earth.

That viewpoint needs to be corrected. It is subChristian.

Christ and the apostles taught no such thing. Jesus himself gave his followers just four tools to build for the Kingdom and to change the world, the same tools he himself employed: prayer, persuasion, service, and suffering.

When Christians add 'political power' in a manner that relegates or distracts from prayer, persuasion, service, and suffering they become subChristian.

Tom and Mike aren't just unconvinced by Christian Nationalism - they're worried about it.

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**TAPE**

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**JD:** You mentioned a moment ago. People's fear of the church taking over in that context, there are some fighting words in this book. They're almost certainly written by Michael Bird, but I want you to try and make sense of them for my listeners. "Christian Nationalism of the kind we have been describing is bad on every level imaginable." Can you define Christian nationalism? And explain why it's bad on every level imaginable.

**N.T.Wright:** The first thing to say is we in England and Great Britain have had our own share of Christian nationalism. You know, when, when we had an Empire on which the sun never set, part of the justification for it was that we were bringing Christianity to, to the world and it was our, our God-given duty

**JD:** And while plundering Africa and Asia, of course,

**N.T.Wright:** And I think people really did believe that.

The danger is so to identify the way of life of one particular country with the gospel of Jesus Christ, that then what matters is the way of life of this country. And we assume that the gospel is coming along with, and history shows it can get very quickly distorted on the way. And in America, clearly, There has been, uh, uh, an explicit statement of a belief in manifest destiny that America has been raised up by God to be a bastion of Christian freedom and truth against the rest of the world.

Therefore, what's good for America is good for God. I have heard that preached in the National Cathedral in Washington. I love America and the problem is It's not all good or all bad. There are many, many great things which America has done. Like there are many great things which Britain has done.

We're not denying those when we say that you can't absolutize the way of life. And so at every level it gives to, um, politicians and elected leaders, um, an inflated sense of their own importance under God And then they forget the under God bit and their own importance just swells to displace God.

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**JD:** But, but from your perspective of, you know, thinking of the kingdom as the New Testament teaches it, thinking of the powers and so on, What would be wrong with Christians in, in, let's say in America where Christian nationalism is sort of growing and staying, you know, in steam. We know what God wants, the kingdom tells us that. We know the good. All legislation is moral legislation. You've got to pick your morality. Why shouldn't we impose Christian Law on the land?

**N.T. Wright:** I mean, there are all sorts of ways in which the great perception of moral good, which is much wider than Christianity, but it seems to be built into the human race - I mean, this is something, again, C. S. Lewis wrote about it in terms of the Tao, the, the, the sort of awareness in many, many different cultures, um, that murder is wrong and theft is wrong, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. These great things are reinforced within Christianity, but from the beginning, I don't see even, you know, under constant Constantinian Roman Christian rule, I don't see people trying to force people into changing their hearts, changing their deepest insides. Yes, they are told that we will teach you the truth and it would be good for you to believe it. And so we have a church that does believe it. And so you must try to learn what this, what this means. And so, you know, emperors trying to, um, compel church councils to come up with a new creed, a new state ment of truth, because then the whole empire would be able to be united. I think we look back at those and say that way danger lies, um, partly because you overdefine what the truth is, and you may do so building in more of your own philosophies than you realize.

A lot of the people who self-describe as white evangelicals would believe, for instance, in the absolute inviolability of the present state of Israel, and in, uh, the right of the Jews to own the whole Holy Land, um, and too bad about the Palestinians, and in the eschatology of a rapture where Jesus will come and snatch the saints up and there'll be an Armageddon, et cetera, et cetera.

And I and others have argued strongly on biblical grounds, very carefully, against that whole view. Not because I see its effects, but I do see its effects. Um, and its effects are to instantiate a sense of, uh, we are the

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ones who are in the right and God's going to show that quite soon. So who cares about what we do?

And, uh, that, if that calls itself Christian nationalism, then, then watch out because it may be nationalism, but it's, I don't think it's Christian.

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### John Dickson (studio)

You don't have to look far to see where Christians in power have got it wrong.

I mean, go back through the archives of *Undeceptions!*

From the Byzantines to the Crusaders, Constantine, the Reformation, etc. - *loads* of Christians have sinfully used "the powers" when in positions of authority.

Some listeners might be thinking that anyone who believes *any* of this stuff about dark powers, or that the job of the Church is to speak truth to the State, shouldn't be allowed anywhere *near* public office.

I put this to Tom to finish our chat.

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**JD:** I have a final question. It's really for the skeptical listener. We have a lot of skeptical listeners to *Undeceptions*. Um, who just think Christianity and politics and, you know, they bristle. What do you think, at its best, the Christian faith can bring to human politics?

**N.T.Wright:** Yeah, at its best, I would hope, um, the combination of wisdom and humility,

The wisdom which is Emphasized again and again in the Old Testament, particularly, but also in the New as what you need to be genuinely human and what you need as a genuine human to do good things in God's world, to bring order to the chaos of God's world, but the humility

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of recognizing that we, none of us individually or groups have a monopoly on wisdom and therefore listening and taking note of positions other than our own is absolutely paramount.

That doesn't mean that what we glimpse with our wisdom is wrong. It merely means that if we're going to live alongside others, we need to take great care about listening to as many viewpoints as we can. That doesn't mean having an open mind, which never resolves anything. And GK Chesterton said the purpose of an open mind is like an open mouth to shut it again on something solid.

But wisdom and humility-part of that humility is a willingness to forgive, a willingness to work to reconciliation where there has been a major breakdown, et cetera. And part of the wisdom is to see ways through which other people who are locked in irreconcilable positions can't. And that's what I think we need to pray for, for our leaders, our elected leaders or non-elected leaders, for wisdom and humility, um, and, uh, out of that to hope that there might be ways forward where we can live wisely and humbly together on God's good earth.

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## NEXT EPISODE

If you have questions about this episode, or any of our other episodes, you just have to ask! You'll see the options in the shownotes at [undeceptions.com](http://undeceptions.com) to send us an audio or text message. I'll be answering a bunch of them in this season's Q&A episode.

While you're on the website, check out the show notes that Researcher Al has put together. It's all the links to the books and shows and people we mention, and some deep dives into the more complicated stuff, too. It's a nerd's heaven. You're also helping out the podcast by purchasing any books you hear about on our podcast via the Amazon links on our website. Every little bit counts!



## Season 12: Political Jesus

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We really appreciate it.

NEXT EPISODE: We're staying in Oxford –one of my very happy places – to chat with one of its greatest living scholars: scientist and theologian Professor Alister McGrath. McGrath argues for a return to 'natural philosophy', a view of reality that grew out of the medieval Christian viewpoint, which insists that everything is connected: we see the wisdom of God in music just as much as in astronomy, in philosophy just as much as in chemistry. Alister reckons this old way is a path to a new kind of appreciation of the world and each other.

See ya...