

# OpenTheo

## #49 Other faiths, Judaism and Gnosticism

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### Ask NT Wright Anything - Premier

Tom answers listener questions, such as will Jews be in heaven? What about religious experiences in other faiths? And is Gnosticism the prevailing world view in America?

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## Transcript

The Ask NT Wright anything podcast. Hello and welcome to today's edition of the show I'm Justin Briley, theology and apologetics editor for Premier and today's show brought to you as ever in partnership with SBCK, Tom's UK publisher and NT Wright online, Tom's a publisher of all his video teaching material, Tom is a renowned UK based historian, New Testament theologian and he's going to be answering your questions today on other religions, Judaism and Gnosticism, well there are among the topics that he'll be tackling on today's programme, which is the final one of 2020 we're taking a little break over the Christmas period and we'll be celebrating our 50th episode with our first show of the New Year. Of course Christmas is looking a bit different for everyone this year, not so much celebrations, festivities and family gatherings as we're used to but we're praying for a good Christmas nevertheless wherever you find yourself this Christmas and a very happy new year as well.

So if you'd like more from Tom don't forget you can subscribe to our newsletter at [askntwright.com](http://askntwright.com) and if you do that you'll be in the running to win one of those three sets of books that we're giving away to celebrate our 50th episode, those are God and the Pandemic and Broken Signpost two of Tom's most recent books we've got three sets of those to give away to subscribers but you have to be subscribed to the newsletter,

again that's ask NTY right dot com and while you're there you might want to consider giving to support the show as we approach the end of the year, we're looking for your gifts if you're able to give to support this show and to continue to bring Tom's thought and theology to wider audiences, we'll even send you an ebook based on the show Tom answering 12 questions on the Bible life and faith, if you want to do that again it's ask NTY right dot com and click on give, for now let's get into your questions on today's show. Welcome back to today's edition of the program with myself and Tom we're taking your questions today on other religions, now one person who recently passed away that we're both somewhat familiar probably you more than I though Tom was the former chief rabbi Lord Sax and it was rather sudden announcement actually, I had been aware that he had had cancer but we were still in conversation with his office even up to the point where I had that surprise notification of his death about possibly bringing you on with him in the new year for a conversation for my unbelievable series. So that came as a real surprise to me and a great loss to the UK, the faith community.

Did you know him particularly had you met him Tom yourself? The first time I met Jonathan was at the Lambeth conference in 2008 where Ron Williams had invited him to be one of the main platform speakers, he did a marvellous address apart from Rowan's own addresses during the Lambeth conference it was for my money easily the best address of the whole three weeks and because the Anglican community was thinking a lot about covenant at the time and Rowan asked him to come and talk about covenant and he did this amazing biblical but also practical exposition of what it means to be in covenant with God and so on and it was an extraordinary, I mean most of us had heard him many many times on the radio because he used to do thought for the day which is a three minute slot that tend to age usually on radio for and millions of people in Britain listened to that and he was always superb but distilling some nugget of wisdom into those three minutes but I'd never heard him go on for 45 minutes before and I could have listened to him for four hours and I'm not exaggerating there because he was brilliant, he was funny he was philosophically acute he was absolutely down to earth and I got the privilege of sitting next to him at dinner and discovered when we were introduced that he had recently read my book Surprised by Hope and I was surprised and delighted by that and he said well hope is what we all need and so he talked about hope and so on and I've read most of his books I recently read his new book Morality and it seems to me it was amazing to have a Jewish teacher writing a book on morality and for it to be there in the big new book section in Waterstones jumping out at you you know who would have thought in our post liberal etc etc age that such a thing would be but he had that profile that people trusted him because he talked sense and he came across as a nice and good and wise man and people basically like to hear from nice and good and wise people and he had the ability to do that but perhaps if I can just tell one story about it which which I met him several times thereafter through various points and I sent him a copy of my biography of Paul when it was in draft before it was published because I wanted to be sure that I wasn't saying anything about Paul that a Jewish friend would say

oh we Jews would never have put it like that and I said Jonathan please tell me if there's anything that kind of sticks in your throat and the way that I'm talking about Paul's upbringing and so on and I got this lovely message back saying there was one line on page 231 of wherever it was he said I don't think we would ever say it like that and I went through and it was very easy I saw the point very easy to turn it around differently and then he wrote a wonderful blurb for the book he did which I almost wept when I saw it that with the sheer generosity of it and I wrote to thank him and I got this lovely letter back saying various things but then saying may God continue to bless you so that you can continue to bless the rest of us and I thought well that's all we should be saying about you but that that generosity from a chief rabbi to say that to a Christian bishop but then at the Lamb of Conference in the Q&A from 2000 bishops asking him questions sending them up and row and reading them out to him somebody said how do you as a Jew see the Christian mission over the years does it worry you or whatever Jonathan typical rabbi answered a question with a question he said how many Jews are there in China because what on earth is that about and then I forget the exact number I think he said of the last count there were eight Jews in China and then he said when I heard that I knew two things first there'll be nine synagogues and second pretty soon somebody will be saying they're running the country which is the pouch yes of course we get the point and then he said how many Christians are there in China and whatever it is 60 million something extraordinary then he said you have done what we were meant to do you have taken the news of this covenant God to the ends of the earth I sat there thinking you're the chief rabbi I don't know if you're supposed to say that oh my goodness you could have heard a pin drop in that hole a sense that he was basically saying we're in the same business but you have this vision of God which happens to be focused in Jesus I talked to him about that as far as he was concerned the history of Christian anti-Semitism was so horrible and he knew so many people who'd been totally ruined and destroyed and damaged by it that he just couldn't turn around and say oh yes fine let's accept this Christian thing then but the sense that we were both in the business of serving this covenant God was huge and powerful and warm and welcoming and I dedicated a book to him actually I can say this now that he's dead I asked him if I could do it and he said but please please don't use my name because it'll get me into trouble so as my book God in public is dedicated to a wise and generous friend that was Jonathan there you go what were just so lovely to hear those stories and your reflections on him I wish we could have brought you together for a recorded discussion but that was not to be but there was a lot of willingness I will say oh yeah I'm sure it happened it was just you know events didn't allow it and by the way if you are a podcast listener and you'd like to hear an interview I took with Jonathan Sacks four years ago on the occasion of his receiving the Templeton Prize it's available on the profile podcast if you'd like to go and check that out we have a really interesting discussion actually on his approach to Jesus as a Jew well we've got another question on that a little later on they're coming from a listener but let's let's start in a more sort of big picture area when it comes to issues around other religions Mike in again Adelaide Australia today says I've

listened to the Ask Gens You Write Anything podcast from the day dot and I love it the humble approach has made a huge impact on my life thank you so much Mike now Mike says my postgraduate research has acquainted me with the traditional religious and spiritual systems of indigenous Australians through this I've encountered a worldview that contains so much beauty as Christians do we have a monopoly on truth how does God interact with people groups that have never heard the gospel does he speak to them and in turn can God speak to us through these other worldviews and perspectives seems to me that people often approach these questions by affirming the value of cultural practices while siloing off these spiritual or religious elements but this seems like an arbitrary and probably very Western division especially since many other cultural groups make no distinction between their cultural practices the material world and their spiritual beliefs so there's a lot in Mike's question there he'd love to hear your thoughts Tom Wow yeah it's a great question thanks Mike and I'm sure there are many people who wrestle with exactly these issues I start from the perspective the biblical perspective that all humans are made in the image of God and that that image is not defaced or it's defaced but it's not erased by the fall you can see that because in the Noah stories it's still clear that humans are to be regarded as in the image of God and therefore it is no surprise to me but rather a matter for delight when people who have very different worldviews and belief systems etc to what I have do all sorts of things which do seem to bring something of the beauty and delight of God into the world and I would say that at its best that then lands you up with the big questions which are what I addressed in my book Broken Signposts which we talked about in a different podcast where yes there is amazing beauty in the world but how come it doesn't actually get you where you might think it should and so on and so forth so it raises questions which are not well answered then by Western Christians coming in with flat feet and heavy hands and saying you haven't got our system therefore you're out of line and so often as we now know Western missionaries with the best will in the world have brought quite a lot of Western culture and indeed Western divisive thought forms about how we line things up along with a genuine faith in Jesus and now actually interestingly some countries where people have embraced Jesus are now turning around and saying the more we know of Jesus the less we like some of those Western thought forms you gave us along with and so there are huge issues there which we I think it behoops us all to be kind of careful and a bit penitent and wary as to how we then go after things but when it comes to the question of a monopoly on truth the word truth is too big to say you've got a monopoly of it I do want to say that Jesus himself is the way the truth and the life but since Jesus is the one through whom all things were made he is the light that lightens everyone there is a sense in which all human beings reflect some aspects of that truth of God the question then is what do they do with it what do they do about it and as I was wrestling with this many years ago I found I had to preach one week on the story in in the book of Kings of Elisha and Naaman the Syrian and Naaman the Syrian is the commander of the enemy army so he's the big danger guy we don't like him but he has leprosy and the king of Syria sends him to Elisha to get cured and actually what's this all about and he

makes Naaman go and wash in the river Jordan and amazingly Naaman gets cured and then Naaman faces a problem I've got to go back home to Syria and the king my master is an old man and I'm his right-hand man and when he goes into the house of his god Rimmon when he bows down I'm gonna have to bow to and he says to Elisha is that all right will the lord pardon me for doing this because he realizes there is no god in all the earth except in Israel that actually he sees this god can do stuff that my god can't but I'm just gonna have to bow and is that all right and Elisha says go in peace Naaman's glass is half full and on the way to getting even more full simultaneously Elisha's servant Gehazi hearing about all this runs after Naaman's chariot and tell some cock and bull story about how people have come and they need some help and could he have some money and some clothes and so on and Naaman please yes have it have it and so Gehazi comes back and squirts it away Elisha knows perfectly well what's been going on and Gehazi is he has all the privileges he is if you like the white westerner who takes stuff for granted yes we've got the truth so we're all right so it doesn't matter what we do and the leprosy of Naaman turns out to be landing on Gehazi and he goes out from Elisha's presence covered in leprosy and it's that's a scary story but it says to me there are lots of half full glasses out there and as we read the story we should watch out in case there are lots of half empty glasses out there as well that doesn't solve the problem it merely says it behoves us to be careful to be humble to be wise about this and when it comes to cultural practices well yes culture is not neutral there are some cultures in which female circumcision is absolutely the norm and I want as a human being to say this is dehumanizing there are some cultures including some would be Christian cultures that have equally dehumanizing practices and so on so we have to be very careful what do these cultural practices say about who we are as a people and I totally agree that we shouldn't distinguish between the culture the material world spiritual beliefs etc we're at a point in our history where we need to be able to map all these out with serious world view mapping and we can do that up to a point but in the middle of it the question is what happens when we put Jesus in the middle here and does Jesus shed light on this does Jesus welcome this does he say yes this is wonderful now if you follow me we'll make it even more wonderful or does Jesus say if you follow me that's something you're going to have to give up because both of those reactions are possible and the church does well to pray for discernment in those situations to know how to navigate because let's let's be quite clear about it there is such a thing as neo-paganism where people say oh these traditional religions they're much older than Christianity and they're much more life enhancing for my sort of lifestyle and then it turns out that they get into all sorts of stuff which I would want to say is not in fact enhancing to what it means to be a god reflecting human being so it isn't a matter of oh yes there's these wonderful things whatever let a thousand flowers bloom it doesn't matter because it does matter there is such a thing as self-deception there is such a thing as sin there is such a thing as death and it's only Jesus who says I have the keys of death and hell yeah it's always been significant for me and obviously with Christmas approaching it's a story that will be told many times but in Matthew's gospel it is the major who are called to the infant Jesus and

we can presume they come from a different culture religion background but they see something they have a portent in the heavens and and you know as the carol puts it you know the great desire of every nation for me I often that helps me to think into what we can take from other religions that are in some sense seeking that great desire you understand the carol of course got it from Isaiah which speaks about god of the desire of nations but I remember hearing Rowan Williams speak about the Magi one year at the house of bishops epiphany meeting and he pointed out that the Magi saw enough of the revelation of god in the heavens to get them broadly to the right place but they went to the wrong house yeah it went to the court of Herod and then it took scripture to get them from there to where Jesus actually was simultaneously the people who knew the scriptures like the back of their hands didn't even bother to go and check maybe for some people some of the time it's the confluence of what is seen out in the wider world with the specific message of scripture maybe for many of us we need both I hope you're enjoying today's show and the videos that we make available on the website do please consider investing in the show your financial support helps us to cover our ongoing production costs and enables us to reach many more people with Tom's thought and theology go to [askentiright.com](http://askentiright.com) and click on give and as a thank you we'll send you Tom's brand new ask and to write anything ebook it's called 12 answers to questions about the bible life and faith read his answers to some of the most significant questions posed in the past year anything you give helps us to continue this show strong into 2020 and enables us to help more people to make sense of faith and grow in Christian confidence again that's [askentiright.com](http://askentiright.com) let's go to another question this one comes from if i can find the right one yes eric in Norway who says you have on several occasions mentioned your sense of the presence of God which seems like it has made you more secure in your faith but presumably there are people of all faiths who have the same type of sense or experience how do you react to that and in general how can we as Christians have faith in our religious experiences when they do seem to be shared by people of other faiths not only the Abrahamic religions by the way yeah the word experience is a very slippery one and actually the sense of the presence of God rather like my perception of different colors is something which is specific to me and it's very hard to know if the person standing next to me is actually having the same sense you know i've got something here which is red and if you look at it how do i know that you're seeing the same as i am and people have done experiments on this when people have had cataract operations and suddenly they've said oh the pillow box is look like i remember pillow box is being when i was young in other words i have been seeing it differently and it's the same with the sense of the presence of God and and that's why in my book Broken Signposts i've talked about spirituality as something where most human beings some of the time and some human beings most of the time know that there is an extra dimension to the world which is way beyond the material and so on and within that extra dimension many many people have a sense of a personal presence of some sort which can come and go just like for many Christians that can come and go so for me that sense of the presence of God does come and go partly no doubt because i'm sinful and

foolish and forgetful and i don't say my prayers properly or whatever it might be but also just because in the natural life cycles some things are more vivid at some points than others so my faith doesn't rest on that my faith rests on Jesus Jesus who is secure there in the middle of human history who makes real and present the whole of the story of Israel which is the story of God or the world and his people and which then opens that out to me so that even if i'm not feeling anything i can tell that story and rest in it even though at the moment maybe because i'm in shock or in grief or sick or whatever i may just feel absolutely nothing there are many people like that who just need to be able to grab onto of the story of Jesus like somebody who can't see too well in the dark just grabbing onto a post until things can get light or whatever it is so i would be wary of saying that that sense of the presence of God is the very heart of it that is given it seems by God to some people more than others that's a very odd thing to say perhaps but i think that's a way of saying our temperaments are very different we react in different ways to different stimuli and what matters is not how i feel about it but the reality of God's self-revelation in Jesus that that for me is is where i would anchor everything and in that sense you would say not to put too much store in claims of religious experiences in other faith traditions it's that's not the thing that we anchor there are undoubtedly great extraordinary mystical experiences i'm not an expert on these but i've read enough here and there to know and there are certain practices whether it's the fasting practices or certain foods and certain substances which induce a sense of another world another reality which can be blissful and wonderful and and extremely meaningful i've had friends who've had experiences like that and that's that i i would say nothing for or against that that's fantastic it's like when somebody hears an amazing piece of music for the first time and it's just as though the whole world is transformed it's like falling in love the question then is what you're going to do with that where is that anchored if that has opened up to you a sense of the mystery and larger meaning of the world where is that taking you where is the onward journey and that's where again to go on quoting broken signposts spirituality can land up with the dark night of the soul the people who've had the most amazing experiences can also be plunged into the deepest darkness and the question then is what's the anchor where do you hang on to and within the tradition that i've lived in that anchor comes from the Psalms all the way into the reality of Jesus who said my god why did you abandon me so if Jesus said that that sense of abandonment we shouldn't be surprised if we sometimes feel that nor should we be too keen to put all our weight on an immediate sense of God's presence if even Jesus found that that was taken away then that's obviously not the place where we should be hanging on hands let's go to another question um this is anonymously sent in but it's from Cape Town and it's sort of identifies i suppose the the elephant in the room in a way with with what the lovely words you were saying earlier about Jonathan sachs but but this is a question about Jewish people and the question is will Jews as gods chosen people who do not believe in Jesus have eternal life when the Lord returns and this person says for me the Bible makes it pretty clear that you have to believe in him Jesus to have eternal life but a lot of people i know growing up evangelical believe that Israel is still God's chosen

people is Israel still God's chosen people will they get eternal life because of that this question literally keeps me up at nights as this person i'd so appreciate any light you can shed on this issue thank you i will say just before you launch into a response here we did do a whole podcast episode actually dealing with issues around Judaism state of Israel and so on if you search back in the podcast episode so you'll see that clearly labeled so so those wider questions about are the Jews still the chosen people and so on have been answered at some level in some depth by Tom there but yes i suppose the question specifically is about those who don't believe in Jesus is there still some way in which they will be welcomed in Tom yes um the the question that i've got it on the piece of paper printing out what you sent it's really two parts um it's one the question of do people including Jews have to quote believe in Jesus in order to quote have eternal life but then the question of eschatology of the present state of Israel being somehow a preparation for a new situation when Jesus returns and this is then bound up with American foreign policy and it's very interesting that i get this question in America quite a lot because there are many Americans and obviously this person is from Cape Town and it's that the movement is larger than that who have believed in some form of dispensationalism according to which the Jewish people have as it were been parked for a couple of thousand years waiting for then when Jesus returns and that the present state of Israel is a preparation in some way or other for that therefore Christians should automatically support whatever it takes for the present state of Israel etc those are extraordinary positions for a Christian to get into because actually the Bible says absolutely nothing about that in the Bible the whole world is now God's holy land and that is not just a Christian perspective which you find in Romans 8 and relations 4 and so on where the inheritance is the whole new creation but it's actually in Psalm 2 it goes back to the Davidic Psalms ask of me says the king says God to the king and I will give you the nations for your inheritance the utter modes passed to the earth for your possession and there were Jewish thinkers in the first century people like Philo and Josephus two of the greatest Jewish intellectuals in the time of Jesus and Paul who believed that the diaspora the spread of Jews throughout the world was in a way the beginning of a fulfillment of that rather than coming back to a land where then they would be at home rather they saw a sense which then the Christian missionaries picked up that God is claiming the whole world and the Christians say yes precisely because Jesus is Israel's Messiah and he is the one who is now the Lord of heaven and earth all authority in heaven and on earth said Jesus is given to me that's a classic Jewish claim not for one piece of territory but for the whole world and to go back from that to say oh but now we have this bit of territory has absolutely no basis in scripture and it's been a long misreading of Romans 9 to 11 that has got people to that place and that misreading itself comes from a misreading of Romans as though it's simply four chapters about how to get saved four four chapters about how to behave and then all that funny stuff about the Jews and then some more stuff at the end that is a rubbish way of reading Romans and I've spent half of my life trying to argue for better ways of reading Romans when we do read Romans 11 and this comes back to the first question we find in chapter 11 verse 23 and there if this is



unbelieving Jews if they do not remain in unbelief they will be grafted back in again because God has the power to graft them back in again I was once in conversation with a Canadian scholar friend of mine who believed passionately that Jews had to be saved by being good Jews and Christians could be saved by following Jesus but there were these two tracks to salvation and I said what about Romans 11 he said it would be much easier for me if Paul had not written verse 23 and I said yes it would because it's actually pretty clear in the Greek or in the English translation that I just gave if they do not remain in unbelief now that is not to say about somebody like Jonathan Sacks that he was a man of unbelief and of course many Jews would say we are people of belief it's just not your sort of belief because I've known many people who have been so bruised by either the church they've known or what the church has done in the past that they are simply physically morally emotionally incapable of throwing their lot in with the church because it just seems to destroy everything that they've known and seems to swallow up all the goodness that they've had in their lives into into a black hole I understand that many Christians have been bruised by the church beyond belief but when there is a shape of faith which I see as almost like a sort of an outline a silhouette of a Jesus faith a Jesus shaped faith then I want to say to Paul would that count is that the sort of thing that you meant and I'm not sure that Paul is too specific about what that would look like but at the heart of Romans 9 to 11 the Romans 9 to 11 is a very carefully constructed hole it's a balanced what we call a chiasm with a beginning and an end which balance then the bits balance all the way in and the very middle of that is Romans 10 1 to 13 when Paul answers his own question about the belief of the Jews Paul has been in tears he's been weeping because the Jewish people don't believe and he says my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved and then he says for if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead you will be saved that is Paul's answer to the big question of Romans 9 to 11 and to whistle past that and go on to a verse at the end of Romans 11 which says and so all Israel should be saved and take that out of context and say there you are all Jews are going to be saved that cannot be what Paul means by all Israel now this is an old question and I don't think I've settled it now there are articles on my shelves within reach which would take three or four different views of that but that is the view that I have come to hold after years of study of this text and though I wrestle with it frequently I don't at the moment expect to change well I'm just got gods in charge on that front and not me absolutely you'll be able to judge things a whole lot better than either you or I can. Final question, Catherine in Texas talking of religion says you mentioned in one episode something about Gnosticism being the main religion in America for the last 200 years I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about that because you're not from America perhaps you're able to see things from a different perspective from those of us who are in the culture on a daily basis. I'd like to know whether you're correct in your analysis the Gnostic belief system seems to be everywhere in America often disguised as Christianity in certain circles look forward to hearing about this so well firstly what do you mean by Gnosticism because I think those people when they think of Gnosticism

they think of the early church and these sort of interpretations and novel writings and things that came along in the second or third century claiming special insights that was hidden and so on.

But you talk about Gnosticism also being a very present day phenomenon. Yes yes I think Gnosticism is a thing which comes back in cycles as it were and certain crises precipitate it and I think we can see why it happened in the second century after the failure of the last great Jewish revolt 132 to 135 that many Jews seem to turn in on themselves and to be reading their scriptures as it were upside down with the heroes becoming the villains and vice versa and saying that maybe the god who made this world is a bad god and maybe there's a different god and we have to find the spark of light in ourselves which means that we really belong to that other god and that this whole creation that we've thought was so good is in fact letting us down it gets very complicated and if you plunge into the work of people like Araneer Senter Tullian at the end of the second and early third century who are writing against early Gnosticism you can very quickly feel that the ground is getting muddy under your feet and you're sinking in a morass of speculation on the part of the people that they're contributing. So all that's going on and there's been a huge amount of work done on it at a scholarly level.

What I've observed over many years now and I think I first met this in the work of Harold Bloom who was an American cultural critic who and it was he who said that Gnosticism is the default mode for American religion and I've seen it in other places as well. I wrote about this in a little book after this would be in I think 2006 that somebody discovered a manuscript which they decided to call the gospel of Judas and it was about Judas becoming the hero rather than Jesus or whatever it was and I wrote a little book on the basis of that called Judas and the gospel of Jesus and there is a chapter in there in which I have spelt out what I mean by modern Gnosticism which explains why as you say the Dan Brown phenomenon has been a phenomenon because as in Dan Brown which is full of conspiracy theories and secrets hidden within secrets hidden within secrets that's how Gnosticism works Gnosticism says which is why conspiracy theories abound especially right now. Right now we're full of them.

Yes exactly social media is the worst catalyst for them as well. Exactly and social media I think has accelerated this form of Gnosticism which is that there is hidden knowledge, Gnosis is knowledge and Gnosticism is there are some of us who have this hidden knowledge and the great mass of people out there don't and so we are the chosen we are the special ones and Gnosticism this is one of the crucial things Gnosticism is not a religion of redemption it's a religion of revelation it says Jesus comes to show you that you are one of the special ones. Now this happens both very personally when people think oh now I have a secret that nobody else has and that often plays out in terms right now of things like sexual ethics for instance where somebody says this is the inner truth about me and I therefore have to be true to it even if the silly world out there doesn't

recognize it.

There's a lot of movies which are about discovering who I really am and so it can become very personal very individualistic but also ever since the Enlightenment in the 18th century it becomes massive and cultural because look at the word enlightenment the word enlightenment says we western Europe and North America we are the ones who have found the key to knowledge and of course that's based on science and technology we've done all this stuff and therefore we know the way the world is the word no is crucial there therefore we can look down from our lofty perch on the benighted nations to left and right and oh they're having some trouble over there and oh some people there they don't seem to have enough to eat well that's too bad but but we are the ones that really count and that kind of western arrogance which is typically British I'm not going to say anything about America or France or Germany but it's typical of the western world actually that then becomes the default position for people religiously and they think oh I'm the special one I've got this hidden gnosis in myself now we could talk about this all day but that's that's what's at the heart of it and as I say it's in a lot of movies it's in a lot of novels it's it's in certainly a lot of churches where they actually teach that Jesus was not coming to save you from your sins but coming to reveal to you that you have the spark of something hidden within you and that God wants to bring that out and I think Paul go back to Philippians 3 Paul would have said there are many therefore who are living as enemies of the cross of the Messiah but the cross says Jesus came to die for your sin so that you should die to your sin and rise again to his new life as God's gift not revealing some hidden truth within you and so narcissism is a poison we need to root it out of the churches every generation has to do that but we need to see it in its larger cultural effects in terms of what that's forced or allowed the west to do to the rest of the world there's a major task here and I can only just scratch the surface in what I've just said we are only scratching the surface but time is against us so we'll have to leave that scratch that scratch and perhaps we'll do another podcast where we dig a little deeper for the moment thank you very much Tom for your time it's been fascinating to cover some of these questions and we'll see you very much next time thanks for being with us on today's edition of the show the final show of 2020 a very happy Christmas to wherever you're going to be celebrating Christmas and on the next edition of the show which will be in January 2021 well it'll be our 50th episode in fact we're going to be looking at issues around ecclesiology and church but to celebrate 50 episodes of the show we are giving away those three sets of Tom's books God and the pandemic and broken signpost to be within a chance of winning you simply need to be subscribed to our newsletter over at [askentyrite.com](http://askentyrite.com) and as we approach the end of the year if you feel able to support the show financially that would be most welcome as well again you can do that from the show page [askentyrite.com](http://askentyrite.com) and as a thank you we'll send you Tom's exclusive ebook 12 answers to questions on the bible life and faith for now thank you for being with us and we'll see you next time you've been listening to the askentyrite anything podcast let other people know about this show by rating and reviewing it in

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