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Interview with Jason Szeftel: The Spiritual State of China and Christianity's Rise Within

February 2, 2022



For The King - Rocky Ramsey

Welcomes to the for the king podcast, and that king being Jesus Christ, the son of God, today I have Jason Szeftel with me. He is a political and economic writer specializing in the nation of China. He mainly focuses on economic and political dimensions of China but today he is joining me to speak about the religious atmosphere in China and more specifically Christianity.

Jason's website: <https://www.jasonszeftel.com/>

Jason's Podcast: <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/china-unraveled/id1511865654>

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Transcript

Yeah, if you live in a world that is socially chaotic and politically fragmenting and just very tumultuous and filled with change, the power of a sort of superordinate religious figure, a sphere or level of values that's either the ground or it's the higher state that you can sort of look towards instead of this changing world, that's very powerful. And in China, it was often very hard for anyone to believe the emperor was the, you know, son of heaven sometimes when he was just being deposed and he was being thrown into a

building. Like there's just coups.

It's just this endless sort of imperial court intrigue, right? It's like, oh, emperor's dead. It looks like the concubine is now basically running the show. It's just like, don't think I will even ask you to make Jesus Lord of your life.

That's the most preposterous thing I could ever tell you to do. Jesus Christ is Lord of your life. Whether you serve him or not, whether you bless him, curse him, hate him or love him, he is the Lord of your life because God has given him a name that is above every name so that the name of Jesus Christ, every knee shall bow and tongue confess that he is Lord.

Some of you will bow out of the grace that has been given to you and others will bow because your kneecaps will be broken by the one who rules the nations with a rod of iron. And I'll not apologize for this God of the Bible. Back at 214, for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

Welcome to the For the King podcast and that King being Jesus Christ, the son of God. And today I am joined with a new friend, a new man I just met, reached out to me and I'm really excited to have him on the podcast. His name is Jason Seftel.

I think is how I would pronounce it. So he can correct me on the second if I just butchered that, but he's joining me today and he is a political and economic writer specializing in the nation of China. He mainly focuses on economic and political dimensions of China.

But today he's joining me to speak about the religious atmosphere in China and more specifically Christianity in China. So Jason, thanks for joining me and I'm looking forward to speaking to you about this. Hey, thanks Rocky.

This is pretty exciting. I don't got to talk about this as much, but it's something I really care about. So it should be really fun.

Yeah, yeah. I'm really looking forward to it. And did I butcher the name or no? Was that was that correct? Yeah, it's Sheftel, but it's kind of a ha.

I see. Yeah. Yeah.

Okay. Well, yeah, thanks for joining me. So can you just tell us who you are? Maybe some of your history and then what you're currently doing.

And then we can kind of so we can get to know you a little bit and then we'll move forward with the topic at hand. Sure. So we're doing a couple of things sort of more work and business side, but I'm also finishing up a book on China that is really a really long time in the making, right? So I've been very, very interested in China for over 20 years.

It really goes back to when I was very young, it got sort of accelerated and supercharged by, by 9/11 and then by the global financial crisis, by the whole narrative of Chinese ascendancy and triumph, triumphalism, basically. And around that time, I basically in college, I studied, learned Chinese, I got a scholarship to study in Beijing. I was there, I was living and studying there.

And then, right, then I moved on and for years, I've been basically trying to figure out what's going on with countries, how they sort of emerged out of the ground, out of the earth, out of the specific regions, how the various groups and ideologies and religions and everything sort of flows around this sort of beautiful planet that we live on. And yeah, a couple years ago, I switched what I was doing and I decided to finally kind of put everything I've learned together into a book and then that kind of expanded. So now there's a podcast people can check out YouTube.

There's, I've long articles about the agriculture in China, in space, trying to go to the moon, the energy system in China, all this sort of stuff. And I'm very interested in where the world is going to go as COVID and as all these other things really just start to, well, they all start to spiral and sort of not the best direction, but try and give some navigation about what's going on a little bit. Yeah.

Okay, cool. Yeah. Thanks for that.

So, okay. So you kind of gave us a little bit of why you're interested in China, I kind of being blasted with 9/11 and kind of world affairs, right? So how did the, how would the war on terror factor into that? Why did that, why did that peak your interest in China? Just because of the narrative after that of China kind of rising as a world superpower? Yeah. So to get further back, like when I was very, since I've been very young, I've been very interested in Chinese architecture, culture, spirituality, their worldview, everything.

I even grew up actually, I have an autistic brother who he is an older brother and there's a guy who basically helped him to learn life skills and stuff like that. It was actually a Chinese guy. So as far back as I can remember, there was a Chinese guy basically coming in and out of my, my childhood home.

So I was a part of it. And then what happened with 9/11, the way I would say it is that I, so I'm sitting there and suddenly I'm shocked into out of childhood and out of, into a weird feeling of unreality, suddenly the United States is invading and occupying other countries. And I was so interested in China already, like in this pretty comprehensive way, not just military, not just economic stuff.

And I remember thinking like, wow, we're out there invading these old complex, uh, ancient countries. And we don't seem to have a handle on anything about what's going on there and about like all the little naughty intricacies. And I remember thinking as far back as yeah, 2001, 2002, I was like, well, China's is, you know, another large old

complex country that's modernizing and developing at an insane rate and basically a rate no one's ever seen before.

And so pretty early on I was like, wow, this is going to, it felt like to me, like this country, I was already very interested in, in the country I was a citizen of were 10, 15 years later going to be on a, on a crash collision course basically. And feels like kind of, I was onto it on that. And then obviously the 2008, 2009, I was kind of already really pulled into a lot of this world.

I mean, I've been, I also grew up, my, my grandfather was a agricultural and developmental economist and he actually was in China and India and all around the world trying to basically help these countries develop, help them avoid famine, all that kind of stuff. And so I was, I grew up reading the economist cover to cover all that kind of stuff. And actually I got really blasted by the financial crisis.

I was just suddenly spurning all the, like all the stuff I thought I knew was like, isn't this simple? There's more to it, you know? And so that's encouraged me to go do different things. But yeah, and around that time when the US was sort of struggling to deal with the subprime mortgage, all that kind of stuff, China basically managed that crisis better than the rest of the world, not in a way that was sustainable, but in a way that in the moment made it look like it was on the rise. And actually when I was in China, 2010, 11, basically in and out of China between 2010 and 2015, that was also when China was absorbing this narrative as well.

So you could feel the energy, the sense of triumphalism of a sentence of a reemergence of the celestial kingdom kind of coming in, in China while I was there. So it was all, all stuff that really fed in, in that way. And like I said, the interest is long standing.

I don't tell the bill, but it's like, it's, it's old. Like I was reading some of these ancient Chinese literature books when I was like, tiny. So it goes, it goes for a while.

Yeah. I love Sun Tzu's The Art of War. That's a very fun book.

I like as a Christian man. I mean, these tactics and battle, I apply it to my faith. I do some of Sun Tzu's teachings, you know, just how to, how to be a tactician.

So yeah, I love the rich heritage there as well. And it does interest me. And in a sense, you know, with the Black Rock stuff, they have kind of have their own little mortgage crisis going on too.

Right? Wouldn't you say in a sense, the Black Rock, do you mean the Evergrande stuff going? Evergrande. I'm sorry. Yeah, I'm sorry.

Evergrande. No, no problem. No problem.

That is a enormous crisis. So when I was saying that like they avoided the old crisis kind of well, but they did it by, by kicking the can down the road. Yeah.

And eventually this Evergrande, the Chinese property market in general, that thing, that's maybe it's maybe the biggest bubble in human history. It's like over, it's probably over \$60 trillion at this point. It's really unheard of.

We could, that's probably for another kind of show or something, but it's insane. Yeah. Yeah.

I was just kind of piggybacking off what you said, but yeah, that's awesome. I appreciate the background and yeah, it's been a long time coming, obviously of you being interested in things. So let's get into the religion in China.

Let's start, let's really start honing in our discussion here. So what, what is the religious worldview in China? Maybe, you know, if you want to go historically and then, and then we'll kind of slowly push the conversation into now, because that's kind of where we want to go with it. Yeah.

But, but what is the history of, of maybe specifically Christianity in the country, coupled with some of the other religious worldviews? I know Taoism is huge there, that kind of thing. So yeah. Yeah.

So China, they often call Chinese sort of the spiritual dimension, religious dimension of China. It's often goes under the name of Chinese folk religion. That's what we would call it today.

But you go back long enough, China's been around for roughly speaking 3,500 years. And basically it's really got going the last 3000 years. So here is an interesting thing for all your listeners.

Roughly speaking, the Zhou dynasty in China, they formed about the exact basically within a year or two of the first temple of in Jerusalem. So that's like, Saul, Solomon, David, that era is when the real first Chinese proto state kind of formed the Zhou dynasty. So that's a good one to keep in mind.

And then it developed from there. So that first thousand years between right between when Jesus was born and then China had formed, right? That same kind of time, basically the, I don't want to say like old testament, but the era when the old testament was being more compiled and stuff, right? And it was written, compiled and the history it covers that that first millennium BC, that's what things got going. And you're right that the primary spiritual or religious framework that really fits in China, the one to use to describe is Taoism.

Taoism is very interesting. Taoism is basically the, it is a survival of shamanic tradition.

It's like a very abstracted version of general shamanic traditions found all around the world.

So shamanism as in shamanism that you find in Africa, that kind of things. Yeah, precisely. It is about a world of ordering chaos and it's about the trying to navigate this world and it's, Taoism is very complex.

It's really, if you go far enough back, it is really entangled in this whole cosmology of the world, right? It's in about the way the universe formed and all this stuff and there's certain energies and right. So there's yin and yang and there's, there's other the five, there's all this stuff and it's this world much more of homogenous moving forces and the growth of substances and the creation of energies and all this stuff. And if you look, you look just even me flowing around like this, like the Tai Chi, the Qi Gong, all this stuff is actually all embedded in this worldview, but it doesn't have major figures like obviously Christianity does.

Like Taoism has Lao Tzu, but Lao Tzu is actually relatively older sort of person and he's not quite, he's not nice as he's nothing like Buddha, nothing like Jesus Christ. There's really nothing like that. So what happened is it's more of a shamanic and animist tradition.

It's very rooted in the regions of China. So historically you have also ancestor cults, ancestor rights. So you'd have, you know, basically the family would have a big grave.

There'd be all this stuff. It's very Roman and ancient Roman, actually ancient Egyptian and in its style. It's very interesting.

And all that is kind of faded. Unfortunately, like just to really quickly zoom to today, you have one child and each family, you don't quite have compounds anymore. That whole thing is kind of gone, which is horrible.

And what's happened with the spirituality in China over time and the religion is that it's a very, this shamanic or animist space, spiritual base, allows it to suck in all sorts of influences from everywhere. And so Taoism in general is often seen as the sort of like the soil of spirituality or spirituality or religion in China. And then you throw in, you know, eventually you get the Buddha, you also get Christianity and you get, you get all sorts of things and you end up with these weird mixtures that kind of are suited to China and they typically fit the Chinese political state and the Chinese sort of Taoist soil, right? This sort of Taoist spiritual soil.

I don't know if that was, that was kind of helpful. If I can go into the much more of the history of Christianity, but the specific spiritual realm in China is very, it's sort of like very open and receptive to new outside forces, but also extremely weak on its own. So if you go to China right now, you'll hear, everyone will say China has a, leave aside the

atheism, leave aside the officially atheistic state.

Even if you forgot, even if you ditch that, there is a massive spiritual hole in China for a lot of reasons. And even in China, they'll say, even the, even the Chinese Communist Party says we're horribly materialistic. You know what I mean? So it's a, it's a complex one.

I hope that gave people some understanding of where things are. And I know shamanism is kind of a hard way to, it's kind of an odd phrase. You think like dudes with crazy sticks and like stuff, maybe running around.

Yeah. Yeah. Witch doctor type thing.

But a way to think about it's just, it's sort of a, yeah, medicine man, shaman healer. But what, what, what Taoism really is is sort of a very abstracted version of that. It's like, you're, you're no longer at that phase.

You're talking to, you've sort of, you're no longer like moving around. You're talking about the spirit. You're talking about the Tao, right? You start moving, you suddenly have a, basically a realm of natural law and forces that you're trying to manipulate and do stuff with.

It's, it's actually very cool. It's very cool, but it's, it's vague. It's, it's distant, especially in the modern world.

It doesn't really energize people in the same way a rich religion focused on salvation, like Christianity has. Interesting. Yeah, that's, that's a good background.

It seems like there's a odd kind of tension or maybe inconsistency there with this very abstract Taoist kind of soil you're talking about versus this extreme materialism. So there's kind of this, maybe a lot of people feel disenfranchised with, you know, the roots being this really abstract principle thing rather than, you know, an extreme materialism. That's, that's interesting.

So maybe we can get into that more and how it mixes with Christianity. So what about the history of, of Christianity in the country? And has, you know, you're talking about this mixture, has Christianity compromised at all? You think with Taoism, is that kind of how missions has worked there or what? I forget the missionary to China. I think it's Adirond Jackson.

I don't know if I'm right about that, who brought Christianity to China really main mainstream, but there was one. I think it was the main guy was probably Robert Morrison, if that sounds familiar. He was a 19th century Protestant.

I think he did the first major translation of the Bible. Obviously translating the Bible and

stuff was a very important part of like old school missionary. We're all that we don't think about anymore, but that was a big one.

Yeah. 19th century, that was the Protestant sort of push. And he was, he was a big one.

And yeah, but in general, I give sort of a overview of sort of Christianity in China, right? So you have that first thousand years, Jesus wasn't born, not, not there yet. And also China was far away, right? Judaism was very local parochial. So that wasn't a big thing.

But what happened is soon you had sort of the era of Christian infancy. So the, you know, right after Jesus, the apostles that hold that whole era, there's a couple of hundred years where there wasn't much motion. Didn't quite make it to China, right? Even Thomas didn't make it to China.

It's China's really far away. So what really the church that really was the first one to go there was the Nestorian church, the old like church of the East. That was sort of like East was Syria, that kind of Mesopotamian, right kind of stuff.

And that probably first made it there, you know, their fourth century, maybe. And there was also a Eastern sort of a Byzantine, so Eastern Roman Empire, Byzantine connection where everybody wanted silk, right? So actually, the, I can't, I might've been cost. I can't remember who was it might've been Constantine, actually, was like actually sent a bunch of missionaries of to China to both proselytize, but also bring back the secret of how to make silk.

So that was like the fifth century, which was pretty funny, but it really finally came together in China in the, during the Tang dynasty, which was like, you know, six, basically sixth, seventh century. And that was really when Christianity came in. So that Tang dynasty was one of those dynasties where China is opened up.

So that's when you actually got Buddhism became the official dynasty, the official religion, China briefly, during this dynasty, it was a big place. That was when a lot of things just sort of surged in both in a material element, you had the people coming in, you had the, you had the goods, you had all that stuff, but you also had the ideas, right? And in this particular dynasty, you had the, not just the ideas, you had like the religions come in, right? They actually really came into that really sort of fertile, right? Soil, that sort of spiritual soil that I was talking about the problem always, as ever in China with this stuff is that the, that same spiritual soil, and it's very fertile. It also leads to just massive violence, right? So you get massive, like even at the end of like the Han dynasty, you had just like, you had these guys, the, you know, the, you had the red turbans, you had the yellow, red turbans, you had yellow turban, you have all these basically millenarian groups, spiritual groups that rise up, they gather a lot of peasants, and they basically ruin the, the, the weekend of many, many an emperor, right? And so what happened with the, this Tang dynasty was open, it was open to four influences, you

had some early translations of the Bible, really good stuff.

But what eventually happened was that foreign religions were banned because they were just too, they were too dangerous for the political state, right? So when you were mentioned about that tension, right, there's that spiritual soil, right? That's very open, but you also have this, not only just a material basis, but you have a very rigid and defensive and aggressive and typically sort of bunker down political state in China, right? That's what happens. You get very brief periods of the state opening up. So that would, that would be this Tang dynasty I mentioned, that would also be China since 1979, right? That's also this phase of opening up.

And as we're all seeing now, it's starting to close down again, right? They're like, we opened it up, we got all these new ideas, we got all this new energy, it made us wealthy, it brought all this new stuff to China. Uh oh, now it's dangerous. Now it's time to batten down the hatches.

And that's what happens. And that also is also what's happening to religion in China. That's what happened to a lot of the Christians who are being persecuted.

It's the same old story. And the, this Tang dynasty, it's really funny how it's not funny, but it's, this is one of those things where the patterns and cycles in Chinese history just repeat themselves, man. It's just, this is just the same thing over and over again.

So you basically had Christianity banned at that time. And it didn't really come back in China until basically after the Mongol conquest, like the Mongols are actually, again, a very open sort of state. They took over the Chinese, the China, and I'll just really speed this up really quickly because no one really cares about this really old stuff, but Mongols open it up.

You had, then you had a phase with the Jesuits, you had a guy named Mateo Ricci. This was during the Ming dynasty. They basically became like the astrologers, right? Of the Ming court, right? They were actually very impressed with the astronomical knowledge of a lot of the Jesuits were right.

You know, their history. So they're really good with this stuff and they were a huge thing. And there was all this back and forth fighting.

And so there's the Jesuits during the, basically the Ming and through the Qing dynasty. And then in the, and this was all Catholicism, right? So for the Jesuits, right? That's all Catholicism. And then Protestantism really arrived in the 19th century.

This basically came with the next wave of, well, British and American actual missionary activity, right? There are people who are like, it was huge. I mean, it was seen to be, it was seen throughout the 19th century and the early 20th century as just a major, one of the last major places where Christianity was absent, right? And like, even though that

soil, I said, is very fertile and kind of good. There's many things in China, particularly as China developed, you got this very rigid Confucian as sort of, and Christian, not Christian, not Christian, Confucian and administrative like thing that just really bound the people into very prescribed social roles.

It was much more conservative, like social being than with their spiritual being or their any sort of transcendent being or soul. And that stuff is all very hard. And yeah, so basically you had that, you had this missionary era and the Christian missionaries during this time were enormously, enormously, this isn't really spoken up enough Christian missionaries in that time were enormously important for educating people in China for remove, for just for destroying the practice of foot binding in China, where women's feet were bound for a thousand years for educating women, for building the first hospitals, for building the first schools, for doing all of this stuff.

It's an untold story. And people just forget about it, but it is massively important throughout China. You're still, you'll still go.

I mean, obviously in places like Hong Kong, you'll see all these Christian, whatever hospital, right? Christian hospital, but it's throughout China. So it's really important. And then the the real last thing that happened is that you just had obviously in 1949, you get another close it all down, right? You had, well, you had generations of war, right? So Qing dynasty ends 1911 from 1911, 1994.

You basically have chaos everywhere. It's not, there actually was a lot of missionary activity, but kind of hard, but it's just like a civil war, right? Yeah. And then Mao shut it all down.

And then it started to open up again in 1979. And what's really interesting today that every, every Christian should know when they're thinking about China, when they hear numbers about how many Christians are in China, these are almost entirely indigenous movements at this point, right? So you got things like, you know, the true Jesus Church, the Jesus family, little flock, all this, all this stuff that doesn't mean anything to anybody, but it's all these random sort of indigenous groups. And after the cultural revolution, after they opened up, this became the major driving force in China.

So China still regulates like, all, all official Christian or religious organizations have to have to, um, how do you say they have to register and be regulated by the state, right? Even this is a whole conflict with the Pope and China always is like, well, your bishops are appointed by us, not you. That's, that's this whole thing. And that that's where we are.

And this is, yeah. And so that's it. There's basically like five, five or six waves of Christianity in China.

Yeah. That historian one you had the tongue to Isaac, you had the Mongols, Jesuits, Protestantism, and then increasingly evangelical stuff today. And yeah, these indigenous movements.

And that's, that's kind of the story of Christianity so far. But it's been, it's a massive growth. I mean, you probably heard it's just the number of Christians in China is a, yeah.

Yeah. Exponentially. Um, as it seems right now.

So, okay. Wow. That was a, I appreciate the summary at the end when you walked us through the different, the different waves.

So people can kind of get it in their head. Um, yeah. Was the Catholic present there mainly after the Mongols with the, when the Jesuits came in, is that when the Catholics kind of established a presence in China? I just, I didn't gather that how the Catholics really, was it the Jesuits? Okay.

The Jesuits, they came in during the Ming dynasty. That was, that was when that happened. And then they, they were there for a big time.

They were there for a while. They were big dogs. And then the, the missionary activity of Protestants in the 19th, 20th century, that really changed the, the, you know, the, the situation, right? But, you know, around 1949, you probably had 1 million Protestants and 3 million Catholics in China, but increasingly, obviously it's just shifted to the Protestant side of things, substantially to say the least.

Okay, cool. Yeah. Thanks for walking us through that.

So then, uh, now we've, you know, all of the, I mean, it depends on how you would define, um, atheism as a religion or not. I would define it as a religion. It's, it's, um, at least in America, it's defined as a religion in, um, the courts.

It's, it's, uh, covered under religious liberty, right? It's, um, it's a spiritual stance, I guess. But, um, so when did the religion of atheism, um, coming through the state, um, communism, you know, the position of the state and then the underpinning of communism is inherently atheistic, right? That's kind of like the metaphysical underpinnings of communism is atheism. So how did that come into the picture in China and, and how did that impact the spiritual state? Like this just huge upheaval, all this rich, like a spiritual, uh, tidings and changes all throughout the history of China.

And then all of a sudden this like really strong will of atheism, um, under the state comes in, you know, how did that have an impact on the, on the spiritual atmosphere in China and when did, how did all of that unfold? Yeah. So it's a really, really good question because the other side of things is that there's this whole spiritual soil, but the other part of religion in China is basically that the Chinese emperor was the locus of spiritual and

sort of temporal and spiritual authority, right? Like it was the earthly and spiritual leader of China, right? This is the Pope and Caesar in one. That's how it always was in China.

So that was the other side of things where part of the reason there's always this tension between that's the basic indigenous folk religion. And then this sort of state is also because the state has declared since forever, right? This is like a typical sort of son of God, right? It's son of heaven thing, right? That, that was spiritually leader. And so when 1949 after the fall of the Qing dynasty, and then the establishment of the communist state, not only is communism like you said, sort of by almost tautologically materialistic, right? Because everything is just a function of materialism and sort of material forces, but it, you know, it is a the actual leadership, the state structure was a spiritual was a spiritual or religious construction forever in China, literally for over, over 2000 years, if that makes sense.

So you didn't just move from a state that was, oh, religious folk religion, that's cool. Ignore, you can't have that anymore. And then now you have your atheist sort of officially atheist state, you have your state used to be a top to bottom religious entity, where the low, I mean, the actual rituals, all the rituals that would balance the seasons and do all this, this was all focused on the Emperor, his activity, his behavior, the construction of the calendars, and everything was all oriented around this stuff.

Even the when emperors could have children when they should try and conceive all this stuff was related to the cosmological structure of the universe, right? That's all gone too. So now the top, you basically, you've, you've beheaded, you've cut off your spiritual head here, right? And so it was actually, basically, what I'm getting at, this is way more traumatic than people even realize. That's the gist of it, right? So when the US occupied Japan, they kept the Emperor as we kept the Emperor as the spiritual and figurative head of state in China and Japan, because that was seen as a very smart thing to do, you don't want to just rip away, in Japan's case, like 1500 years of history, well, China just by itself did that.

And so that's a really big challenge. And the issue you have a huge problem on almost every level, because you have a state that was minimizing for a long time, this folk religion, and the big, also, a big thing people should keep in mind is that communism and isn't homogeneous, right? So communism has been adapted to China. And so, on and off, they weren't too worried, like during the 50s, 60s, 70s, they were persecuting everything, they're trying to figure out what part of their culture to maintain, what to ditch, what to keep.

And that was just a really tough time. And they were hitting everything, getting rid of Confucius, getting rid of Daoism, but then they kind of gave up on a lot of that. And now they're actually trying to preserve all sorts of their culture, but they don't want to actually allow it to have any sort of authority and authority beyond the state, right? So

that's the real challenge where even though the state no longer has spiritual authority, it still will not allow any other thing to have that spiritual authority, if that makes sense.

Very interesting. Yeah. I mean, that's been that's really for Christianity, Christians have never been persecuted because that they believe that Jesus is God, because there's plenty of gods out there.

Christianity has always been persecuted, mainly because they say Caesar is not Lord, or they, you know, for like the Christians, the Christians in China, you know, the atheist party is not Lord, I will obey God and not the party, right? So I mean, that's, as far as I understand church history, and the persecution of the church all throughout world history has always been mainly because they will not bow down to the state, the Christian won't. So yeah, that's interesting that they still will, they're in a place now where they want to preserve the culture, because they understand the importance of that. And they were unable to kind of stamp it out in China, is kind of what I'm picking up from you when you say that, that they were unable to really stamp it out.

So they've kind of given up on the endeavor of like trying to destroy it entirely, but to keep it maybe at bay so that it's not threatening the authority of the state or the party, right? The CCP. Is that pretty true? Yeah. So basically, what happened is they, right, they were trying to crush it for decades, right? We're going to be you know, it's materialism, it's atheism, etc.

That was a few decades of that. Then at with their reopening of their economy and their world, basically, their, their country to the world, they, you know, they also had to, they basically had to relax some of that too, right? Because they just couldn't, you needed to get things done in China, right? You couldn't just, you couldn't be prosecuting and persecuting everybody. So what happened is that you just had a massive, massive growth in Christianity, in particular, in China.

And so in just give some numbers, like in 2020, they probably the official number is like 30 million Christians in China, but that is like, holy, holy inaccurate, like, it's probably much closer to 100 million or more, because it's all underground. So China's problem is that it, you know, new couldn't fight things, but want to just regulate everything. So try to have all the churches, okay, you can all just register, just register, register, register, register, then you have all these party officials, ruining everything you're trying to do, if that makes sense, right? They approve all the pamphlets, they approve every all your materials, they have to look at all of the stuff you make all your sermons, all your it's just, it's right, they're trying to kill you through regulation, basically, even if you're still officially allowed to do it.

So everything's gone underground. And what happened starting in the 2010s, you started to get a big crackdown. So you'll you go type in Christianity in China, and you'll find churches being destroyed, you'll find all sorts of stuff like that.

And it's similar for Muslims in Xinjiang, but that's a sort of it's much more related to terrorism and sort of the Chinese occupation of that region with a minority population that's Muslim, and its connection to sort of farther central Asian countries, but with Christianity in particular, is much more just the overall threat of precisely what you said, where Christians if they think there's an authority greater than the Communist Party, it's not acceptable to Communist Party. And this isn't even the Communist Party. This is basically any Chinese state.

This is also part of the reason why the comm the other guy, the all the Chinese empires said the Emperor was God. Because then you couldn't get it you couldn't you couldn't avoid this, right? So that's a big reason to happen. No, that's, that's very interesting.

So I here's the question I still have, I guess, after all that, how did just tell us a little bit, because I really frankly don't know, like, how did communism get injected into the society, though? Did like was Mao reading Lenin and Marx and all these after the Bolshevik revolution? Like, was he reading their stuff? Did they start reading some of that literature? How did that all happen? When did communism get injected into the society? Right. So yeah, so late, late 19th century, so end of the Qing dynasty, you know, through the 1919 hundreds 1910s 1920s. This was just a period where every sort of radical idea about how to modernize about industrialization about the future about everything was just surging into China, right? And it was surging in because China was being beaten up, basically by everything right, everybody and everything in Japan and the West and all these ideas were coming in.

And one thing people it's always good to keep in mind with communism in general, is that it was a very hot like, you know, Marxism was a bit really big ideological movement. And we kind of forget it now. But a lot of it is just based one way to think about it, if you remove the spiritual dimension for a moment, is it's in a lot of ways, it's a reaction to the system of industrial labor that developed in the late 19th century, which is pretty horrific.

Like you can go read, you know, Charles Dickens and all the coal mining in the 1870s. That's that's going to make anybody a communist, right? That's basically even then, like it didn't quite mean what it what it meant. But communism and socialism, all these things were like appearing, they were new, they felt like the future, they felt like progress.

And China was obsessed with trying to find out what on earth it could do to fit into this modern world in a new and powerful way. And so in the 1920s, the Chinese Communist Party was formed. And it was, it came, you know, Mao a bunch of other people, they basically just joined, they formed it in Beijing.

But the truth is, they never read all that much marks, let's be honest here, they didn't read much of it. They didn't really need to because like I said, it's just this reaction to the

world, right, basically, and in China, in particular, this idea of labor, the struggles of the worker, right, as being a big motivating factor for communism in general, the life of a Chinese peasant is pretty horrific, historically, I mean, for 1000s of years, it is brutal. So there was to use the soil metaphor once more, the political on a political realm, like China is a great place to have a large ideological movement that says we are for the worker, no longer will it be about the ampere, right? It'll be like because the masses the 10s and 10s and 10s and hundreds of millions of suffering Chinese peasants that that is life in China, that is the way it's been.

So that was that's fertile soil. So one way to think about it is that Mao thought, hey, I can get a lot of troops, I can get a lot of recruits, if I start saying this. So that's part of it.

And the real truth is there was not much Marxism. In general, a lot of these like Marxism just becomes like a generic ideology for like a guerrilla movement that's trying to take power in a random country. And they don't ever read all that much about they have really like sort of on the ground things you have to figure out.

So if you're Mao, you need to figure out how to conquer China. That's actually much harder than trying to reading Maui gonna help you conquer Beijing, right? And that's the challenge. Typically what happens China breaks into pieces, and it breaks into all these familiar pieces.

And they all war against each other. And you need a warlord to come out on top. So if you're trying to take over China, you basically it's Mao.

I mean, Marxism was a great recruiting strategy, right? And so this is a kind of a glib way to talk about it. But that actually, anyone's interested, I'm actually going to come out with a podcast, it's called tales of the communist empire, it's going to really go into how the Communist Party works in China, what where it came from, why it is the way it is and where things are going. Because I get asked this question a lot.

And it's a, you know, it's the largest political organization administrative organization, human history has ever seen. So it's very complicated. And so I just tried to put into a tighter, tighter box that I think people could get something from.

But yeah, so 1920s, that's when they had the first meeting, there became a guerrilla movement, a revolutionary movement, then it fought a war, then became the official government. But that official government was mostly just built on old imperial Chinese lines modernized with like new administrative agencies first modeled after the Soviet Union and then modeled after the United States after 1970s. That's the gist of it, of how it kind of got there.

Okay, no, that's really helpful. And just a thought I had. I don't know if I want to save this.

Okay, well, so my next question, I'm going to connect what I'm about to say with the next question. But so the question would be how has the spiritual void in China been filled in part by Christianity specifically. So we've kind of already been talking about that.

But kind of what I want to follow it up with is you're talking about this fragmentation that's happened all throughout China's history. And they're always trying to find this leader that comes out on top and kind of unifies China. It's such a large country or large heritage, right? The geographic areas, massive.

And, and I just, from what you've been saying, and from just my personal understanding, there's always been these different dynasties and fracturing. And I'm curious if what these Christians in China see is this unifying figure of Jesus Christ, a Lord, a King, but he's not like Mao or he's not like these. No guns are in Japan, what would they be called Emperor, I guess, these emperors that rise up, they can they're humans, right? They can change their rule, they can change the laws on you, they can go from, you know, all of a sudden, this kind of folksy folk, Chinese folk religion, and then all of a sudden switched to atheism on the whole country, the whole country is kind of disenfranchised.

They don't understand, like, you know, I'm curious if Christ, the person of Jesus Christ as a king that has an objective word. And for me, as a Christian, as I grow in my faith, I'm understanding the absolute importance of objective reality in anchoring a society on values, right? So we always talk about the West being, you know, Jordan Peterson's huge on this of just Western values and how they're, they're unchanging. And they're kind of like the starting place of society.

And Eastern religions are so like you said, kind of abstract and shifty in the truths within, it's kind of subjective in nature. But then you have this atheistic, again, which is based on, you know, if you take them to the logical end, it's kind of subjective and Mal can kind of do surveillance when he wants to and kind of not. And I'm just curious if you think a lot of this, the spiritual boy in China being filled by Christianity is actually this unifying figure of Christ, this Middle Eastern man 2000 years ago, you know, not a white dude, I know people always get hung over, they just think it's a, it's a, you know, Jesus was not a white guy, you know what I mean? He probably looked like Osama bin Laden, like, that's probably what he looked like, something like that.

So, right, I mean, I think this factor's in, I think it's a good question. So I'm just curious if you, if you think that might be Christ is kind of pictured as that better King that doesn't change on you all willy-billy, but he's got an objective word in the Bible and I can follow him that way. He doesn't change on me, you know? Yeah, if you're, if you live in a world that is socially chaotic and politically fragmenting, and just very tumultuous and filled with change, the, the power of a sort of superordinate religious figure, a sphere or level of values that's either, you know, it's either the ground or it's the, you know, the higher state that you can sort of look towards instead of this changing world, that's very

powerful.

And in China, it's very, it was often very hard for anyone to believe the emperor was the, you know, son of heaven sometimes when he was just being deposed and he was being thrown into a building, like, because there's just coups, it's just this endless sort of imperial court intrigue, right? It's like, oh, Emperor's dead. It looks like the concubine is now basically running the show. It's just like, you know, and also you had often the emperor, the empires were very weak.

So it's just like, well, why are the, why are there Mongol hordes just running through the country if the emperor is the son of heaven, right? So all that kind of stuff does push towards a higher figure. And that's also part of the reason Buddhism became so prominent in China. It's also a figure who is above.

It's a very different type of figure in certain ways than, than Christ, but it's a very similar thing. Like there's more Buddhists in China than there are in India where it appeared, right? It's a very, it's a weird thing in some sense, but it is that a world that is so tumultuous and chaotic as China is, like you mentioned with this constant fragmentation with this ceaseless struggle for achieving that sort of temporal authority and unifying the land, which inevitably fails. There is a strong, strong push in the country to find something deeper, more objective, more eternal.

Wow. Okay. Yeah.

That's, that's kind of what I was picking up. I mean, I, I wouldn't have connected those dots unless you kind of laid it all out like that. But I think, I think that makes sense.

And that's an interesting bit of information and kind of take on what's going on in China. So you mentioned earlier that after the 19th century when Protestants come in or evangelicals, they come in and they evangelize and they've done a lot with the terms of starting hospitals and doing all this kind of infrastructure building, educating people. But now, you know, this movement of Christianity in China, you're saying is more indigenous or homegrown rather than like missionary led at this point.

Yes. How, when did that shift occur? And was it in response to the churches being kind of forced underground through the communist state? So there was kind of a unifying like, Hey guys, it's just kind of us now. The missionaries can't really get in as easily as they once could.

Right. It wasn't as open, maybe early. I don't know.

I'm just curious what your take is on that and how it ended up homegrown, you know? Well, the missionaries weren't allowed in. Yeah. That's what I was figuring.

Yeah. Okay. So the missionaries, they weren't allowed in after 1949.

So for 30 years basically. And then you open it up and what, you know, the people who were moving to China at that point, there was missionary activity, but it was really more business. It was economics.

It wasn't that. It wasn't really seen. And the truth is the scale of it and the fact you actually have to learn Chinese, right? You have to learn, you have to learn.

Missionary work in China is extraordinarily difficult in a lot of ways. Right. And so I mentioned like specific people like Robert Morrison, the material, all this kind of stuff, because you have to really absorb this worldview and this spiritual culture and this long history.

And then you have to figure out how Christianity applies to it or how, how it can be understood, right? How it can fit in into this history. So it takes a long time. And the basic fact is just that people were better at it.

It just was, they had that natural background. And if they became extremely full of faith, they knew their own journey. They knew their own, do you know what I mean? It's just, it's easier.

And also you also have to deal with the absolutely chaotic mess of like the cultural evolution and all this stuff in China where it's like, how do you just roll in? Hi boys. Hi boys. I know you've had a tough time.

I know recently, but, but Jesus is here. It's just like, it was, it was a tough sell in a lot of ways. And yeah.

And then it just built momentum. Like the real thing here is that this is Christianity developing in, in a country on its own, on its own term, in a sense, it's a very authentic form of Christian, depending what you mean by authentic, right? But it is, it is its own, it is a Christianity that is becoming rooted in this country. And it's like by itself, if that makes sense.

So I actually find that extremely fascinating. It's just dynamic. It's very different.

And I mean, just so people know, I mean, the number of communists, the, actually, what's funny is that they're actually right now, here's the interesting, there's probably, there's about 95, 96, 97, 98 million members of the communist party. There's probably more Christians in China than official communist party members. And by 2030, Christianity is almost certainly going to be, I mean, China is probably going to be the largest Christian nation.

Yeah. Wow. It's going to, it's going to beat out Mexico.

It's going to beat out Brazil, United States, just because like, in a lot of ways, it's just so

different, right? Like in Europe, you don't have, you have this growing lack of religion, right? We're growing atheism or non religiosity. Yes. But you also don't have this absolutely crushing violence experience of famine experience of war expectations of do you know what I mean? It's like you said, the pull to a higher source of reality of life is strong in China, right? It's bizarre, because it's strong, but it's like covered down.

And there's all these other it's very complex practice, Confucian stuff, there's the political stuff, there's, there's all this stuff. There's even this new Chinese nationalism, where Christianity is seen as a sort of something that's very foreign, even though it is authentically developing in China, you can't say, Oh, the Catholic Church did this. It's like, please, that doesn't make any sense.

Yeah, that's, that's interesting. And that honestly, for me as you know, I guess you can label me as an evangelical, I would just say I'm reform Baptist, like in my theology and kind of the flavor of Christianity, I guess. But that is my big critique of missions work, I think it's so foolish to just be giving just a bunch of white guys like 10s of 1000s of dollars when to get him on the plane to get over there, and then to live like he's living in the West, overseas, when you can just give a Chinese minister that knows the culture, he knows the language, he knows the people, he knows the story, and then to proclaim the gospel through that.

So I mean, I think that's so cool that that's the way it's gone in China. And I love that. I think that's so cool.

And so for any of you listening, hopefully, that's encouraging, you know, that there's people should remember that like some of the real, real missionary work, like that was just translating the Bible. Yeah, yeah, right. Because in a lot of ways, it should do obviously, you have to be able to get the books in, right? You can't just translate it, and they'll get burned or whatever.

But that's a real act, right? Learning the language, doing a phenomenal translation, having a communicated well, making sure it's understood, like that's a, that's major mission, I work and then right people who pick it up. Right? It's very interesting. So I do agree with you.

It's also really sort of interesting and different thing, right? Because there's a lot of missionary movement in the United States, but it's, it's troubled in a lot of ways, like kind of like exporting a lot of sort of other social gospels in the United States are like various progressive things. It's very similar, like, well, maybe that doesn't quite fit. And part of the reason I'm just people listening, the reason I'm so interested in this stuff is like, like I said, I'm the thing that gets me and the way I look at things is like, how do things emerge out of the country, right? Naturally, how did, why did you get Taoism and Confucianism and this political, authoritarian mega state in China, for that, thousands of years? Why did that happen? Right? And so when I see people try to do some missionary

stuff where it's like, you know, it kind of feels like some Peace Corps stuff where it's like, all right, I'm gonna go to the Philippines and teach them to do all these things.

It's in the moment I leave, they're going back to what they were doing. Right? So this is interesting stuff, for sure. Yeah, it is.

Okay, so we can kind of move on as we kind of slowly get to the end here, because I don't want to keep you forever. So what is the future for Christianity in China? You kind of talked about how you think it's, you know, it's going to grow a lot, that kind of thing. So can maybe can you flush that out a little bit more and put some legs on it? How tolerant is the CCP of Christianity? You mentioned Hong Kong, really, there's a lot of these historically Christian hospitals, right? So where's Hong Kong going? And are they going to try and split or secede? Is that even a thing that would happen? And are the protests there in Hong Kong fueled more by Christian worldview? And there's like four questions there so we can revisit.

Yeah, yeah, it's fine. I'll just kind of try to move through them. Yeah.

So start with the future Christianity in China. Well, growth, huge growth, like it's had like six to 7% growth for like years, that's probably not going to stop as the economics in China go down, like as it starts to struggle more and more makes sense to see more of a same, let's look upwards, right? Hey, it looks like we're not becoming billionaires and having our own mansions and stuff. So that's not happening.

So you got to look for something else. That's that's a fact. But also we got to get ready.

Like, like I said, the Communist Party and not just the Communist Party. Again, like I, I was encouraged people like, even if this wasn't an officially communist atheist government, you would see it have massive, massive problems with religion in China. Because it's just like I said, the, the there's, you actually pointed out there's that spiritual soil that's very fertile and really active and want stuff.

But there's a political state which needs control. It needs authority and cannot abide other authorities, right? That includes spiritual ones. So that is a, this is a major point of tension.

We're going to see a major clash between Christianity and, and, and communism in China, basically. There's that story. And yeah, so it's growing.

It's growing that crazy. There's churches are being destroyed, people are being sent underground. But you know, anyone who knows the story of Christianity knows that that doesn't quite always work like exactly as they imagine.

It pushes underground. And but, but you know, the other thing is that it's also not exactly the Christianity that, that people remember, right? It's not, it's not your

Christianity, I guess, is the way to say it, right? In the same way that, you know, after the Protestant revolution, you now have like 400 or so flavors of Protestant Christianity, right? This is actually what the Catholics had said for a long time. They said, if you do this, you're just going to fragment, right? You're not going to have one thing anymore.

And it's like, well, okay, you were right about that. But what's also happened is that this also means that what's going to appear in China is going to be its own thing. But kind of like, you know, there's a global Christian community, in the sense of could be connected to Jesus and, and a church, a capital C church, regardless of what that is, even if you have your own different one, right, there will still be that connection.

But it is, it will be different. And I think one important thing for people to remember, actually, no one knows this, I'll just kind of tell people an insane story, one of the crazy stories in Chinese history, and it relates to Christianity. And it's about what I mean, when I say a showdown, just the Communist Party does not, they're scared of what Christianity means.

And not just because of this history of Christianity elsewhere in the world, and blah, blah, blah, Roman Empire, they don't care about any of that. They care about the 19th century, when those Protestant missionaries came in, they write the pastor, all these books, and there was a guy named Hong show Hong show Chen, who was basically the anyways, basically, there's a guy, he failed a couple of confusion, interest exams, basically, that the high school exit exam of ancient China. And he basically, he became a major Christian.

And he started a movement. And there's basically, basically what happened is you had a giant civil war in China, based off of a Christian group, the Taiping heavenly kingdom, everybody should check this out. It's called the Taiping.

They call the Taiping rebellion. But this is the Taiping Civil War, fundamentally, and you had a guy who declared himself the I believe it was the brother or the younger son of Jesus Christ. And he proceeded to conquer southern China.

And he almost got support from the British. The British had supported him, this guy probably could have run China to somebody or at least run southern China. And yeah, so this was also, people don't realize this is not like a minor war.

This was before the 20th century, this was the bloodiest war in human history. This was a massive event event, right? So right now, if you go if you're in China, and you go and try to read about Taiping Civil War, stuff like that, Taiping rebellion, but again, it's so big to call this a rebellion is absurd, right? It's absurd. Taiping Civil War, this is a massive event.

This was a basically a Christian indigenous Christian, millenarian sort of revolutionary

group, that kind of like the Communist Party, a few, you know, 100 years later, almost took over China. And so that is a major thing that's in the Communist Party's mind. They've wiped the slate clean with this stuff.

So if you go to like, into Nanjing, you go to a place in China, where there's a lot of historical memories and stuff of this, and museums and stuff, they've red washed this whole thing, Jesus, Christianity, all this, it's cut out. And they basically say the Taipings were a bunch of revolutionaries protesting the feudal the feudal imperial state, right? They're basically putting them in the line of the a proto Communist Party, right? That is not the story that happened. This was a revolutionary Christian movement that proceeded to create the large that got involved in the largest war, basically in human history up till that time.

So the Communist Party is insanely, insanely aware of that, right? This is the 19th century, this is the century of humiliation, this is when all the changes came to China. And this is a huge thing. So you're not going to see something that quite like that.

But that is actually part of the Christian story in China. So when people are thinking, oh, it's gonna, Christianity is gonna reform China into maybe a nicer place. No, it's not gonna reform China to a nicer place.

It's that's just there's too many other problems. And there's this history that is, you know, it pushes towards persecution and purses pushes towards a crackdown. Because, well, look what happened the other time, right? And just some people know, this war, it hit its peak about the same time as the American Civil War.

And this is just one of those quirks of China, where even though you had a civil war, at the same time as the American Civil War, there was way more bloody, way, way, way, way more bloody and violent. Nothing has changed in China, right? There's no grand, like after the Civil War is like the US is one country, it's like, even though people are freaking out right now, probably not having another Civil War anytime soon, it kind of solved that question. China, it's still not solved.

You're still ready for maybe another rodeo, another battle royale. And that's just a major shift. And so when religions get involved, it's just, it makes it dicier.

And so that's what's gonna happen. I mean, I don't, I don't really have any prediction for like, where exactly the that like, will lead, right? Like, I don't think you'll see like an officially Christian country in China. But it would that would just cause even more problems in a way.

But that's kind of where things are going. So the CCP is not all that tolerant of Christianity, it thinks it thinks it might lead to another Taiping rebellion. That's one way to think about it.

And also, it just doesn't like as a basic fact, the fact that it asserts a higher authority. And then for Hong Kong Christianity, Hong Kong is right, that was a major entrance point for everything into China. That was actually where a lot of the original missionary work started.

And it was a British colony. So there's a huge Christian out there. And like I said, there's hospitals is all that kind of stuff.

That's really good. The protests aren't that fueled by a Christian specific worldview, it's more the economic and political more the economic position of Hong Kong in the world, right? Their whole position in the world material position in the world depends on a specific relationship to the rest of the world and a specific relationship to China that is now being destroyed. Right.

And so that's the basis of the conflict. It's like they're going to be flattened down and to be indistinguishable from any other Chinese city. Right.

So that makes you no longer really Hong Kong, you're just a coastal Chinese city, right? And so I think you asked about them seceding. That ain't gonna happen, man. That's, that's like, that's, that's an open invitation for another coastal Chinese city to see maybe they'll just join with Taiwan, maybe the Taiwan, maybe they'll just get with Japan.

It's just, no, not gonna happen. Okay. Okay, thanks for that.

So then my last question before we kind of wrap things up here. You already alluded to this, that this, you don't see this happening, but this is just a thought I have been having, you know, wouldn't it be wild if we saw a religious led revolution in China, kind of like the Taiping, whatever Taiping revolution or uprising, I don't forget what the specific term would be. But if we saw something like that, similar to the American revolution reaction against Britain's tyranny.

So they react against, you know, Mao Zedong's tyranny, they win. And then China becomes this kind of beacon of like kind of Christianity and like the hub of Christianity. And then we see America turn into a socialistic totalitarian state, which is what I think we see, we see happening that that would be my take.

And what I see happening with things like vaccine mandates, things like that. So do you think we could us in China can flip off at all? Is that even that's funny? You said no, I feel like I stole the thunder from this question a second before. But yeah, I feel bad.

But yeah, the gist of it is Taiping rebellion, right? No, so it's it's tough. And here's the truth is that even if you were a religious group, it wouldn't matter, even a Christian version of the Chinese state would end up being tyrannical. It's rooted in the region, in the way it has to govern itself, the large complex geographies, the large, diverse populations, the weak economics in many regions, the strong economics and others, but

connected to other parts of the world and not towards China's own interior, all that kind of stuff is a big reason why you get this tyrannical state.

And you're probably not going to see, I mean, you could see big religious movements in China, you'd see maybe even religious regions, God, who knows, like, depending on how the demographics all shift, you can see that kind of stuff. But China's staring through the barrel of a really, really bad future. Right.

So I don't know how much your audience is aware of just bad things that are happening in China, they might still believe a lot of this triumphal sort of narrative, it's about to take over the world. China's got a lot of problems coming down the chain. And so that is, that's probably that side of it.

And as for the American flip into the other side, you know, I don't see it. I see how a lot of people are really worried about it. But I will say that the world that we're in, where you have slower growth, you have less, you have less of a hopeful vision for a global humanity, you have less of a sense that any of our sort of social dogmas are really rooted in anything, that our religions are very fragmented, they don't seem to cohere communities like they used to all this stuff is just making it extraordinarily divisive, right among all sorts of other things.

I just threw out a couple that came to mind in the first second, but it's tough. And yeah, it's I don't think we will ever though ever, ever, ever get anywhere near as authoritarian as China is people. Anyone who thinks that just has no idea how bad China is.

There's more cameras in China, China than there are people in the United States, just as an example. Yeah, yeah. And I don't mean like your phone camera, to be clear.

Yeah, it's totally different world. Yeah, they have a social credit system. I mean, it would.

I mean, who knows what we could see happening in the rest of the world modeling after the toilet. I will say that that's a big thing. So China, one of the things that's a really big story, people should always keep in mind, everybody listening and worried about the United States, worried about how it might be emulating China or trending on its track.

One of the real challenges right now is that there's big challenges throughout all of our countries, right? Socially and with all these new technologies, how to integrate them, how to make families, how to foster relationships, how to have children at all, that kind of thing, and not just depopulate. And the thing is that China, because it has this hands on state for every problem, is the first often the first attack or not the first title, it is often tackling all of these questions. Like other states will be like, Oh, we don't know what to do yet.

We're not going to just do some crazy thing. China's like, No, we're going to just go for it. So they're tackling the questions and that just makes them really prominent, right?

They're like, Oh, video games are probably not what a kid should do.

And you probably shouldn't just play video games all day long. In the United States, we're not going to just demand that they have quotas or you're not allowed to go over an hour. Like maybe a parent can do that, but not the government.

China, they're just like, No, you better, you have an ID, you have to do this, you have to do that. And they'll just, they'll cut it out the at the knees, right? So that's a big thing where the very fact the US won't try to regulate as much, it won't try to do as much, it opens the field for people to look at China and for China to try and do because China will do all these things, it will try and regulate crypto, it will try and regulate all sorts of online behavior, it will try and have, you know, controls over pornography, it will try and have everything. And a lot of people, regardless of what you think about the Chinese state and all of its tyrannical activity, they do think, Hey, a lot of things have gotten out of hand, why are they doing it? And we're not right.

And so that does push, particularly more on the left where they tend to have plans for every sort of heart of society, there's more of a push towards doing something, right? And the more China is doing something, the more you feel that you like, like you need to do something like the United States is going back to the moon, because China says going back to the moon in a lot of respects. There's that push, man. And this is that era, if you're in an era of competition, the US has kind of been begging for someone to compete with, right? That's one of the reasons our country's been so listless and weird and doesn't know what to do.

It's like, we're like, we're primed to compete in a way. And once the Soviet Union was gone, it was just like, loosey goosey, like, I don't know, whatever, like, oh, let's just what are you doing Iraq? That's weird. Like, uh, so now the whole thing is trying to like focusing, and it's all focusing on China.

And it's hard to balance, right? If you don't have that, the core sense of American values, or maybe Western values, or anything like that, you're trying to just compete with a authoritarian mega state. Well, it's kind of easy to just think, well, I guess we got to be more like an authoritarian mega state. But still, like I said, I don't think we'll get that far.

It's just, it's so the whole system is so different, right? So I encourage people to check out the podcast I'm coming out with not to hype any of my own stuff, but just like it goes into the details about how the state functions, because it's hard to kind of lay out in a quick one or two words. But it's so different from the United States, it kind of boggles the mind. And the US wouldn't be able to shift that far, right? You have real constitutional protections.

They're not paper like in China, law is just law is just something that the Communist Party can say you did wrong, like, it's just whatever they think you might have done

wrong. Like, you could you could be breaking 50 laws right now. But if the Communist Party didn't quite care, you're not breaking any laws versus you could be doing everything right.

And if they want to target you, you've broken 50 laws. It's just it's not the same sort of thing at all. Wow.

Yeah, that's what that's a sounds wild to live over there. But there's a lot of people that do it obviously, billions. I'm gonna leave it again.

Yeah. Yeah, you were over there for a little bit to studying. Well, I think, you know, we've talked for a while and I am, you know, I think we're okay to wrap it up.

So you've already dropped your podcast a little bit, which I'm happy you did that. I mean, I want people to know how they can learn more if they're interested, right. So tell us a little bit about your podcast, what you usually cover on there.

Is it only China or do you talk about other things, but you have this podcast coming out here soon. You know, and you're still in the process of writing this book, China unravel and I'm curious if you looked up my note, I said that if you go on Merriam Webster, ravel and unravel literally mean the same thing, even though it seems like they're, they would unravel with negate ravel or whatever, but they both mean to untangle to ravel. Oh, untangle and then to unravel something is to also untangle it.

They mean the same thing. It's funny. So you could also call your book bizarre China ravel ravel.

Yeah. I'm going to say that at some point. That's a good one, man.

I had no idea. You, that's like pretty rare, right? You just have a word that like the exact prefix is just irrelevant. It's like, yeah, you didn't have it there or not.

Yeah. I thought it was very odd when I learned that I was like, okay, but yeah, tell us about your podcast and the book, you know. Yeah, sure.

So the books, like I, I think I mentioned earlier, it's like, that that's a long time coming to be working on that hard. And then basically when the pandemic hit, I realized I just finished the first draft of the book and I was like, Oh God, like pandemic just spews out of China. No one else that's going on.

So I started putting out podcasts episode, just describe what's happening. So first three episodes are about, you know, birth of the pandemic, what really happened to the extent we can know, what can we expect to know what we can't that kind of stuff? What's the lockdown situation? What's that really about all that kind of stuff? And then I just started to explain parts about China, right? So a lot of it is more sort of what's going on now,

how China functions, like military stuff, political stuff. I have a three part series on Hong Kong.

Where did Hong, why did Hong Kong appear? Where what's its future? Right? That's a really good one for people. So that stuff's cool. I also have a YouTube channel where I basically just do right now.

It's just some live streams. Eventually I'll be putting up videos and stuff, but they are just kind of mouth off. People really liked listening to me.

You can only check that out. Otherwise, yeah, do at your own, at your own risk, I'd say. And then yeah, check out, I also have a website, www.jasonchefdel.com. It's got articles, other stuff.

And also I do a good amount of interviews to anyone who's sort of interested in this. There's all sorts of dozens of interviews where I talk about this stuff. Although it's again, not as much the spiritual, the deeply historical stuff or sort of cultural stuff.

It's much more right now. Everyone's so worried about China, about the world that part of what I'm doing is trying to explain where, where our world is going after COVID. Right? So COVID has really accelerated a lot of these challenges.

And what I was trying to do with the, what I'm doing in the book is just explaining how China got to where it is and why this whole thing is basically going to unravel. So the, the point of the name was that it's like, you know, you, now you'll understand China if you read the book, but also you also understand why China is going to unravel. That is sort of the, yes, Nick.

So you're going to, you're going to rival China and, and you're the other, exactly. Yeah. And so that's, that's the gist of it.

And, but the real thing is also is what happens next, right? We're all kind of in a holding pattern. We're all just hoping, you know, thinking 2019 is coming back, but really a lot of things are coming back and it's, it's, we got to know what the world's going to look like. And when the China story starts to implode, that's when we really know the world we're in the next phase.

And one of these, I'm so interested in it is because it's, this is the last real challenger to the United States. If, if, you know, people haven't checked out the world map in a while, it's kind of been a rodeo with basically every country. And I'm not a sort of America first in some generic sort of sense, but I do think something really profound has happened if the global political hierarchical competition has now effectively ended and people don't quite realize that the United States has been top dog in the world for like 150 years.

And this has been through more technological changes than humanity has ever seen,

like all the thousands of years of history before. So it's more, it sounds like, oh, 150 years. That's a long time.

Yeah. But it's even more time than you really think. If you account for the rapidly accelerating technological growth that happened as well, right? It means that the United States has been, you know, through the nuclear era, the jet era, the train era, that all these, as all these advances have come biotechnology, it's still been the USA at the top and China is really the last attempt at another country to try and get things done.

Anyone who thinks Brazil is going to do it is wrong. Anyone who thinks India is going to do it is wrong. It's like a million reasons why.

And just kind of at this point, it's probably kind of obvious that that's the way it is. And what's really important now is to figure out, you know, I think a lot of people are very interested in this is like, who are we as a country? What are we here to do? And that can be a religious sense of like, well, maybe there's something greater than just being top dog and getting fat and lazy and stupid and ignoring your kids and watching TV and just laying there like, yeah, both on a personal, national level or whatever. And you have to understand and part of the reason that this book goes into so much depth and the reason I tried to give people this, even just while we were talking this depth, this understanding of the deeper history of Christianity in China, and the deeper history of the religious and spiritual worldview in China is because even if you are who you are, you have to really, you have to start to get to know these other parts of the world.

And it's very important because it can really empower you if you know who you are first, and then you understand these other places in the world, you can take the best parts of everything. And so that's part of what we really have to start doing. And so, yeah, that's it.

So guys, go check me out all those places. And if you're interested in any of the things I just said about why I'm kind of doing this, it might be interesting to follow along. Yeah, that's, that's great.

So yeah, I think that's it guys. That was Jason Scheftel, Scheftel, right there, close enough. Yeah, thanks a lot for joining me.

I appreciate you with all the knowledge, all the things you've learned sharing that with the audience and me. It was a pleasure to have you here. And I usually end with a goxology, 1 Timothy 117, to the King of the ages of mortal and visible, the only God, to be honored and glory forever and ever.

Amen. Solely, day out.

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