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#185 Questions on Crucifixion and Atonement (Replay)

September 14, 2023



Ask NT Wright Anything - Premier

From the archives: Just in time for Easter we bring you a show (recorded before lockdown) in which Tom answers listener questions on the crucifixion, the nature of atonement and forgiveness. • Subscribe to the Ask NT Wright Anything podcast: <https://pod.link/1441656192> • More shows, free eBook, newsletter, and sign up to ask Tom your questions: <https://premierunbelievable.com> • For live events: <http://www.unbelievable.live> • For online learning: <https://www.premierunbelievable.com/training> • Support us in the USA: <http://www.premierinsight.org/unbelievableshow> • Support us in the rest of the world: <https://www.premierunbelievable.com/donate>

Transcript

Thank you for joining us on this NT Wright podcast today. Before we launch into the programme, I want to be sure you don't miss out on an inspiring free resource from the archives of The Unbelievable Podcast titled, In Conversation with Tim Keller. As one of the leading apologists of our day, Tim was powerfully gifted to communicate the truth of the Gospel with relevance, windscreenness, and clarity.

While we're deeply saddened by his passing, we thank God that Tim's ongoing legacy of teaching and inspiration, which will continue to be a part of the opportunity to continue to equip and empower the worldwide church in the years to come. In this free PDF download, your catch at glimpse of Tim Keller's pastoral heart, an incredible mind as he talks about issues of theology, faith, and suffering. Download your copy today by visiting premierinsight.org-nt-right. That's premierinsight.org-nt-right. Welcome to this replay of Ask NT Wright Anything, where we go back into the archives to bring you the best of the thought and theology of Tom Wright, answering questions submitted by you, the listener.

You can find more episodes, as well as many more resources for exploring faith at premierunbelievable.com, and registering there will unlock access through the newsletter to updates, free bonus videos, and ebooks. That's premierunbelievable.com.

And now for today's replay of Ask NT Wright Anything. We'll be back for another edition of the show with myself Justin and Tom sitting down to take your questions today on the crucifixion and atonement.

And that's obviously very relevant to the period we're in of Lent as we approach Easter. Lent in some ways has been rather revived as a Christian tradition, I've noticed in recent years. I think whereas once it was seen as the domain simply of Anglo-Catholics and that sort of thing, people outside of those traditions increasingly observing it in some way, doing something to market the 40-day period up to Easter.

I suppose you've always yourself acknowledged and done something to reflect the Lent period. Sure, I mean a lot depends on what's going on in one's life, and sometimes I've had to be travelling for 10 days in the middle of it and going to different places and being taken out to meals, and it's very hard to keep a strict discipline in the way that you might, if you were at home all the time. But yes, I grew up in a very ordinary middle of the Road Anglican Church where it's just assumed Ash Wednesday introduces you to Lent, and now we have these 40 days coming up to Holy Week and Easter, and Holy Week and Diggly Good Friday and Easter.

What's always happened to be about that is that we often do Lent quite well in the sense of being intentional about either taking something up or doing without something or saving the money we would have spent on alcohol or chocolate or whatever it is, giving it to some good cause. But then we don't do Easter in the same way, and I have a problem about that. Easter too is a great 40-day time, but that ought to be a celebration.

And so I think it's characteristic of Western Christianity to be very conscious of the penitential season and then we have a big party on Easter Day, and then we forget about it all. So yes, everywhere that I have lived in every job that I've done demands a different kind of discipline for Lent, and this year because we've only just moved house and tried to settle in and figure out what's going on and haven't even settled into a regular family pattern of church going yet, we're still trying to figure all that out. But yeah, I grew up with people going to Lent and Bible studies or deciding to read a book for Lent, whatever.

The trouble with that is I'm always reading books, I'm not quite sure. It wouldn't make much different. And do you find yourself usually with a nation cross on your forehead? Oh, often.

Ashwin. Yes, not always, but often. And when I was teaching in St Andrews, if I had to be in class for a seminar early on, I couldn't go to the funny looks.

Or do you make people always start? Probably not, because there would be other people around. Likewise. I suspect that if I walk around Oxford, this Lent, that way would be the same.

I read a fascinating story, actually, a bit off subject, of a young man who, as an atheist, as a skeptic at least, had started attending quite a high Anglican church and went along to their Ash Wednesday. And so it had quite a profound impact on him, this act of receiving the cross and went into his workplace during the rest of the day and discovered actually, it helped to identify who the other Christians were, because, and he got, led to him being given someone, connecting him with him, giving him a copy of Seis Lewis's books. He became a Christian in the end.

So there you go. That's God moves in many serious ways. Great.

We're talking about the crucifixion today. People always have questions on this. Obviously, you've written books on the subject as well, Tom.

But let's start with something that's come up in a couple of ways. Can you explain the necessity of Jesus's crucifixion, specifically as a blood sacrifice in inverted commas? Why the necessity of sacrifice at all from Abel on? And how specifically was Jesus's crucifixion the end, the telos, the abolishment of blood sacrifice? Beyond a simplistic, he was the perfect man, so his sacrifice was enough. How is it required at all? And conversely, how is it enough for the almost infinitude of humanity's sins, both transgression and missing the mark? Simple questions, says Fred at the end.

Yes, thanks, Fred. Really simple questions. There's a major problem here in that we are so distanced from the idea of animal sacrifice.

That there's not something that we do or have done in the ancient world. Most people lived quite close to the land. Many people were either themselves or immediate family involved in agriculture and with animal husbandry.

And you just would be used to killing animals for all sorts of reasons, either for food or because they were sick or offering them in some sort of sacrifice. So that in the ancient world, this was perfectly normal for us. It's like, yuck, I never killed an animal, knowing me in that way.

And the other thing is that the idea of sacrifice, we have assumed, has the meaning that it has in some forms of pagan religion, which is trying to please a deity by doing something cruel or, certainly, deadly to an animal. Or particularly having an animal being punished because of my sin, something. And when people hear the phrase blood sacrifice, I think all of that stuff is going on in the back of their minds.

I want to say, just let's rinse that out and start again where the Bible starts because in the Book of Leviticus and Numbers, where you get the ancient Israelite sacrificial laws, it's not about this animal being punished for the sins of the people. If that was so, you couldn't offer the animal to God because it would be impure, to be unclean. The only animal that very definitely has sins placed on it is the one animal that you don't sacrifice

to, maybe the scapegoat, exactly, it's good not to the desert.

For Azharzil, whatever that means, different theories as to what that might mean. But it's a way of saying, yes, we need to get rid of our sins, it's a great visual aid for that. Once a year, that's what you do on the day of the Talmud.

So what is sacrifice about? And this is where the letters of the Hebrews often get invoked, and it's all about earth and heaven, and about the temple, or the tabernacle in the wilderness, as the place where earth and heaven are joined. And this relates to one of the biggest problems that we have about the whole conception of Christianity in the Western world, which is that the Bible isn't about how do we sinners that we are get to live with God. It's about how does God, in his love and grace, get to live with us sinners that we are.

And the temple is the sign that God wants to live with and amongst his people. But if that is to be so, then because God is utter life and utter goodness, he cannot dwell with anything that reeks of death in the sense of sin, corruption, decay, etc. God is the life giver, he says yes to creation, not no to creation.

And so God provides, according to Exodus, the physical numbers, God provides the life blood of the animal as the way of cleansing the sanctuary from all the pollution that would otherwise prevent him from coming to live there. Now, when you fast forward from that and see the language that Jesus uses, which is complicated, and the language then that the early Christians use, it's something to do with what Paul says in Romans 5 verse 1. Since we're justified by faith, we have access to this grace in which he says, this is temple language, and that God comes to dwell with us because Jesus has been, in that sense, the perfect sacrifice because his blood has cleansed the heavenly temple, which now gets joined to the earthly world so that now, even though we have been sinners, God can dwell with us. And that is what then kickstarts Paul's whole theology of the early spirit, that the spirit dwells in and with us now.

Now, this is huge. I've just listed about 10 different layers of theological investigation. I just want to say, hold off from the modern anxiety about blood sacrifice, and let's try and get our heads around, which is difficult, the whole biblical idea of the reason, just note, in Leviticus numbers, the animals are not killed on the altar.

That happens in some pagan sacrifices. The animals are killed somewhere else. The moment of killing isn't important.

What matters is that the blood, which is the life, a gift from God of life, then cleanses and rinses the sanctuary. Now, let me be quite clear. This does not mean that I am denying something you could loosely call substitution retonement.

That phrase means many different things, many different people. Many people have

quite wrongly identified the sacrificial cult with substitution retonement. Once you separate those out, you can understand them both in their own way.

One other point, which, and there's enough agendas for our three PhDs here, the Passover sacrifice and the regular round of daily sacrifices, particularly then the day of atonement, are very, very different things. There's nothing in the Passover sacrifice about forgiveness of sins. They come together in Isaiah 53, interestingly, and Jesus himself seems to draw them together, because the state that Israel had got itself into, which Jesus is responding to and sharing, is that Israel is in long-term exile because of her sins, so that the exiles both need forgiveness of sins and a new exodus.

The sacrifice of the Passover and the sacrifice of the day of atonement, which are quite separate things, get joined together by Jesus and explored together by the early church, and then forgotten about by later Christians, because we're coming with the wrong conceptualities. So it's a tough set of issues. Now, you've implicitly mentioned the book where you lay a lot of this out in one of your recent books, *The Day the Revolution began*.

And I'll skip to Victor's question here, and we will come back to penal substitution as well. There's got some questions on that. But Victor is in Switzerland and says, I very much appreciate several of Tom's books thrilled to hear him in person in Basel some years ago.

I've been struggling through *The Day the Revolution began* for over a year with gaps. I think I've grasped the main points. Jesus came to fulfill God's covenant promise to raise up a forgiven and liberated host of people from all nations, and will one day establish a perfect combined New Heavens and New Earth for all of us.

But why? Oh, why? Do the arguments, especially Romans 3, have to be so complicated. And I think even just hearing your previous explanation now, a lot of people will have said, well, it was always very simple, you know, when the gospel presentation was made. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

You know, your bad person, Jesus took your sins, now you're forgiven, and now you can have life with God. And a lot of what you're expounding suddenly makes it sound more complicated to say. Yes, I fully appreciate that.

And I've spent my life oscillating between simplicity and complexity, and I've written three books with the word simple in the title. One of the times my publishing editor said to me, Tom, I need to explain to you the word simple, to which my response was, and I've made this several times. If I'm in St. Andrews, as I was for 10 years, and somebody says, how do I get from here to Glasgow now? Please keep it simple.

I could say, just keep going west and a bit south and you can't miss it. But it would be

kinder to point out that there is a very wide river in the way, two miles wide at its narrow point, and that if you try and avoid that, there's a couple of ranges and mountains. Now, am I making it more complicated? Yes, I am, but maybe that would help.

I mean, the one thing I would say in all of this is I love exploring the depth and the complexity, but we don't need to necessarily understand all that for it to be efficacious in our life. Absolutely. A long time ago, I heard a very wise teacher, John Wenham, who was in Oxford when I was on to graduate, gave a talk on the atonement, and he rattled through all these different theories and laid it all out brilliantly.

And somebody said at the end, how much of this does somebody have to know in order to be a Christian? And he smiled and said, very little, something about the love of God reaching out in Jesus and his death and embracing you. So that's enough to get started. It may not be enough to keep you going, but it's certainly enough to get started.

And that's absolutely right. You know, Jesus loves me. This I know for the Bible tells me so.

That's pretty basic. But then when things get tough, you need to understand more and more and more. And it's like many things in life.

It's like music. You know, somebody joins a choir and can't I just sing the tune? And well, actually you have to understand about sharps and flats. You have to understand about pausing and breathing and so on.

Oh, that makes it so complicated. I just like singing in the bathroom. Okay, you go and sing in the bathroom.

Please don't join the choir unless you're prepared to learn the details. Sure. And the same with anything that's worth doing.

But Romans 3 21 to 26. And there are several other passages in Paul like this. It's as though Paul could have taken that and written a whole letter explaining it.

And I suspect that one of the reasons that people fell out of windows sometimes when he was preaching all night was that he was explaining it in great detail. Just explain for those who don't have photographic memory like you do. What is the content of Romans 3 21 to 26.

Well Romans is in four great movements. And the first movement is chapters one to four. And Paul sets up the problem.

And it's a multi-layered problem about how can God's purposes be maintained in the world? And how can God's covenant faithfulness to Israel, to the covenant and to the creation be fulfilled? It looks as though it's all gone horribly wrong. And then in 3 21 he

says, but now the covenant faithfulness of God has been revealed from God's faithfulness to human faithfulness basically through the death of Jesus. But then what he does is he scrunchies together his argument in a very tight little passage verses 24 25 and 26 where he says, okay, all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

Justified by his grace as a gift through the redemption which is in Messiah Jesus, redemption is an Exodus word, whom God put forward as a, and the Greek is Hylasterion. The Hylasterion is the mercy seat in the tabernacle with the cherubim either side, which is the place where God comes to meet with his people and meet with them in grace where the blood is sprinkled. And it's to be received by faith so that he might display his righteousness, his covenant faithfulness to prove that in the present time he is faithful to the covenant and that he justifies the one who has faith.

The faith in Messiah Jesus. Now, phew, that's a lot. But he's hurrying on because the point he really wants to make at the end of chapter 3 and then in chapter 4 is this is how God has been faithful to the covenant with Abraham to create a worldwide sin forgiven family.

And now we can move on to chapters 5 to 8, 9 to 11, 12 to 16. But it's as though at several points he's got, I mean, think of it like a telescope. He could have expanded it.

He could have written much more, taken each of those points and spelled it out. But for the sake of the logic of this argument, he's telescoped it together and we have with labor and difficulty to spell it. Talking about a similar passage the other day in Oxford, in 2 Corinthians 5, where he says the love of Christ constrains us because one died for all, therefore all died and he died for all.

So those who live might live no longer for themselves. But for him who for their sake died and was raised. Whoa, wait a minute, for hang on.

Can you just take us through that slowly? And again and again he does this. So I think it has to be complicated because maybe it's something to do with the strange inspiration. It's something to do with the strange inspiration of Scripture that God knows and poor knew that we need to be transformed by the renewing of our minds.

And I think sometimes the dense and complicated passages are given within an overall structure which is wooing us in to say, hey, stop on this wall. Dig around, try and figure it out. And then that's when you start to see it.

It's amazing. I don't think you would have been a eutuchicus leaning out the window and falling asleep if you'd been there with Paul unpacking some of this stuff. Well who knows? It was a hot night.

It was. Did you know that this month marks the third anniversary of Premier Insight? It's a real season of celebration but looking ahead there's also a challenge I need to share

with you today. Due to rising costs and the pressure of inflation there's a \$37,500 need that must be met this month to keep Premier Insight moving forward with strength.

The good news is that we've been offered a \$3,750 matching grant, 10% of our need which effectively doubles your gift. But whatever we fail to match we lose, that's why I'm asking you to give a special anniversary gift to keep programs like this NT Right podcast on the air and equip a generation of Christians to live out their faith with clarity, conviction and confidence. In fact your gift is so important.

We want to say thanks for whatever you give today by sending you a copy of Pastor Tim Keller's best-selling book, *The Reason for God, Belief in an Age of Skepticism*, a must-read for every thinking Christian. To request your copy simply visit [premierinsight.org slash NT Right](http://premierinsight.org/slash/NT%20Right). Once again that's [premierinsight.org slash NT Right](http://premierinsight.org/slash/NT%20Right).

Thank you for your generosity and partnership. Enjoy the rest of your episode. Two related questions here as I promised on penal substitutions.

Now this comes around every time and obviously, well as you're here some people have some sort of worries about you Tom on this front. So Stephen in Austin, Texas said I recently had a conversation with my pastor about listening to the Ask NT Right Anything podcast and was very surprised by the response. I was told that I have to look out for NT Right because of his beliefs.

Most notable was that Mr Right does not believe in the idea of penal substitution re-atonement. I found articles that dispute this accusation but they were published more than a decade ago. Could you please explain your views on the subject as they are today? Thank you and thank you for Paul's biography.

I found it fascinating, inspiring and went through an entire tin of book to heart. And there's another one here and I'll just read this as well because it's much the same stuff. Parker in Malibu California says why has the church grown to favour? Substitutional atonement over Christus Victor when dealing with the purpose of the cross.

It seems to me that both atonement theories are shown in scripture and work in tandem to display the power and purpose of Jesus's life death and resurrection. So we've covered some of this ground before but let's just unpack it again. Penal substitution re-atonement.

Should we watch out for you? Yeah. Well, you need to watch out for Paul because what I'm really trying to do here is to get inside the mind of Paul and to see precisely what he means. And it's one of the worries that I've had for much of my adult life actually is the way in which the church has assumed that it knows what Paul must have meant and then rather forces certain texts to mean that.

Rather than actually allowing Paul to state his own terms and develop it and I mentioned

to Corinthians 5 a moment ago and there's the famous text in verse 21 when it says God made him to be sin who knew no sins that in him we might become the righteousness of God. People say well, that's quite straightforward. He takes our sin.

We take his righteousness end of conversation. Unfortunately, that's not what that passage is about. The passage is part of that long passage from to Corinthians 2, 14 through to 6, 13 which is Paul's apostolic apologia.

He's explaining to the Corinthians why a genuine apostle is bound to look beaten up and suffering and always in trouble which was not what their idea of a leader was about at all. And it's because he is bearing about in his own body as he says in chapter 4, the dying of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be manifest. So that passage in 5:21 comes where he said God reconciled the world to himself through the Messiah and he gave us the ministry of reconciliation.

God was in the Messiah reconciling the world to himself and entrusting us with the word of reconciliation. God made him to be sin who knew no sin so that we might become, might embody the covenant faithfulness of God. In other words, this is about us apostles are looking like the crucified Jesus and that that's what it means.

So don't be surprised when you go on immediately, very interestingly, chapter 6, verse 2, he's quoting from Isaiah 49, one of the servant songs, which goes on the very next line to the one he quotes to say, I have given you as a covenant to the people and then he goes on into this riff about as unknown and yet well known as dying and behold we live. It's an amazing passage. And the trouble is because people from the 16th century onwards particularly have taken 5:21 out of its context.

It makes it look as though, oh there we are, this is quite simple, sin, righteousness, done deal. Sorry, righteousness didn't mean what in the first century what it meant then. So pan back from that to the big question because a generational tour go, there was a guy called Gustav Allein who was a Scandinavian bishop who was obviously a bit fed up with the way that a rather cheap and cheerful doctrine of substitution reattainment was being preached by clergy that he knew, etc.

which was all rather brutal, it was just where sinners, God needed to punish somebody. Here is Jesus, happened to be his own son, that'll do, bang, he gets killed, we're all right. And people are looking at that and saying, hang on, just how does that work, is that fair, is that moral, is that right? And so Allein argued, strikingly, that actually that's not the center at all and that's not really the main point.

The point is that in the cross God won the victory over the powers of darkness. And so he polarized substitution and Christ was Victor, Christ the vanquisher of the forces of darkness. And ever since then, people on both sides of the equation have assumed that those two are antithetical.

And as one of your questions here, Parker from Malibu says, they're not, they work together and that's exactly right. Let me show you how. In John chapter 12, Jesus, it's John's equivalent of the Gethsemane moment.

The Greeks come to the feast and want to see Jesus. And Jesus doesn't go and see them. He says, this is a sign that the moment has come.

And he says, should I be afraid of this are? No, for this cause, I've come to this are. And he says, now is the judgment of this world. Now is the ruler of this world cast out.

And if I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all people to myself. In other words, what I'm about to do is to win a victory over the dark force that has usurped God's rule over the world. This is why I called my book, Jesus and the victory of God.

And if I've given you. And, but how is that done? And John makes it quite clear, through the narrative rather than through theological theory, that it happens through Jesus taking the place of the sinner, whether it's Barabbas or whether it's Peter or whoever it is. And Luke does this particularly again and again.

This man has done nothing wrong. We're receiving the just punishment for our misdeeds, et cetera. There's substitution is woven into Luke's narrative, even though the reader knows, because Jesus says in Luke's death, Seminary scene, this is your are and the power of darkness.

In other words, it's a battle with the forces of darkness, but the way the victory is won is by Jesus taking the place of the sinner. So the two work together, victory through substitution. How does that work? This is fascinating.

I think it works like this. This is difficult to describe, but I think it's central. That when we worship idols, which we all do to a lesser or greater extent, but repentance is always a turning away from idols, we give to those idols, whether it's money or sexual power or particular things or people or whatever.

We give them power over us and that power causes us to sin in various ways, deep down inside in our imaginations and in acts and speech, et cetera. And every time we sin, we are increasing the grip of those powers on our lives. So the way to break the power of the dark powers that we have invoked by worshiping idols is for sin to be punished and to be dealt with as it needs to be dealt with, sin itself, so that then the thing which is enabling the idols to keep their grip on us has been dealt with and is done away with.

The place where Paul says this most clearly, and I want to say this to Stephen in Austin, Texas, and to his dear pastor, is Romans 8 verses 3 and 4, where Paul says in verse 1, there is no condemnation for those who are in Messiah Jesus. And the ultimate because, there are several because is there, but the ultimate one is because on the cross God condemned sin in the flesh of Christ. Now that is definitely substitutionary, it is definitely

penal, but it works within that larger scheme of God dealing with all the powers, which is why at the end of chapter 8, neither death nor life nor anything in all creation shall separate us from the love of God in Messiah Jesus our Lord.

In other words, the victory has been won, but it is a victory through substitution. If you take substitution out of that larger picture, then you put it into a different basically medieval picture of we've all been naughty. God has to kick somebody in the teeth.

It happens to be his own son. But obviously the passage that is often brought into play from the Old Testament is the Isaiah passage. Absolutely.

Absolutely. But the Isaiah transgressions he was wounded and so on. Absolutely.

But look at the larger context. The larger context, if just track back the fourth, seventh song Isaiah 52, 13 to 53, 12, track back from 52, 13, just a few verses back to 52, 7, which is how lovely on the mountains is the one who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, your God reigns. What does that mean? Babylon has been running the show.

Something has happened, which means that God has won the victory over Babylon. Your watchmen lift up their voices and shout for joy because in plain sight they see Yahweh returning to Zion. The first question I answered in the first exam paper was an absolute gift for me.

Said, quote, the servant songs can only be understood in the light of Isaiah 40 to 55 as a whole. Discuss. And I thought, yes, that's exactly right.

These servant songs mean what they mean, not within the context of a detached medieval atonement theory, but in the context of the whole vision of the greatness and the victory of God, which you have in 40 to 55 as a whole. Time's running away. So I'm going to skip some interesting questions that we could have got to on limited atonement.

Maybe we'll do another podcast looking at some particular Calvinist interpretations of things. But I didn't want to get to this one. Edossa in Scotland says, in Luke 23:34, Jesus said, who are these people that Jesus interceded for? The authorities that put him to death, the Jewish world, the whole world, were these people forgiven? And if they need to repent to be forgiven, then what was the importance of Jesus's words for these people? I mean, anyone can get forgiveness if they repent.

So just some interest in that particular phrase. Father forgive them because they know not what they do. Yes.

I think the very specific thing is we're talking about Roman soldiers here, and Luke is probably writing for a Gentile audience. Who would include people like those Roman soldiers. They're just doing their job, etc.

The really interesting thing, which Edossa does not actually mention, is what a radical innovation this represents within the whole Jewish martyr tradition. If you look at the book called Second Maccabees, and look at Second Maccabees 7, where there are 7 brothers being tortured to death, they say to their torturers and to the king who's commanding this torture to take place. We're going to get new bodies in the resurrection, but God is going to punish you.

You are going to have a terrible time, and you'll see God's judgment on you. And the extraordinary thing in Christianity, from that moment on, from Luke 23, through to Act 7, where Stephen says, Lord, don't lay this into their charge, and then into the whole later Christian tradition is people praying for their persecutors. And this is like, oh my goodness, nobody does this.

Why would you do it? You'd surely call down God's judgment. And then I think something about the nature of scripture did Luke think he was writing scripture. Well, he was writing a Jesus story for the church to show how, yeah, I think he, in a sense, he thought he was writing something that we would call scripture.

Is that scripture is multivalent once you get the original meaning, here are these Roman soldiers nailing into the cross, then you can see resonances out beyond that. And that phrase has been hugely powerful again and again. I mean, in, in, in Coventry Cathedral, you know, it's a father forgive.

And it's an allusion to this. And the context of that, of course, being the bombing of the cathedral. Sorry, yes, the bombing of the cathedral and I think it was the Dean or the Provost the next morning found some charred bits of wood and put them roughly in the shape of the cross.

And there they are. And it says father forgive in other words. They don't know what they're doing.

And that's why Coventry has been such a symbol of reconciliation and peace. And so the words do resonate out to the Jewish world, to the authorities, to the whole world. So that's a good question.

Was Jesus prayer answered in a sense? Do we know that those Roman soldiers were forgiven? We have no means of knowing that just like in many cases when you're in ministry, you preach to people, you counsel people, only God really knows their hearts. People can pretend to be hard-hearted when in fact they're deeply penitent and vice versa. So I want to say that is God's business.

I think there is a sense in which the gift of forgiveness, just like, you know, it's an old chestnut. Can you forgive somebody if they're not sorry? And the answer is if you don't, then their evil is still crippling you. And I think that's now a well-known thing

psychologically.

And I think there is a sense in which the same is true about God. You know, we look at the world and say, God, how can you allow your world to be like this? And God says, I have done absolutely everything to make it clear I love you and I forgive you. And God is not therefore perpetually implicated by the evil that people do, but that's quite a dark mystery at the heart.

And as we finish off this one, I suppose for me I've always felt as well that phrase obviously does resonate down the centuries and can be brought up by many Christians since Jesus who are facing similar persecution who are able to say, Father forgive them, they know what they do. Of course, of course. As we saw in Coventry Cathedral.

A Coventry Cathedral and yeah, just the last two or three years ago was it, a group of Christians in Libya who were lined up and shot or beheaded or whatever. My eyes is yeah. Yeah, that's right.

And just calling on the name of Jesus and yeah, and people in death camps offering forgiveness to their persecutors. This stuff still happens. It still happens.

And it's still extremely powerful. Tom, thank you very much. Thank you.

And next time we're going to be looking at the other side of Easter, the resurrection. So we're looking forward to hearing some questions on that and your thoughts. For now, thanks for being with me and we'll see you next time.

Thank you. Thanks for joining us on this week's edition of the podcast. A very happy Easter to you wherever you're celebrating from lockdown.

I do hope that you can come back again for the next one to in a couple of weeks time. We'll be looking at the resurrection, yes, a couple of weeks after the big day, of course, but some interesting questions that you'll be sharing with us and Tom will be responding to. As ever, if you want to find out more about this podcast and get yourself signed up for all the content that's available and indeed the bonus prize draws and so on, do go to the website askentiright.com. But just before you go, got an Easter egg that we have already actually shared on the podcast a year or more ago.

But I thought I'd dig it out again today. It's a great little number by Tom on the guitar and very relevant, obviously, to today's topic. So to play us out, here's Tom with a song.

Well, we've got to that fun, not too serious part of the podcast where Tom pulls out the guitar. It happens to me my guitar, actually, but Tom plays it for us. Now, we all know some of the best-known songs from Sydney Carter, One More Step Along The World I Go, Lord of the Dance and so on.

In that sense, his songs have been sung in primary schools probably for decades now. What I didn't realize until I came across a video of you online playing this particular song, that he obviously had quite a repertoire of different songs and poems as well. Tell us a little bit about how you first came across this one.

Well, in the 60s, he was, as you say, writing things which then it was kind of flaky and exciting that one was allowed to play this sort of thing, which had Christian resonances and some people even bringing guitars into church. I know that's now such a cliché and it's typical, this old 60s rock that is still turning up grey hair but still strumming away. So I'm very much aware of that and okay, the joke is on me there, but in the 60s it was hugely exciting.

And when I was in a gap year, as we used to have between school university, I was out in Canada and I was working in a lumber camp in British Columbia. And there was a folk club in Prince George, which was about 50 miles away from where the lumber camp was. And it used to go in on the weekend.

And I went one weekend and was chatting to people and they discovered that I played the guitar. Oh, come next week, do us a set. So during that week working in the camp, how should I sort of nail my colours to the mast? And so I had all sorts of things from Dylan, Peter Paul and Mary, various Gordon Lightfoot.

But I thought, actually I'll do a couple of Sydney Carter ones right up front, just to say, actually this is who I am. So right at the top of the first set, I played Lord of the Dance and then I played this Friday morning. Let's hear it.

Okay. It's self-explanatory, I think. It was on a Friday morning that they took me from the cell and I saw they had a carpenter to crucify as well.

You can blame it on to pilot. You can blame it on the Jews. You can blame it on the devil, but it's God that I accuse.

It's God they ought to crucify instead of you and me. I said to the carpenter, a hanging on the tree. You can blame it on to Adam.

You can blame it on to Eve. You can blame it on the apple. But that I can't believe it was God that made the devil and the woman and the man.

And there wouldn't be an apple if it wasn't in the plan. It's God they ought to crucify instead of you and me. I said to the carpenter, a hanging on the tree.

Now, the Rabbis was a sinner and they let the Rabbis go. But you are the crucified for nothing here below. And God is up in heaven and he doesn't do a thing with a million angels watching and they never move a wing.

It's God they ought to crucify instead of you and me. I said to the carpenter, a hanging on the tree. To hell with Jehovah to the carpenter I said, I wish that a carpenter had made the world instead.

Goodbye and good luck to you. Our ways they will divide. Remember me in your kingdom, the man you hung beside.

It's God they ought to crucify instead of you and me. I said to the carpenter, a hanging on the tree.