

1. No Delusion - The Real God of the Old Testament: A Personal God

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 04 May 2008

Preacher: William Philip

- [0 : 00] Well, you might like to open your Bible at Exodus chapter 3, and we will get there eventually.
- You may know that Richard Dawkins was recently voted to be one of the world's top three intellectuals. It's quite impressive, isn't it? One of the top three minds on this planet.
- You probably know he is the Professor of Public Understanding of Science at Oxford University. And he certainly is a brilliant mind. He is a brilliant writer. His books often top the bestseller lists.
- And I guess he must have made an awful lot of money through these books. But increasingly it seems that his books are less to do with the public understanding of science than the public attack on religion.
- Indeed, you might even say propagation of the public misunderstanding of religion. It really is rather mischievous and getting more so, it seems.
- [1 : 12] So his latest book, I know many of you have probably read it. Here it is. It's called The Delusional God. It's an all-out attack on what he calls the delusional belief in God, which causes an immense amount of harm, he says, to society, to the world.
- Religion, he says, and I'm quoting, fuels wars, foments bigotry, and abuses children. Of course, it's easy to see, isn't it, why his books get increasingly fetid in a culture like ours today.
- Because our culture is increasingly receptive, isn't it, to that kind of thinking. You'll find those kind of views everywhere if you read the newspapers, among political elites, in the social commentators of our society.
- Witness, for example, the fears and the growing resentment that there is, especially, I guess, on the liberal left, to the very idea of faith schools, which has been one of the government's policies, hasn't it?
- It's ringing real alarm bells among many. Talk of the ghettoization of society, the dangers that that brings, and so on. Now, it is easy to understand why people feel nervous in a world of suicide bombers, a world of terrorism, things done in the name of God, and in the name of religion.
- [2 : 32] But notice the basic premise. All religion is much the same. That's the basic premise of Richard Dawson's book. It's the basic premise of so many who fear religion in society.
- All religion is much the same, and all of it is bad. And the more seriously it's taken by people, the worse it is. Isn't that right? So the aim of our politicians, the aim of those who can influence the public, whatever particular religion it is that's being talked about, the aim is to have as little of it as possible, and as liberal a version of it, an expression of it as possible, to keep it all in manageable proportions.

And as our society becomes more and more secularized, more and more ignorant of our past heritage, of being a Christianized country, not a Christian country, of course, there's no such thing as a Christian country, but we have been in the past a Christianized country, shaped, that is, by a culture that grew out of Christianity, that flowered through Christian influence and Christian values and so on.

But as we become more and more ignorant of the doctrines of the Christian faith and the beliefs of the Christian church, then people know so little about the Bible, so little about the Christian faith, that it's easy for them to be taken in by that kind of thinking.

And there's even been a change in our language, hasn't there, about religion. I wonder if you've noticed that. Nouns have become adjectives. And adjectives have become nouns. I know anybody who's been to school in the last 20 years may not know the distinction between those two things anyway, but bear with me.

[4 : 18] In the past, you see, when people were discussing religion, the word Christian was a noun. It's like the word Muslim or Hindu or whatever.

And then people used adjectives attached to those nouns, didn't they? So you might be a traditional Christian or a keen Christian or a committed Christian or, always disparagingly of course, a fundamentalist Christian.

But perhaps you've noticed that those adjectives, especially that last one, fundamentalist, those adjectives have now become the nouns, haven't they? That word fundamentalist is now a noun.

It's a very dangerous noun too, isn't it? It's got dark and worrying connotations when you hear it on the television, on the radio. Fundamentalists are people who fly planes into buildings, aren't they?

Fundamentalists are people who let off bombs in tube stations and on buses. Fundamentalists are people who send pregnant women into marketplaces, so suicide bombers and things like that.

[5 : 26] They're all fundamentalists, aren't they? They're all one group. It's a collective noun. Religious fundamentalists, that's what they are. They're a big, big problem in our world. We need to be careful, don't we?

That's the message. And now, you see, the adjective has become quite secondary, really. They're all much the same, you see. Dangerous religionists, dangerous fundamentalists, fanatics.

They fuel war. They foment bigotry. They abuse children. Whether they're Muslim fundamentalists or Hindu fundamentalists or Christian fundamentalists, they're all fundamentalists.

At root, they're all the same milk, you see. It's a subtle shift, isn't it, from adjective to noun. But it's a very significant one. It's a very influential one.

And it's that kind of thing that's being ruthlessly exploited by somebody like Richard Dawkins. Religion, he will say, especially, of course, the Christian religion, that's what's in his sights, especially if it's taken very seriously, that's the thing that fuels war and foments bigotry and abuses children.

[6 : 38] You say it often enough and it takes root, doesn't it? You just begin to assume that that's true. So, in his book, *The God's Illusion*, and in other writings, but in his words, especially in this book, he attacks all religion.

But you won't be surprised to learn, of course, if you haven't read the book, that he has a special focus on the Christian faith and the Christian God. So I want to read to you just how he begins chapter 2 of this book.

The God of the Old Testament, he says, is arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction. Jealous and proud of it, a petty, unjust, unforgiving control freak, a vindictive, bloodthirsty, ethnic cleanser, a misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filialcidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully.

Well, I don't really need to go much further, do I? There's enough adjectives in that to last a lifetime. Pretty offensive, really, isn't it?

However, the fact is that I'm afraid Professor Dawkins displays sheer ignorance of the God of the Old Testament when he writes like that. I find it barely believable that any intelligent man could read the Old Testament scriptures and say something like that, far less one of the world's top three intellectuals.

[8 : 12] His ignorance is displayed a few pages later on when he says this, quote, for most of my purposes, all three Abrahamic religions can be treated as indistinguishable.

That's Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. Essentially, all exactly the same. You see, that's the dogma that he's persistently pressing.

Well, I, in some ways, want to say once a man's spoken like that, it's hardly, it's hardly possible to take anything else that he says very seriously, is it? And yet, many do.

And certainly, Professor Dawkins takes himself very seriously, he doesn't tend to take many other people very seriously, especially if they argue against him. Certainly not if you're Christian. He apparently refuses to debate in public anybody who's a Christian, even very distinguished Christian scientists, because by definition he regards them as fools.

Last year, when a very eminent American philosopher and apologist was touring this country, William Lane Craig, Professor Dawkins, declined to debate him publicly.

[9 : 25] There was a debate held in London in the Westminster Central Hall where John Humphreys from the BBC was the chairman. And it certainly didn't show much courage that he wouldn't even enter the debate.

John Humphreys himself tackled him on that. He said to him that he seemed to be happy to rake in the money writing inflammatory books, but was very unwilling to debate it and to defend his views in public.

You might not think that's a terribly great advert for somebody who champions the empirical sciences, belief in evidence and rational argument. However, that's the way it is.

It doesn't show much courage. But in his book, and indeed all of his books, he does reserve most of his invective for Christians.

Well, he is an intelligent man. He's far too shrewd, isn't he, to attack Jews. He would be immediately branded as an anti-Semite. And it would appear he's far too weak to attack the Muslims.

[10 : 26] He doesn't want a fatwa on his head. But of course, Christians are easy game. They're not going to come and slit his throat and put a video of it on the internet, are they? And so he can slander our God all that he likes.

And he does. Well, that's okay. And we don't need to be on the back foot. We don't need to fight back with the weapons of the world. But I think it's important that we don't let somebody like Professor Dawkins and others of his ilk, that we don't let them get away with accusations that really are utterly ignorant about the God of Scripture.

So I want to give some answers about this God of the Bible. Not to meet fire with fire, but to expose what I take to be real ignorant. And to expose it in the face of the truth.

I've got two reasons for doing that. It could be that you're here tonight and you rather think that Professor Dawkins has a point. He might be a fan of his. And it could be that you think that indeed the God of the Bible, especially the God of the Old Testament, is an awful tyrant.

Now, if that is your view, I want to take that view seriously. But I do want to try and show you where I think you're wrong and why you're wrong. But on the other hand, many of us here tonight will be Christian believers and we may, at the same time, find ourselves a bit unsettled by the kind of attacks from very intelligent people like Professor Dawkins.

[11 : 53] We know people who take his views very seriously. We want to defend our view against us but we feel intimidated. We want to reason with them but we find it very difficult.

We feel a bit out of our depth and we don't know how. Well, I can't take on Professor Dawkins on science. Not that I'm entirely ignorant of science but I defer to him.

That is his area of expertise. Nor am I an expert in philosophy and I can't really take him to task on that. However, nor is he really an expert on philosophy.

You might be interested in a review of his book written by Alvin Plantinga who is an American who is one of the top philosophers in this world and he says this rather interestingly in a review.

If you'd like to see the whole thing I can show it to you afterwards. Dawkins, he says, is perhaps the world's most popular science writer. He's also an extremely gifted science writer. For example, as a kind of bats and their ways in his earlier book *The Blind Watchmaker* is a brilliant and fascinating tour de force.

[12 : 55] The *God Delusion*, however, contains little science. It's mainly philosophy and theology. Perhaps a-theology would be a better term. Now, despite the fact that this book is mainly philosophy, Dawkins is not a philosopher.

He's a biologist. Even taking this into account, however, much of the philosophy he purveys is at best jejune. You might say that some of his forays into philosophy are at best sophomoric, but that would be unfair to sophomores.

Sophomores are second-year college students in the US. The fact is, grade inflation aside, many of his arguments would receive a failing grade in a sophomore philosophy class.

Well, there you are. That's one of the world's top philosophers, and that's what he reckons of Professor Dawkins. However, I am not a philosopher either. I can't take on Professor Dawkins there. But I do want to take him on over his view of the Bible, because I have read the Bible, and so have you.

And not only is the Bible manifestly not Professor Dawkins' area of expertise, it really does seem doubtful that he's ever given Christian scripture even the most cursory glance in terms of reading it intelligently.

[14 : 09] I'm pretty sure that he wouldn't want you or me to read his books in the way he seems to read the Bible, or read his science papers with the kind of disdain.

So, what I want to do tonight and in the next few weeks is go very much to the heart of the evidence, to examine the data that is in dispute here. We're going to be scientists, we're going to use our eyes and our minds, we're going to read the Bible.

Indeed, we're going to read the Old Testament, and we're going to see just what kind of God we really do find there. Of course, that's what we're always engaged in, that's just what we do week by week, isn't it?

But I've introduced my talk this evening this way, just to emphasize that our primary task when we're seeking to engage with error like that, with totally mistaken views about God, our primary task is not to try to be cleverer than somebody who's in the top three minds in the world.

I suspect not anybody in this room is quite going to match up to that. But our task is simply to be honest, isn't it? It's to let the facts speak for themselves, to let the Bible speak for itself, and that's something that you and I can do.

[15 : 27] We've got nothing to hide, we don't want to deceive anybody. In fact, if God really were, as Professor Dawkins says he is, we ourselves might need to be rescued, mightn't we, from our delusional faith.

We've got to be honest about it, haven't we? But we don't believe that, and we do have confidence in the truth about God, the real God of the Bible, the real God of the Old Testament scriptures.

And all of us, all of us here who are Christian believers can open our Bibles. All of us can show somebody what the Bible really says about God and what God is like.

So the next four weeks we're going to look at this one chapter and we're going to see the evidence that the Bible clearly gives us as to who the God of the Bible really is and claims to be.

And then we must decide for ourselves. You must decide if you think Professor Dawkins' view is correct or our view is correct as we read it in the scriptures here.

[16 : 33] Is Professor Dawkins as unbiased an observer, a scientist as he claims to be? That's the question. What kind of God is the God of the Bible?

It's a key question for us. That's a key question for you if you're a Christian and you want to share that message with others or if you're not yet a Christian and you really want to know what the Bible claims about the God who we worship.

So let's look at the first six verses of Exodus chapter 3 tonight because these verses proclaim that the God of the Bible is a personal God.

A personal God. Not a megalomaniacal, capricious, malevolent God but a personal God. A God to his people and for his people.

And he's a God whom you can know because he has condescended to know you. Let's just read these verses again. Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro the priest of Midian and he led his flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb the mountain of God.

[17 : 41] And the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked and behold the bush was burning yet it was not consumed. And Moses said I will turn aside to see this great sight.

Why the bush is not burned? And the Lord saw that he turned aside to see God's heart called to him out of the bush. Moses, Moses. And he said here I am. Then he said do not come near.

Take your sandals off your feet for the place on which you are standing is holy ground. God. And he said I am the God of your father. The God of Abraham. The God of Isaac.

And the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face for he was afraid to look at God. Well you know the story. It's not long since we looked at Exodus chapter one and two.

If you've never read it before then perhaps you've seen the prince of Egypt which at least is vaguely in the right kind of ballpark although a little bit different of course. But Exodus chapter one and two tells the story of the aftermath of the great story of Joseph.

[18 : 45] Remember way back in Genesis God had promised to Abraham as we're seeing in the mornings a land and a great people from his seed. But he also said hadn't he that it would be a great time of affliction hundreds of years before his people would come back to the land.

And it came about when the Israelites went down to Egypt. Remember under Joseph became the second in command of the whole nation overseeing the famine. But then the years passed and if you look at chapter one verse eight of Exodus you'll see that there arose a new came over Egypt one who did not know Joseph.

And from that moment everything was downhill wasn't it? The Israelites were growing and multiplying that became a great threat to the Egyptians. So that's what so often happens in these cases the Egyptians subjugated them, made them slaves.

But God was still at work. He is the God of his people. And Exodus chapter two tells us about the birth of Moses and of the extraordinary preservation of that little baby.

Despite Pharaoh's plan to kill all the boys, God hides him in Pharaoh's own palace and has him brought up at Pharaoh's own expense. Extraordinary. But then again, remember disaster loomed and Moses in trying to help his countrymen he kills an Egyptian and he has to flee and he becomes a shepherd in the desert in the land of Midian.

[20 : 18] And you're left at the end of chapter two of Exodus wondering what on earth is going on? Has God forgotten his people? Has his plan failed? Well no. Look at verse twenty-four of chapter two. God heard their groaning.

God remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. God saw the people of Israel and God knew. So we get to chapter three, this very, very famous chapter.

And it's time for God to step in and to give Moses his orders to act as a leader of the people, to bring them to deliverance. And it's a wonderful chapter. It's worth spending several weeks on it.

I want you to see that above all it's a chapter about God, not Moses, about God revealing himself to Moses and telling him who he is and just what he's really like.

And these first six verses of the chapter show us two extraordinary things that God reveals about himself to Moses. Two things that teach us something about what the God of the Old Testament really is.

[21 : 24] He does it in a very striking way, doesn't he? Moses' attention is caught by seeing this bush going on fire. I suppose that if Moses was a shepherd in the west of Scotland, that would be a very, very unusual thing for him to be out there in the rain and the drizzle and a bush suddenly went on fire.

But it probably wasn't that extraordinary in the desert, in Sinai, pretty hot there. I guess bushes were catching fire all the time. But there was something different about this.

Look at verse three. The bush wasn't burning up. It was on fire but it wasn't being consumed. So Moses says, well that's very strange, I'm going to go and see what this is.

We're not told what he thought it was. We're not told whether he thought somehow or other he'd struck oil and was going to make his fortune because this extraordinary oil well was burning in his midst. There certainly doesn't seem to be any suggestion in the text that he immediately knew that this was God.

But it was God. And it was a personal God, verse four, who called out to him, who even knew his name. Moses, Moses he said.

[22 : 37] And not surprisingly, verse six tells us that he was afraid. Wouldn't you be afraid? I would certainly be afraid if I was out in the desert and there was a bush that was burning and blazing but not being consumed and somebody called out of it my name.

And yet, Moses didn't run for his life. Some things seem to tell him that that would have been the wrong thing to do. And so he answers God, here I am. And you see, God then reveals to Moses two amazing things about himself in that moment at the bush.

First of all, he reveals to him that he is unapproachably holy. and yet that he makes himself approachable to the people that he calls his own.

Do you see that in verse five? He says to Moses, don't come near. It's dangerous to come near. This is holy ground. The holiness of God is a dangerous thing.

It's a consuming thing to the unholy, to human beings. It's as dangerous as an incandescent flame of fire. Fire in the Bible is so often seen in connection with God's appearance, isn't it?

[23 : 58] Remember back to Genesis 15 when God made the covenant with Abraham. He passed through the pieces of the animals as a smoking fire pot, a blazing fire. If you read through Exodus you'll find that again God appears as fire all the time.

There's a pillar of fire, isn't there? There's the great fire on the top of Mount Sinai. There's the fire and the smoke when God descends on the tabernacle. And always it signifies God's separatedness.

He's the one who cannot be near anything that is tainted. And therefore there is a real danger for sinful human beings to be in his presence. Don't come near.

This is holy ground. It's dangerous. Aha, there you are. I can almost hear Professor Dawkins at the back saying there I are. I told you he's malevolent this God.

He is dangerous. A horrible thing this God of the Old Testament. Well, dangerous yes. I can't deny that. God himself says do not come near.

[25 : 03] And Moses was afraid with good reason. But not malevolent. He is unapproachably holy but this is the God who makes himself approachable even in his dangerous holiness by condescending to approach us in a form that can be seen and can be heard and can be approached.

That's what he did to Moses at the bush. If you read through the Bible you'll see there's a pattern. It becomes very familiar as you get to know this God of the Bible. And so Moses isn't consumed.

And he can stand before this God and can encounter him. But notice he can only do it in God's prescribed way at God's command.

Take off your sandals says the Lord. And God wants Moses to be able to stand in his presence without danger without being consumed by the holy fire and so he enables Moses to approach him but only through obedience to God's stated way.

You see you can approach the unapproachable God only his way. And it's not just Moses who needs to learn that is it? Anyone who would seek God must know that he is unapproachably holy.

[26 : 24] You can't just experience this God any way you want to. You can't just say that's the way I like to think of God that's how I'll approach him. No. As you read through the Bible you see that's why there are a whole raft of regulations in the Old Testament about approaching God through priests and sacrifices and so on because God is holy and it's dangerous to be in his presence any other way.

And yet he is a God who wants us to be able to approach him. It's far too dangerous to come any way of our own thinking.

The only possible way that is safe to be in the presence of this God is to come at his calling, his way. But he does make himself approachable.

He does provide a way into his presence for Moses because he is a personal God. He's not distant, he's not dark, he's not unknowable, but he's present and personal.

And that's the true God of the Old Testament. Yes he is unapproachably holy, he is fire. But he makes himself approachable to those that he calls his own.

[27 : 40] God of God. That's the first thing Moses learns at the burning bush. The second is this, he is a God who has been perennially failed by his people and yet he is a God who is himself persistently faithful to his people.

Look at verse 6. It's a wonderfully reassuring word to Moses and to you and me. I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob.

See what he's saying? I am the God of my people, warts and all. I am still their God and I am still your God. That's what he's saying. He is the God of Moses' own father.

That means of Moses and his own family. The same God whose tender care oversaw his birth and that extraordinary rescue from the Nile and his upbringing in the very house of Pharaoh.

Think about how their faith and their trust, the trust and the faith of his parents in God. Think about how it was marvellously rewarded as they handed this little baby into God's hands for protection.

[28 : 51] And he's still looking after Moses despite all these years in the desert. Don't you think Moses was doubting things? Don't you think at times in the desert he wondered what on earth had happened and whether God had abandoned him?

I think it's obvious that he did. If you look back at chapter 2 verse 22 you'll see that when he had a son he called his name Gershom which means I've been a sojourner in a foreign land.

In other words God has abandoned me in the desert. He calls his son that name out of despair. Sometimes people feel like that don't they?

Maybe Moses felt that he deserved it. that apparent fiasco with the murder of the Egyptian and being sent away and all of that. Maybe he just thought I have blown it with God and God will have nothing more for me.

People often feel that don't they? I've certainly felt that in my Christian walk. Maybe you felt it too. But you see this God even though he is perennially let down by his people yet he is persistently faithful.

[30 : 02] I am the God of your father Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. He is the God of Abraham. Think about it. We have been seeing it in the mornings haven't we? Yes of course he is a great man of faith but plenty of muck ups.

We will see when we get to the story of Isaac what a lackluster nondescript sort of person Isaac seemed to be. Or Jacob an absolute rogue a twister and yet I am their God says the Lord.

Despite all of that he is the personal God. He is the God to his people and for his people despite his people. That is the truth. And you notice he is not just saying I am the God they worshipped when they were alive.

No he is saying I am their God still. He is still their personal God even though their bodies are dead. That is what he promised to be to them as their God he will be forever.

he will raise them up from the dead and give them a new body. He will never stop being their God. That is what he is saying to Moses. We know that is what he is saying because Jesus himself tells us that in Mark chapter 12.

[31 : 13] Just turn that up actually because so much nonsense is often talked about the Old Testament having no belief in God raising the dead. It is absolute ignorance.

Mark 12 verse 26 the Sadducees who didn't believe in the resurrection are talking to Jesus and asking him about it. And Jesus says in verse 26 as for the dead being raised have you not read in the book of Moses in the passage about the bush how God spoke to him saying I am the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.

He is not the God of the dead but of the living. You are quite wrong. He is the personal God. He is persistently faithful even to those who are perennially failing him and he will be faithful to them forever and ever and ever.

That is no unforgiving control freak God is it? I think Jesus would have said to Professor Dawkins just the sort of thing he said to the Sadducees here.

He is not the God of the dead but of the living. You are quite wrong. There is no politically correct pussyfooting around in that is there? You are quite wrong says Jesus.

[32 : 27] You are wrong because you haven't read the Bible. You don't understand the scriptures. And that is the true God of the Old Testament the God Moses met. He is yes unapproachably holy, dangerously holy and yet approachable because he condescends to make himself approachable to sinful men.

And yes he is perennially failed by his people but still he is persistently faithful. He is a personal God who never gives up on his people.

And that is the God of the Old Testament. The Lord the unapproachable one and yet approachable at the burning bush. Should we be surprised then when in the fullness of time there walked on the earth one who spoke with the voice of God and with the authority of God and claimed identity with God in an absolutely unique way and yet also distinct from the Father and said I and the Father are one.

One who was seen to be awesomely holy and demanded awesome holiness. Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect and yet at the same time condescended to be approachable, be a friend, to outcasts and sinners.

One who was perennially let down even by his nearest and dearest followers and friends. You will all fall away on account of me said Jesus and they did. Yet one who was himself utterly faithful to them.

[34 : 08] I give them eternal life. They will never perish and no one will pluck them out of my hands says Jesus. Should we be surprised at Jesus Christ, the fullness of God revealed on earth, the human being?

The only begotten Son who is at the Father's side, who alone has made God fully and ultimately known. Should we be surprised at what we find Jesus to be like? Well of course not.

Because we've met him before all through the Old Testament. Right here at the burning bush. He is the God of the Old Testament. Who appeared as the majestic angel here to Moses in the bush and appeared at last in his full glory as the majestic Son in Jesus Christ forever.

Jesus himself said Moses wrote all about me. The personal God, the God to his people and for his people forever. The God whom you can know even in his unapproachable holiness because he has condescended to come down that you might approach him and know him.

It seems that Professor Dawkins doesn't understand that at all. Or he refuses to. Again it seems to be a picture of a scientist falsifying the data.

[35 : 38] He does admit some admiration of Jesus of course later on in his book. He says this, quote, from a moral point of view, Jesus is a huge improvement over the cruel ogre of the Old Testament.

He blanks out the consistent message of Jesus himself that he is that self-same God. In John 8 verse 58 he puts it absolutely unmistakably when he takes the very words from verse 14 of our chapter, Exodus chapter 3, spoken from the bush when God reveals himself with the name, I am, and when he identifies himself with them.

Listen to John 8 verse 56. Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad.

So the Jews said to him, you are not yet fifty years old and you have seen Abraham. Jesus said to them, truly, truly I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.

So they picked up stones to throw at him that Jesus hid from them and went out of the temple. You see, they knew exactly what Jesus was saying. That's why they took up stones to stone him for blasphemy.

[36 : 49] I am, he says, the one who spoke to Moses out of the bush. So when Professor Dawkins says this, as he does, what makes my jaw drop is that people today should base their lives on such an appalling role model as Yahweh and even worse, that they should bustily try to force this same evil monster on the rest of us.

When he says that, he is saying it about the Lord Jesus Christ, who himself said that he is Yahweh, that he is the Lord, the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, the God of Moses, the God of the bush.

The one who is and has always been from the very beginning, a personal God, God to his people and for his people forever. The God who is, yes, unapproachably holy, unable to bear the presence of sin, and yet, who made himself approachable at infinite cost to himself, that he might make his people holy so that they might dwell with him forever.

And the God who is still persistently faithful to his people despite all of our perennial failures, because of the length and the breadth and the height and the depth of his redeeming love to us in Jesus Christ.

Well, let me confess to you. When I read this book, I do not like at all the God that Professor Dawkins describes.

[38 : 25] I don't like him at all. Not one bit. But, you know, when I actually examine the evidence and read this book, I don't find that God in there at all.

I don't recognize the God that Professor Dawkins is talking about. It seems to be a delusional God altogether. He's not there. But the God I do find in this book, the Bible, the true God of the Old Testament, well, I do like him.

I like everything I read about him. And I know him. And all that I know of him in my experience of my life personally matches exactly, not with this book, but with this book, the Bible.

And everything that I read there about him. I know he's no cruel ogre. He's a wonderful God. He's a personal God. He's a God of all grace.

He's a God who at last made everything about himself known in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. And who through him offered me life in all its fullness and life eternal.

[39 : 45] That's a God I know. And I hope you know him too. And if you don't know him, then I hope that you soon will. But can I leave you with some advice?

You won't find him in here, but you will find him in here. Let's pray. Our gracious God, we rejoice in who you truly are as you reveal yourself to us.

not only in the fire and the nearness of the bush with Moses, but in the glorious justice and mercy of the cross of Calvary, where your infinite holiness and your judgment against sin was not hidden, but displayed for all the world to see, but where your infinite mercy and grace also was proclaimed forever.

by you, the personal God, who drew near, bearing in your own body the judgment that was ours, that we might be yours and might draw near to you in the holy ground that is your dwelling place.

open our eyes, Lord, and the eyes of our hearts to truly know you, we pray, in these words that you have spoken. For we ask it in Jesus' name.

[41 : 16] Amen.