

The God of the Bible
By Ellie Wakeman

Before all things, was the trinity, God, existing in perfect unity & community. Because this triune God embodies self-giving love He created and brought into existence all we see and know SO THAT He could share Himself with his prized creation, **humanity**. And because He desired a relationship based on choice, desire, love and trust, THAT IS FREELY GIVEN, He blessed His prized humanity with the dignity of free will.

Everything God had brought into existence, beautiful and good, was set before humanity, it was all for them, His divine image bearers who were made to reflect Him into His world. In relationship with God, they were to take all the goodness and set out to continue His creating in order to bless one another by making decisions, in Him, that would make this beautiful place flourish.

An Opposer, Accuser, Deceiver (the Satan) comes to humanity with another story, taking God's good words and twisting them to cause doubt instead of trust. Humanity was given a choice: trust their good Creator God and live abiding in perfect relationship with Him, OR attempt to set out to take this world into their own hands and define for themselves what THEY think is good and evil and make a world on their own terms, ignoring God...this is what has been done, and the world today is the result.

But that's NOT the end of the story. God, who knows us better than we know ourselves, always knew what initial decision humanity would make (He created us after all and so knows how we think, feel, etc). Being fully aware of the direction we would turn, even before He brought this world into existence, He moved forward, knowing what it would cost Him to restore the mess that humanity would make of His good world.

From the very beginning, God had a plan to redeem and restore. That's what all of Scripture from Genesis 3 on, is all about. He sets into motion His redemptive plan, pointing forward to the day Jesus, God-in-flesh, would come and be for us what we couldn't be on our own and do for us what we couldn't do for ourselves.

The world began with heaven and earth perfectly overlapping, humanity chose to attempt to do life without God (as if that's even possible - it's His created world after all and we are His created beings whose lives are sustained by His own breath as sheer gift), and still, we tried. And as we did so, we began to push heaven's space out of earth's space. Jesus came to restore His fractured world and bring heaven and earth back into perfectly overlapping realities which is what will one day be fully realized. Until then, Jesus came announcing that "the kingdom of heaven" (the part we pushed out of His good world), has returned at last, in Him, and everywhere He went He brought healing and restoration to all things broken & hurting. Sick were made well, diseased were healed, marginalized were brought near, evil was stomped on and defeated – because that's what life looks like when heaven & earth overlap once again.

This is God's story in Scripture. Humanity, blinded by the Evil One, has made up all kinds of other deities to explain life as it exists in this world. But no man-made religion talks about the God, Creator and Author of all things, coming in self-giving, self-sacrificing love to take on evil and free humanity from its grip. Only Yahweh, the God of Hebrew Scriptures, comes to rescue humanity from itself, from evil, from death. All other religions attempt to explain the current state of this world and how humanity can work really hard and sacrifice to their gods to appease them and hopefully find relief from the pain

experienced in this world. That's not the God of the Bible. That's the gods humanity explains in their religious attempts to answer the questions of existence and purpose and the pain experienced in this world.

God called a people, in the Middle East, to Himself, and from Adam (humanity), from the line of Abraham (where God announced blessing to come FOR the whole world), from the line of David (where God announced the true king that would come and reign, rejoining heaven & earth, as He brought God's kingdom with Him), God set into motion healing for ALL the nations and it only comes through Jesus, God-with-Us, but the healing is for ALL people. He came out of the people of Israel (not the United States, not China, not India) but came proclaiming Good News FOR the whole world (which includes the U.S., China, India...) and reaches all people as the Good News changes hearts and lives and, then, those changed, new-creation people go into all the world proclaiming this Good News message so that ALL will hear and come to know Jesus – God-in-flesh, saving and redeeming humanity.

The God of the Bible didn't originate with the U.S or churches in the U.S. But it did make its way TO the U.S. as God's kingdom people moved into the U.S. bringing with them this Good News message AND it's the same for EVERY OTHER nation... While the God of the Bible, also didn't originate in China or India, etc, as God's kingdom people move into those areas (as they did in the U.S.) they bring a Good News message that is for those nations as well. God is not an American-made, United States God. He is not any one nation's God alone. He is above all, over all, and draws near to all dwelling with anyone who acknowledges Creator God as their God. In Jesus, God comes to redeem every nation so that each nation looks like a renewed nation – the United States is a renewed United States, India is a renewed India, China is a renewed China, Africa is a renewed Africa, etc...it's a renewed world! All the distinctiveness of a nation remains but it becomes a restored version of itself. This is what God's people work towards, following God & in His strength, as they await King Jesus' reigning return when everything in this world and about this world, once and for all, is finally and fully set right and made new.

And what about those (in the U.S., China, India, Africa...wherever) who might never get to hear of Jesus? One thing is for certain, God is perfectly just and we can trust in His goodness as He responds to those who may never have been given the opportunity to hear about Jesus.