

391 A glorious vision of God – Part 1

Over these past few years my view of the God of the Bible has become more and more wonderful; I'm so grateful to have been given the chance to make these discoveries.

But my journey started with an unhappy dissonance: (1) the amazing way the glorious message of Jesus spread like wildfire through the self-sacrificial lives of the early Christians and (2) the apparent demise of today's church, plus some of the terrible things we've done over the centuries in the name of Jesus the Messiah = the God of the Bible.

Why?! and Where next?!

It feels like the Holy Spirit is pointing me towards an overall picture, seeing the whole thing in context. I now see the Bible as a totally inspired document showing me how God works in and through fallible humans, towards God's loving overall plan...

The God who is love (i.e. Father, Son and Holy Spirit in loving relationship) creates a place and a people where that love can be expressed, and we are able to be part of that relationship. The Bible, end to end, narrates the glorious creational start ('and it was very good'), the less-than-glorious middle, and the absolute most glorious culmination.

We still have to trust God that the culmination will happen – Jesus will come again, and we will see his glory (the Lamb that was slain) – but thankfully we're on the right side of the middle: we have seen and can finally know what God is *really* like: Jesus.

(Spoiler alert: this is being prompted [present continuous tense] by Greg Boyd's 2025 book *God looks like Jesus*.)

The Bible is the story of God's plan, and God has provided the Bible to help us know how to live in love with God and with creation (people and place). The trouble is (1) humans are fallible and (2) there is such a thing as evil (I can see evil, plain as a pikestaff, but just don't ask me to explain it!).

So how does a loving God work with fallible humans, and against evil, to improve the situation here and now, and in the future? And how can we become more like that loving, self-sacrificing wildfire church and less like the Crusades, the Spanish Inquisition, etc.? Before we start saying, 'But that was then!', of two very powerful people today, one says, 'I'm a Christian; I'm doing this in God's name', but I'm not sure about Putin.

I think the key to how to get things horribly wrong is to have a wrong idea of what God is like. The Bible shows us how God (Jesus) overcomes evil by the irresistible force of self-sacrificing love; we, on the other hand – partly by misunderstanding the Old Testament – think God overcomes evil by force, imposing his will on people.

We become like the God we worship: is that a God of overwhelming power or is it a God who subverts evil through love?