

## Glocalized God – Acts 10:34-43, Easter, Rod Spidahl

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Hey, friends, regulars and all, I need some help today! Look, there is this tradition where as a leader I say “He is Risen” and you respond “He is Risen, indeed!” So in my message, when you hear me say the “one who is Risen” or words to that effect, could you just say “He is Risen, indeed!”? OK? Let’s go.

I remain fascinated to this day by an event that occurred in my childhood as I learned to appreciate wild things-in this case, large, night-flying moths. More specifically, Cecropia, Polyphemus and Luna moths. I used to hunt these large green caterpillars 5-6” long, strong-bodied and weirdly adorned larvae in the later summer on apple trees, birch trees and some shrubs. The larvae go into a cocoon stage, weaving a brown and camouflaging webbing into and with leaves and twigs and then, in spring or in the warmth, out emerges the most amazing moths with wings folded upon themselves. As the moth hangs upside down and pumps the wings they unfold and become exquisitely colored wings, elaborately made with varying expressions of eye-spots and colors that seize the eyes and boggle the mind. The local larvae become able to go amazing distances on these new wings! Another amazing thing is that the commonalities of language and our experience allow me to describe (if I do it well and offer you a universalize sense of amazement from my local experience) Local to global.

We live in a Glocal world. Glocal is the combining of two words: Global and Local. Glocal for our purposes means both/and awareness/involvement where the particular/local interacts meaningfully with the universal/global, and vice versa.

According to the sociologist Roland Robertson, who is credited with popularizing the term, glocalization describes the tempering effects of local conditions on global pressures. At a 1997 conference on "Globalization and Indigenous Culture," Robertson said that glocalization "means the simultaneity --- the co-presence --- of both universalizing and particularizing tendencies."

Local historical event where Christ arose! / Global Easter Sunday and Resurrection! How does a local Palestinian event become meaningful in Minnesota or Maroua, Cameroun or Dehli?

We can begin to relate it to Basketball fans in a very localized analogy, as in Trey Burke hitting a 30’ 3 point at the buzzer, *resurrecting* the Michigan Wolverines for a Final Four placement. In these days of Elite 8 to Final Four, there may be more prayers than ever according to my future son-in-law, Josh Mohagen, as there are no real favorites; it is the craziest year ever.

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The **One who is risen** that we are speaking of today [PAUSE FOR “HE IS RISEN INDEED], if you want your head in this game of a universal Message, also has words of impartiality and no favorites! Listen to Peter speaking to the other Jewish leaders after God uses a vision to convince him to take a trip to a Gentile (read, UNCLEAN) household to announce the Resurrection! “Now I truly understand that God shows no partiality but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ- He is LORD of ALL” (Acts 10:34-36 RSV). Notice the reality, embodied in local and the universal declaration!

Absolutely fascinating that Peter has this **conversion** in his worldview where he goes from seeing Christ for only Jewish peoples to hearing God tell him that **this Christ who is risen is risen** for all peoples [HE IS RISEN INDEED]! Like us, Peter’s journey with Christ is meant to have progressive “Aha” moments . . . And it is healthy to be changed along the way toward a universal Christ!

We first see Peter rebuked because He doesn’t have the full picture of Christ –that he has to die (Matthew 16:16-17, 22, 23); next he has to deal with the reality that he promises more than he can deliver (religiously speaking) in that he says thought everyone else desert Christ, he will not but will give his life for Christ (John 13:37)! Then Christ converts him from thinking He can love and worship Jesus Christ without serving the Church-remember the “do you love me Peter, three times (John 21:15-19) with Christ saying, “well, then, feed sheep, care for lambs, take care of sheep, not meaning the four-footed variety! Finally, in God’s Word today for us from Acts 10 we see that Peter arrives, by ongoing conversation with God’s Spirit and Scripture, at a Glocalized or Glocal perspective!

And, this universal or global awareness of God is something God does not despise or scold people for, rather, as Peter has now learned after visiting non-Jewish people and seeing God work through the declaration of a **risen Christ** [HE IS RISEN INDEED], “I understand now that God shows no partiality but in every nation anyone who fears Him and does what is right is acceptable to him—after all, He is LORD of ALL. However, most God-awareness in religions outside of Christian Scripture remain localized and are Henotheistic, that is, the god of a place or locale and its culture is made to be the god of all. This, by the way, is what happens in the NCAA Basketball tournament if the Wolverines would win [SMILE] . . . we’d all have to rally around their mascot, their town in celebrating . . . and it is hard to make a Wolverine our universal mascot because, well, it is not intended to be that for more than a moment.

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Well, you might ask, “How can the Scriptures and the God of the Bible, take a particular person and make this person universally “It” The ONE?” A reasonable question . . . but first I’d say that a hint of the possibility of taking a local hero to universal status does exist somewhat in the Olympian model or some strong man competitions, where participants from all over the world are “measured” or “tested” to see who is the Champion and that stands universally, at least, until the next one comes along.

Honestly, this Glocalization of Christ is what makes Christianity, unique among all the world’s religions; the Hebrew Scriptures and Greek New Testament affirm from the beginning this glocal idea and there is no other way read it. What is called the essence of Gospel (1 Corinthians 15:1-11 reminds us pointedly that Christ was predicted for centuries, in Scriptures, as the Universal coming Savior (unlike the NCAA champion or an Olympian). Like it or not, no other specific religious tradition records anything near the scores of prophecies about a “Messiah”- predicting lineage, universal dominion, place of birth, type of death, and resurrection the way the Hebrew Scriptures do. That is why we use the same Scriptures as the Jewish people use today for our Old Testament- the prophecies go back thousands of years beginning with the first “gospel” of a Messiah in the first book of the Bible, well before the Jewish nation, predict that “He (Messiah) will have his heel “bruised” or struck by Satan but he will crush Satan’s dominion wherever he rules” Gen 3:15

The universalizing feature of a particular person born a particular way in a particular town becomes, because of Scripture’s predicting this again and again, the risen glocal Christ we celebrate today as **Risen from the Dead** [HE IS RISEN INDEED]. If you doubt this, just get a Bible and turn to Genesis 12:1-3 and note the seven-fold emphasis on this universal Savior to come through Abraham because of FAITH not because of JEWISHNESS. Remember, the NT reminds us that Abraham’s father was a wandering Aramean . . . Jewish identity was solidified later as bearers of the promise . . . Christ-bearing is the important thing to note, just as it has been given to Israel, so it has been continued and given universally to those of us called “church”.

Curiously and wonderfully, in all other world religions, no savior/ Savior is set up to really be Glocal. Let me explain . . . Of all the worlds’ 7 billion peoples, the major categories of religion are Christianity of all stripes – about 1 in 3 (31%); Islam about 1 in 4 or 24%; Secularists or non-religious 1 in 5 (20%); Hindu about 1 in 7 or 15% and Buddhism and Other Religions 1 in 10. Buddhism is really more of a philosophy than a religion, although it is sometimes categorized there. And I am using large figures here so the exact percentage is not the point.

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In any case the real rub in a multi-cultural and ethnically diverse world is what some would say is the *problem of localization*. How can a savior like Christ, born in a small mid-eastern village have any claim on the cosmos or the world? Judaism has at center a system of sacrifice and temple that has been, well, interrupted since the Dome of the Rock sits very close to destroyed site of the sacrifice and temple. . . wailing wall . . . some say, awaiting rebuilding. But the point is, Judaism without Christ, at its holiest and best, remains tied to place, that being Israel and Zion.

Islam has five pillars: Confession of ALLAH and Muhammad as The Prophet (God must be referred to as ALLAH); Prayer are only acceptable as being toward MECCA, in Saudi Arabia, 5 times daily in Arabic (other languages not acceptable) (Salat); Alms-giving (Zakat); Daylight abstention from food during the Lunar Month of Ramadan (Zaum); and Pilgrimage to Mecca or participation in it by contributing to someone going (Hajj). Islam is culturally and linguistically located in Arabic with its holy site in Arabia. Just note the direction of Muslim required prayers- toward Mecca, the language of prayer (Arabic); the holiest site (MECCA), etc.

As for Hindus, the day of purification in the Ganges becomes, at certain localities, a most holy site(s), located geographically in the bounds of India. A major festival just ended in March in places like Allahabad where in 60 days it is reported that 120 million people had their sins washed away in the Ganges River. These festivals originated in the myth-origins that the nectar of immortality fell on the four places in India that host this festival on the Ganges, which is sacred; the waters are worshipped as is a god. Many pilgrims use all their money to come to these sites.

OK, so let's just wrap this with some practical reasons why Christ, the one risen today, translates so readily into all peoples and all cultures of the world.

- 1) The world was created through Him and by Him . . . no other prophet/savior/king in any religion is declared as co-creating a real world, with God as is the Christ.
- 2) Language and Translation. The Bible allows all languages to be "holy" and to be honored as the Word of God in their own languages (Pentecost affirms this). No other major world religion, Judaism, Islam or Hinduism gets out of this trap of exalting one language over others, except for Christianity.
- 3) Names for God. We don't have a secret mantra for God-awareness, but a translatable one in any language . . . so it is not a Hindu God name or an "Ahhhoohhhmmmm" of meditation or only the name Jehovah or Yahweh or Allah. . . we can call Him Yesuus,

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Eyeesu, Jesus, Jesu or whatever because it is the content of the message, the person we are communicating, not the special or particular sound of the Name that saves. 1 Cor 15:1-5 makes this plain as does Colossians 1:28.

- 4) Prophecy- only the Hebrew Scriptures predicts Christ's coming, dying and rising. The odds of one person filling only 14 of these by chance is more than 1 in 10 to the twelve power... about as likely as a tornado going through a junk yard and happening to assemble a Mustang!
- 5) Location: All places where Christ is named are holy because "God does not dwell in a human building or locale" and God's temple is said to be in all believers, therefore we are all called his holy ones.
- 6) Government- Christ said we could live under and respect what is good in all governments, rendering to Caesar what is Caesars and to God what is for God. Christians do not need a theocracy nor do they seek to institute it. ***Christians following Scripture do not seek to combine throne and altar.***
- 7) Worship can be anywhere with no special direction, language or objects. "Worshippers in Jesus are called simply to worship in Spirit and in Truth"
- 8) There are no clean or unclean foods in Christ—What God has cleansed (all things) no one should call unclean. Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and Judaism all have dietary requirements or restrictions.
- 9) No special clothing, hairstyles or habits are required of Christians unlike other religions

There is neither Jew nor Greek, male nor female, slave nor free, all are one in Christ.

We are witnesses and commanded to tell all people He is the judge of the Last day, the living and the dead and that forgiveness of sins is theirs, now, in the **One who is Risen** [He is Risen indeed!] AMEN!