



"Without absolutes revealed from without by God Himself, we are left rudderless in a sea of conflicting ideas about manners, justice and right and wrong, issuing from a multitude of self-opinionated thinkers."

—John Owen

12-Oct-18

A God Near at Hand (Part Two)

As we saw in Part One, people have different ideas about God's involvement in the lives of people on Planet Earth. Deists believe that a Creator [God](#) exists but that He is disinterested in humanity and does not intervene in its affairs. Of course, most professing Christians reject the deistic creed, holding that, conversely, God is intimately involved in His creation and especially with those whom He has called into His church.

In the early chapters of the book of Genesis, we began to see a pattern of God's involvement with humanity, which we will continue to develop. In [Genesis 6:13-21](#), God intervenes directly in human affairs, informing Noah about the violent state of mankind and instructing him to build the ark to save his family and the animals He would bring to him. God proceeds to execute righteous judgment by causing water to flood the earth so that only the eight people that He had chosen are saved to live into the new era of human life.

[Genesis 11:1-9](#) relates the story of the Tower of Babel, in which God's watching of the activities of humanity is emphasized. He is not idly standing back or off in the vastness of space just letting time tick on. On the contrary, He is involved in observing the advancements of humanity, judging its deeds and intentions, and in this case, intervening decisively so that His plan would continue to move forward as designed and at the pace He desired.

As we move forward in time, we [see God](#) speaking to Abram in [Genesis 12:1](#). We should not gloss over this. We sometimes read statements like this, but they remain two-dimensional to us. That is, we may read a biblical account but fail to grasp its full import. God *spoke* to Abram. Have any of us heard the voice of God speaking directly to us? Their conversation was probably similar to what Adam and Eve experienced in the Garden of Eden. God was present, talking with Abram, instructing him on where to go and what to do. They had a personal, intimate relationship; God and Abram were friends ([James 2:23](#)).

Later in Genesis, the Angel of Lord appears and speaks to Hagar, telling her that He would make a great nation from her child ([Genesis 16:7-16](#)). Keep in mind that God stood before Hagar, appearing as a mighty angel and directly addressing her. Notice what she says in verse 13 once He has finished speaking"

Then she called the name of the LORD who spoke to her, You-Are-the-God-Who-Sees; for she said, "Have I also here seen Him who sees me?" Therefore the well was called Beer Lahai Roi; observe, it is between Kadesh and Bered.

It is interesting that her response is, "Have I actually seen God?" She is astounded that God was interested in—and would make something of—an insignificant Egyptian maidservant.

In Genesis 17, the Lord appears again to Abram, who falls on his face as He tells him more about the covenant that He is making with him and instructs him on how he should conduct his life from then on. The Lord changes his name to Abraham, foretelling that many nations will descend from him and make him exceedingly fruitful. The Lord is not a God who stands back and

lets things happen! He is not passive in the least; when He wills to do something, He takes direct and personal action.

In [Genesis 18:1-15](#), He appears yet again to Abraham, this time accompanied by two angels, and He does not speak and quickly disappear. He stays and talks with Abraham for hours—long enough for a fine meal to be prepared for Him from scratch and eaten! This is not a God who has gone away or for some reason has avoided interacting or intervening in His creation!

There are many other examples of this kind, and we have not yet exhausted the book of Genesis. We will note one other example because it is helpful to demonstrate, not only that God personally interacted with many people, but also that their responses to their encounters with Deity can be instructive and inspiring.

This particular example of God interacting with an individual is found in [Genesis 32:27-30](#), when God meets Jacob as he returns to Canaan and begins wrestling with him. We see that this encounter and response from Jacob is similar to what we saw from Hagar.

So He said to him, "What is your name?"

He said, "Jacob."

And He said, "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed."

Then Jacob asked, saying, "Tell me Your name, I pray."

And He said, "Why is it that you ask about My name?" And He blessed him there.

So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: "For I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved."

Hagar's response is more rhetorical—"Have I also here seen Him who sees me?"—but in the form of a question nonetheless, as if she could not believe

her own eyes. Jacob's response, on the other hand, is matter-of-fact: "For I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved." He *knew* he had just had a personal, face-to-face, chest-to-chest encounter with God—a long wrestling match and conversation. That is awesome!

Next time, we will see that God's interaction with human beings did not end with the close of the book of Genesis.

- Ryan McClure

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[You Are My Friends!](#)

by Martin G. Collins

While it is common on Facebook to defriend/unfriend, Christ's love for His people is a friending with the condition that godly fruit is produced. When Paul challenged the Roman congregation to produce godly fruit, he was not looking for new converts, but evidence of the spiritual fruit of God's character. The fruit Jesus asked His disciples to bear is designed to glorify the Father, to demonstrate love by obedience to His Commandments, and to increase the believer's joy, a by-product of sincere obedience. God admonishes us to not only bear fruit, but to bear more fruit through pruning. God is looking for a great deal of fruit as we yield to Him in order to exceed our self-imposed limitations, as well as for enduring fruit, in contrast to futile worldly projects which are subject to decay. As we bear godly fruit, the quality of our friendship with God the Father, Jesus Christ, and our brethren will increase exponentially as we make activities like intercessory prayer, sacrifice, hospitality, and charity a perpetual part of our spiritual repertoire.

From the Archives: Featured Article

[Living By Faith and God's Sovereignty](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

The serious Christian looks on this ever-declining world—a world that reflects the rebellious, anti-God attitudes of Satan the Devil—and wonders how anyone can truly live by faith. Some may even begin to doubt that God is in control of events here on earth. John Ritenbaugh, however, contends that God's sovereignty over His creation is complete, and the course of world events are moving according to His will.

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