



## What Do You Expect?<sup>(Part 4)</sup>

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What do YOU expect? That has been the theme of the week. What should I expect from God if He visited our planet? Previously I discussed the Scripture itself, how I expect God to relate it to us in its accuracy and its reliability. Today, I will discuss his proximity.

C. S. Lewis, in his book *Perelandra*, makes a comment about the invisible beings of angels and demons. If a demon were to appear before you, he remarks, we would be terrified by its power. But at the same time we would know there was at least one area that we had the advantage: We are more moral than any demon. But contrasting this with an angel makes things remarkably different. If an angel were to appear before us, not only would we be terrified by its immense power, but we would also be terrified by its perfect moral character. In every way we would have the disadvantage.

If this is how we would feel before a finite angel, imagine what it would be like to stand before the All-powerful and All-holy God of all beings. This thought is nothing short of bewildering.

Yet this is what God guards us humans against throughout the Bible. "No man can look on Me and live," God tells Moses. God shows Moses his back and Moses glows for forty days. In like manner, when Isaiah merely sees a vision of God in the temple, the overwhelming temperature of that encounter educes woe. Even the hot coal placed upon Isaiah's lips did not evoke a response. In like manner, in his Revelation, John falls before an angel as if dead.

May I suggest that the Bible is telling us that if God is brought too near and too unveiled that it would bring paralyzing fear in our hearts. Raw holiness from God's throne would strike immediate justice of the fiercest kind. His glory laid bare would eradicate our wills.

If God is really holy, then I would expect his unveiled presence to do this to mortal, sinful creatures. Yet, at the same time, if God were really good and loving, I would expect Him to come to us in ways that would allow our wills to remain intact so that we could

deliberately choose His goodness and seek to know Him.

And this is what I find in Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus claims to be God, yet he veils his glory. He is sheathed in skin and drops hints of his Home Country through miracles and compassion. Sometimes his message is explicit of his Father's Kingdom, yet he never rips back the curtain with a shock and awe campaign. He walked the way we would expect God to walk and he comes near enough to us so that we can see what he's like without our wills being eradicated.

This is a gentle spot in God's gentlemanliness: Loving enough to draw near yet holy enough to stay far. He wants, not just obedience, but our wills to earnestly seek him and choose him above all other suitors.

C. S. Lewis gives a clear description of God's strategy in the Screwtape Letters when he says, "God cannot ravish; he can only woo."

From a God who is good, loving, and compassionate, I would expect Him to keep His distance in some way, to cloak Himself in some apparel so as not to overwhelm me. Yet, I would expect Him to draw near

enough so that I can seek Him with all of my heart. He has struck the perfect balance between His ways of revealing and my ways of receiving.

This is the God I find in the Scriptures, not one who comes tip-toeing into the world through the obscurity of secret societies and abstract mystical religions, but one who comes bold faced in the person of Christ, opens the door plainly in the Scriptures, and respects us with a gentleman's kindness so as to woo us unto Himself.

Not only is this what I expect from God, it is what I have found only from the God of the Bible as revealed through the person of Jesus Christ.

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