



PART 1: Connecting with God

CHAPTER 8

Connecting in a Tempest

Life-threatening storms arrest our attention with deadly peril. Whether material or symbolic, they evoke an urgency to connect with God. Storms evict us from our comfort zone, yank us from lethargy, and refocus our priorities.

Job's Encounter

After losing his children, servants, and livestock, Job wanted more than a theological explanation. He wanted his family back; he wanted his faithful servants and hard-earned fortune back. Stricken with painful boils, Job wanted more than a medical explanation; he wanted his health back. From a posture of extreme desperation, Job pondered, probed, prayed, and eventually demanded a breakthrough in his relationship with God.

From the tempest of a storm, God addressed Job's greatest need.¹ He exposed the truth about Job and then He revealed the truth about Himself. Rather than providing answers and explanations, God confronted Job with pointed questions and rhetorical candor. Divine probing awakened Job to see reality with enlightened eyes. Job had underestimated the One whom he was addressing. Primed with acute pain and severe grief, Job listened while God spoke with audiovisual clarity.

¹ Job 38:1 and 40:6

Then Job answered the Lord and said: "I know that You can do everything, And that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You... "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, But now my eye sees You. (Job 42:1-5 NKJ)

A Stormy Alarm Clock

After a rigorous day teaching from a boat, Jesus rallied His disciples to cross the Sea of Galilee.² Exhausted as He was from addressing a massive gathering, Jesus fell asleep during the voyage. Suddenly a violent storm arose threatening their safety. Several disciples were veteran seamen, yet when waves flooded in they pressed the panic button. Fearful for their lives they woke Jesus abruptly.

Rather than asking for help, one disciple denounced Him for not caring for their welfare. He pronounced a scathing accusation saying, *"Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"* These disciples blamed Jesus for not making their survival a priority. Unbeknownst to them, Jesus used this fierce gale to wake them up. He was more concerned with the accuracy of their connection than the comfort of their journey.

Taking the disciples to the other side of the lake was not Jesus' primary objective. Their peace was not His top priority. At His command, the storm became perfectly calm but their fear did not abate. Instead, their fear intensified. They were now *"exceedingly afraid"*. The fear of the Lord gripped them beyond gale force. They said to one another, *"Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!"* This question hit the bull's-eye that Jesus was targeting. He wanted them to connect beyond the scope of their limited perception. Until that moment, these disciples had merely connected with Jesus as a teacher and orator. They saw Him as an accom-



² Mark 4:35-41

plished healer and exorcist, well aware that He was an extraordinary prophet. At this moment however, Jesus forced them to reevaluate His mortal status. He made them reconsider His sacred worth. New data had revealed that Jesus was more than the man they thought He was.

This storm jolted attentive disciples into an awakened state of encounter. Jesus' primary goal was not escorting disciples to a lakeside destination. Nor was He aiming to alleviate their fear of death. Saying, "*Peace be still*", Jesus revolutionized their prospective connection possibilities. He transformed them from being biased observers to radical participants. The perils of this storm primed their heart to discover the divine nature and eternal power that filled Jesus.

Each storm-induced crisis becomes a tactical lever in God's hand. He uses tempest force wind to pry open layers of pride and stages of independence. After pinpointing our vulnerability, God exploits mortal weaknesses for our own good. He exposes our insecurity and challenges our complacent pursuit.

The storms of life (both material and figurative) motivate us to approach Jesus with dedicated perseverance rather than distracted curiosity. They compel us to wake up and pursue an informed connection with Him.

In the Storm with Jesus once again



Fighting strong winds and heavy waves, the disciples were in trouble once again. Far from land at three o'clock in the morning, they saw Jesus, not sleeping in the bow but strolling across the lake. Sometimes, Jesus exhibits unexpected behavior during storms. Once again, concern for safety escalated into feelings of terror as Jesus arrived on the scene.

The disciples cried out in fear thinking He was a spirit. Attempting to reassure them, Jesus said, *“Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid.”*

Once again, the disciples were terrified, and they wanted more than a pep talk from a ghost. These men needed supernatural action.

Peter rose above his fears and he lunged beyond any reasonable sense of risk aversion. As he joined Jesus for a stroll on the waves, the disciples deduced that this ghost was more than a lifeguard. As the wind died down, they connected the dots and saw Jesus for who He was.

Awakened to reality, they finally got it. Those who were in the boat worshiped Jesus, saying, *“Truly you are the Son of God.”*³ They could have quoted Jacob who awoke from his sleep and said, *“Surely the Lord is in this place and I did not know it.”*⁴

This account describes the only time in the entire Bible where the disciples worshiped Jesus before His resurrection. After two storms, they eventually recognized the truth about Christ and responded accordingly.

Navigating with Jesus in a Figurative Storm

Preceding one of the most ferocious figurative storms in history, Jesus announced His upcoming betrayal. One by one, the disciples denied their involvement by saying, *“surely not I **Lord?**”* Judas however, used a completely different word in his reply. He said, *“surely not I **Rabbi?**”* Eleven had connected with Jesus as Lord or ‘Kurios’, the Greek title given to God.⁵ The one who betrayed Him with a kiss while feigning affection had only connected with Him as a religious teacher or rabbi (as other disciples had connected during the first storm).

And while they were eating, he [Jesus] said, “I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me.” They were very sad and began to say to

³ Mat 14:22-32

⁴ Genesis 28:16 NKJ

⁵ <http://bible.crosswalk.com/Lexicons/> (accessed 1-13-07)

him one after the other, “Surely not I, **Lord?**” ...Then Judas, the one who would betray him, said, “Surely not I, **Rabbi?**” Jesus answered, “Yes, it is you.” (Mat 26:21-25 NIV)

Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, “Greetings, **Rabbi!**” and kissed him. (Matthew 26:49 NIV)

A Global Storm Brewing

Our Heavenly Father seeks an occasion to wake up the human race—His beloved creation. Perhaps the war, which Joel urges everyone to prepare for, will be a provocative wake-up call.

*Proclaim this among the nations:
“Prepare for war! Wake up the mighty men,
let all the men of war draw near, let them come up.
Beat your plowshares into swords
and your pruning hooks into spears;
Let the weak say, “I am strong.”
Assemble and come, all you nations,
and gather together all around. ...*

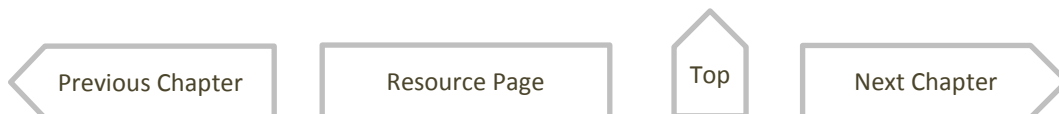
Joel 3:9-11 NKJ

As God jolts the nations awake, Jesus may reveal Himself in unexpected ways. The magnitude of this impending storm will activate a monumental season-change. The current political and economic climate remains fragile and temporary. Altering the spiritual atmosphere may actually cause a world-shaking event in the material realm.

Eventually, one generation will experience the ferocity of God’s wrath mingled with the fury of Satan’s rage. Intense chaos will provoke the most reticent cynic to abandon their inadequate security system. Connecting with Jesus during this global storm will leave no room for apathy or complacency.

Jesus said the human heart would fail because of *“fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth”*.⁶ Human anger has enough power to inflict terror, which can be disheartening but the terror generated by God’s wrath and Satan’s rage promises to be heart stopping. Emotions associated with supernatural terror affect the anatomy and physiology of the human body. When the wrath of God and the rage of Satan erupt, we will need to be stronger and more courageous than we are now. We need supernatural strength to respond appropriately to supernatural activity. We need God’s strength to live abundantly, love passionately, and influence effectively as we overcome Satan.

God did not design us simply to negotiate a survival course. While some things are worth fighting for with all the strength we can muster, our existence serves a much greater purpose than overcoming adversity. Fighting to survive hard times is not our primary concern. We exist to connect permanently with God’s passionate love. Connecting with Jesus and staying connected is a cause with paramount importance. Created in God’s image, we embrace this relationship as an eternal priority.



⁶ Luke 21:26 NKJ