

Was Jesus Seen in the Old Testament?

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Question: This is from Paul. "How do you feel about the idea of Christophanies in the Old Testament?" Anybody know what a Christophany is? (from the room) It's the manifestation of Christ. Tim: A manifestation of Christ in the Old Testament. "How do you feel about the idea of Christophanies in the Old Testament? The Angel of the Lord visits where worship is even received, or wrestling with Jacob, etc. If these are biblically sound, is it a stretch to say that all theophanies..." Theophany, christophany. Christophany is a manifestation of Christ. Theo - God - a manifestation of God. So basically, what they're asking is it right to think that in the Old Testament every time God manifested Himself that it is the pre-incarnate Jesus. "We know He is the image of the invisible Father, and that no one can see God. So would the whirlwind in Job, the burning bush, or the glory that Moses saw on Mt. Sinai really be the Son as opposed to the Father? I feel it is generally taught as God generally, which in an Old Testament context alludes to the Father. Thank you."

Discussion: Now, as I've said before, just because somebody asks the question a certain way doesn't mean that we simply receive it. Because he made a statement right at the end that I would say, well, wait, he just made an assumption that isn't true. He says, "I feel it is generally taught as God generally, which in an Old Testament context alludes to the Father." So he's basically saying that in the Old Testament when God is alluded to it is generally the Father.

Well, he's making that assumption, but he really doesn't say anything to prove it. So you see what his point is. He's saying, really, his preconceived ideas, presuppositions about the Old Testament is this: he thinks that in the Old Testament when God is mentioned, it usually is referring to the Father. So if that's the case, when God is said to appear or manifest somewhere, why would we jump to the conclusion that it's Christ? Is it Christ? That seems to be the tension that he feels.

Is it Christ? Well, perhaps it could be Christ. But usually when God's spoken about in the Old Testament it's the Father, so how can I know that it's Christ over against the Father? And he does actually talk about the fact that the Father is invisible and that Christ is the representative of the invisible Father. He's the image.

Let me just say this calling into question what he says. You know, he says that his assumption is that when God is being spoken about that it's typically the Father. Well, is it? I guess that's the question. He assumes it, but is that the reality? I mean, just think with me here. How does the Old Testament start? "In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth." Okay, how does John 1 start? "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." In the beginning, the Word was with God. Is that how verse 2 goes? Verse 3 - what does verse three say? Do you have it there? "All things were made through Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made." Okay, so then we find out Christ is God and everything

was made by Him. So when you go back to the Old Testament, even the way the Old Testament starts: "In the beginning, God created..." So let me ask you this, is the God in Genesis 1:1, is that specifically speaking of the Father or the Son? Yeah, it could be both. And there's another chapter 1:1 that kind of comes into play here. Hebrews 1:1. Because what we find is that God created all things through Christ. So yes, it could be either one.

But okay, let's ask this. In Genesis... 3:8 comes to my mind. Yes, God was walking in the garden in the cool of the day. So let me ask you this: Is that the Father or is that Christ? Or it could be either? God is walking in the garden in the cool of the day. Which is it? Or is that uncertain?

(from the room) John says in John 1, no one has ever seen God the Father, but the only God who is at His side has made Him known.

Tim: Yeah, that would be one. John 1:18. You have 1:18 right there? Somebody have John 1:18? I think we should read that. John 1:18 and somebody else can look up John 6:46 because they give us some similar thoughts.

"No one has ever seen God. The only God..."

Tim: Okay, nobody has ever seen God. The only God... but if you just stop right there, it's like, well, wait a second. Isn't Jesus God? Haven't people seen Him? Keep going.

"...Who is at the Father's side, He has made Him known."

Tim: God is at the Father's side. He makes the Father known. Read the whole text again.

"No one has ever seen God. The only God Who is at the Father's side, He has made Him known."

Tim: Isn't that interesting? Nobody has ever seen God, but the only God Who is at His right side - is at His side, He has made Him known. He declares Him. Somebody have John 6:46?

"No one has seen the Father except the One Who is from God; only He has seen the Father."

Tim: Okay, if we take those two realities and we go apply it to Genesis 3:8, what's the conclusion? The pre-incarnate Jesus. Does God the Father ever take on human form? We're never told that. In fact, what we're told is nobody has ever seen Him. What we're told is that the Father is invisible. Colossians 1:15 specifically says that. Invisible God. Christ declares Him. Christ is the express image of Him. 1 Timothy 6:16 says the same truth. No one has ever seen Him. And so what you have in Genesis 3:8 when you have God coming and walking in the garden, it's got to be Christ. It's got to be a pre-incarnate - the incarnation is Him coming into the earth being born of the virgin Mary - before that. Can we prove this any other way?

(from the room) I think a significant text is John 12:41.

Tim: John 12:41. Now, John 12:41 - you might want to look at it - v. 41 and 42. It is questionable. The reason it's questionable is this: John quotes from Isaiah 53 and then he quotes from Isaiah 6. And then John says that Isaiah saw Christ's glory. What does he mean? Does he mean that Isaiah 6:1, He saw also the Lord high and lifted up and sitting on this throne. Does he mean that he saw His glory there? Isaiah saw the glory of Christ there? Or does he mean that he saw prophetically the glory of Christ as demonstrated in Isaiah 53 where you have the glories of the cross? The last thing quoted is Isaiah 6. If you go back to Isaiah 6, and you can go back there, you'll see Isaiah entered the temple. "In the year King Uzziah died, I saw also the Lord, high and lifted up." And the last quote there before John says that Isaiah saw Christ's glory is right there from Isaiah 6, so it may very well be.

Let me tell you something else. When Israel was in the wilderness and you had this pillar of fire and smoke, the reality is that Paul looking at that, in 1 Corinthians 10, says that Rock that followed them was Christ. Now, I know we're not getting necessarily human form there, but he's going back to the Old Testament and he's saying when God was following Israel through that wilderness, that Rock that followed them was Christ.

How about something else? I think we have to keep coming back to the reality that Jesus said no one has seen the Father. So when you go back to the Old Testament you say, well, wait a second, Manoah - the father of Samson - just maybe go back there. Go back to Judges. If you go back to Judges 13, you remember what happened first - Manoah's wife - I think it's very interesting that Manoah's wife is actually the first one that has this revelation, and yet her name is never mentioned. It's just Manoah's wife. But if you look there in Judges 13:21, you'll see that they specifically had an encounter with the Angel of the Lord. And when you go to verse 22, what does Manoah say? We have seen God.

Okay, put this together with Joshua. Back up a book. Go back to Joshua 5. You remember this. Joshua getting ready to lead the hosts of Israel into the Promised Land, defeat all these nations, and there as he's preparing to go in, he's met by? Joshua 5:13. What does Joshua 5:13 say? Who is he met by? A man. Now grasp that - a man. But then keep reading. Somebody read it out loud.

"When Joshua was by Jericho, he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing before him with his drawn sword in his hand. And Joshua went to him and said to him, 'Are you for us, or for our adversaries?'"

Tim: Keep going.

"And he said, 'No; but I am the commander of the army of the Lord.'"

Tim: Okay, "commander of the army of the Lord." So we have a man and he's the commander of the army of the Lord. Now, keep reading.

"Now I have come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped and said to him, 'What does my lord say to his servant?'"

Tim: It says Joshua fell on his face and he worshiped. And you know what? This Commander of the Lord of Hosts does not stop him. Now if you know your Bibles, you know in the book of Revelation, when the man John fell down to worship an angel - two occasions - he was stopped dead in his tracks. Why? Because that's not appropriate to offer worship to an angel. So what happens? Joshua falls down and worships. And not only that, we get the same kind of verbiage that comes from the bush that burned with fire there on Sinai. This Angel of the Lord - well, if you keep reading. Keep reading. He says, "take off the sandals." It's holy ground.

And so, let's back up even further. Let's think about Jacob wrestling before his encounter with Esau. Because you get the same kind of thing again. If you go to Genesis 18 - no, not Genesis 18, Genesis 32. Genesis 32:24. You get the same kind of verbiage again that we saw with Manoah. First, a man wrestled with him. In 32:30, Jacob says, "I have seen God face to face."

Now, go all the way back to the prophets, to Hosea 12. Because this account is reiterated for us by the prophet and he adds an interesting title to the mix. Hosea 12:3-4. Somebody read that out loud if you get there.

"In the womb he took his brother by the heel, and in his manhood he strove with God. He strove with the angel and prevailed; he wept and sought his favor. He met God at Bethel, and there God spoke with us..."

Tim: You hear he strove with God. He strove with the Angel. When you look at Genesis 32, it's a man. When you start talking about somebody who's a man, who's God, who's the Angel, who's the Commander of the Lord's armies, you begin to see a picture.

I mentioned Genesis 18. That's Abraham. And you remember him. One day, three men came, and one of them is specifically called the Lord. Three men, but one is specifically called the Lord. No one has ever seen the Father. Abraham called Him Lord. If you look at the terminology there, it's obviously God. I mean, this is what we're confronted with in the Old Testament. We're confronted by what? I'll tell you what I believe we're confronted with. We're confronted by an Old Testament that is full of Christ. He is there and He is moving and He is active and He is very much involved. Now, the people didn't know. You had the Old Testament Scriptures - well, it's a man; it's the Lord. I mean, what did they do with that? They've got this idea of one God, and yet He's coming as a man - they knew that. They saw that. Or did they just say, well, it was an angel? It was an angel representing God so it's appropriate to credit him as speaking for God? And sometimes they just kind of intermixed the language? (incomplete thought) I don't believe that any time you actually see a manifestation of God as a man, that you're seeing the Father.

Because Jesus could say to the people: He's invisible, and you've never seen Him. So, I have one more.