

Theophanies in the Old Testament

Special Topical Lesson

1. My wife and I have recently opened up new discussions in our faith

- a. Chuck and David Bercot have introduced the historic faith to us
- b. The historic faith is very different from most denominations (due to theological drift)
- c. Understanding of the Old Testament (and use of OT)
 - i. Abundance of prophecies
 - ii. Deep usefulness of knowing the law and many stories
 - iii. Jesus in the OT

2. Justin to Trypho the Jew

- a. Justin's Dialogue with Trypho 29, "They are contained in your Scriptures, or rather not yours, but ours. For we believe them; but you, though you read them, do not catch the spirit that is in them...."
- b. We need to be careful not to have the same reading as Trypho and "not catch the spirit".
- c. A lot of Christians today have this.
 - i. Either OT is wholly old and gone
 - ii. NT has to be read through a Jewish lens
 - iii. Should be a Christocentric view of the whole Bible
- d. Many Christians also understand the role of Christ in the Biblical narrative differently than the early Christians
 - i. Christians today place Jesus at creation helping the Father and incarnate during His ministry on Earth. They also expect His return.
 - ii. Early Christians also understood to Christ to be manifest throughout the Jewish narrative. The theological term for these manifestations is theophanies.

3. Context for Christian understanding and usage of the OT

- a. **2 Tim 3:16-17**, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."
 - i. Paul often uses the Old Testament to prove the faith
 - ii. Prophecy of both types: Eastern and Western

- b. **Matt 22:29**, Jesus answered and said to them, “You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God.”
 - i. If you do not know what the Scriptures say and teach and
 - ii. Do not know the power of God,
 - iii. Then you cannot see the Scriptures clearly.

4. Jesus as ever present (especially in the past)

- a. **Rev 1:8**, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End,” says the Lord, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”
 - i. John on the Island of Patmos receives a vision of Christ
 - ii. Christ announces Himself as the one who has always been and always will be
- b. **John 8:57-59**, “So the Jews said to him, ‘You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?’ Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.’ So, they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.”
 - i. Jesus going back and forth with the Jews
 - ii. Jesus claims that He existed before Abraham

5. Jesus as creator

- a. **John 1:3**, “All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.”
- b. **1 Cor 8:6**, “yet for us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live.”
- c. **Col 1:15-16**, “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.”
- d. **Heb 1:1-2**, “God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds....”

6. Presence of more than just God the Father

- a. The early church often uses the “Us/Our statements” from Genesis to prove the existence of the Son and the Holy Spirit
 - i. **Gen 1:26**, “Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness.”

- ii. **Gen 3:22**, “Then the Lord God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil.”
- iii. God speaking in terms of Us and Our indicates the presence of the Son and the Spirit
- b. The early church also uses “the Lord said to the Lord” moments
 - i. **Psalm 110:1**, “The Lord said to my Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.’”
 - ii. **Gen 19:24**, “Then the Lord rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from the Lord out of the heavens.”
 - iii. Lord the Son communicating with Lord the Father

7. No one has seen God

- a. **John 1:18**, “No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.”
- b. **John 6:46**, “Not that anyone has seen the Father, except He who is from God; He has seen the Father.”
- c. Many people claim to have seen God in the OT, but no one has seen the Father.
- d. The early church believes that they saw the Son.

8. Early Christian understanding of the Son’s manifestations in the OT through Justin Martyr

- a. Justin’s Dialogue with Trypho 61, “I shall give you another testimony, my friends,’ said I, ‘from the Scriptures, that God begat before all creatures a Beginning, who was a certain rational power proceeding from Himself, who is called by the Holy Spirit, now the Glory of the Lord, now the Son, again Wisdom, again an Angel, then God, and then Lord and Logos; and on another occasion He calls Himself Captain.”
- b. Justin’s Dialogue with Trypho 126, “He remains ever in the super-celestial places, invisible to all men, holding personal intercourse with none, whom we believe to be Maker and Father of all things... there is said to be, another God and Lord subject to the Maker of all things; who is also called an Angel, because He announces to men whatsoever the Maker of all things — above whom there is no other God — wishes to announce to them.”
- c. Justin believes that the Son is called many things in the OT: Wisdom, Angel, and Captain. He is now called Glory, Logos, and Son.
- d. Justin believes that the Son is the mediator between God and man in the OT.

9. Manifestations of the Son in the OT

- a. Hagar and the Angel
 - i. **Gen 16:7-14**

- ii. Hagar is with child and running from her mistress Sarai
 - iii. She is visited by the Angel of God and claims she has seen God
 - iv. This must be Christ because “no one has seen the Father”.
- b. Before Sodom and Gomorrah
- i. **Gen 18:1-3, 18:33-19:1**
 - ii. Three men come to Abraham, then the Lord goes His way, and the other two men visit Sodom and Gomorrah
 - iii. One of the three men is talking to Abraham, and he calls Him Lord
 - iv. Justin’s Dialogue with Trypho 56, “He who appeared to Abraham under the oak in Mamre is God, sent with the two angels in His company to judge Sodom by Another who remains ever in the super-celestial places, invisible to all men, holding personal intercourse with none, whom we believe to be Maker and Father of all things... there is said to be, another God and Lord subject to the Maker of all things; who is also called an Angel, because He announces to men whatsoever the Maker of all things — above whom there is no other God — wishes to announce to them.”
- c. Atop Mt Moriah
- i. **Gen 22:10-14**
 - ii. Abraham is being tested and is commanded to offer his only son Isaac
 - iii. Abraham and Isaac are visited by the Angel
 - iv. In the LXX, Abraham declares that he saw the Lord on the mountain
 - 1. Consider that the Son is providing an offering in place of Abraham’s son!
 - 2. Mt. Moriah is where Jerusalem was to be built
- d. Jacob’s Ladder
- i. **Gen 28:10-19**
 - ii. Jacob is fleeing from Esau and sees the Lord atop a ladder reaching Heaven.
 - iii. Justin’s Dialogue with Trypho 58, “Moreover, I consider it necessary to repeat to you the words which narrate how He who is both Angel and God and Lord, and who appeared as a man to Abraham, and who wrestled in human form with Jacob, was seen by him when he fled from his brother Esau. They are as follows: And Jacob went out from the well of the oath, and went toward Harran. And he lighted on a spot, and slept there, for the sun was set; and he gathered the stones of the place, and put them under his head. And he slept in that place; and he dreamed, and, behold, a ladder was set up on the earth, whose top reached to heaven; and the angels of

God ascended and descended upon it. And the Lord stood above it, and He said, I am the Lord, the God of Abraham thy father, and of Isaac”

- e. Jacob wrestling
 - i. **Gen 32:22-30**
 - ii. Jacob wrestles with a man who is not willing to say His name
 - iii. **Hosea 12:4-5**
 - iv. The KJV (MT) claims that the Angel wrestling with Jacob is God
 - v. Justin’s Dialogue with Trypho 126, “For Moses says somewhere... A man wrestled with Jacob, and asserts it was God; narrating that Jacob said, ‘I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.’ And it is recorded that he called the place where He wrestled with him, appeared to and blessed him, the Face of God (Peniel).”
- f. Moses in the Bush
 - i. **Ex 3:4-6**
 - ii. The ground is holy around the burning bush
 - iii. The Lord is present, and Moses must remove his sandals
 - iv. Justin’s Dialogue with Trypho 59, “from the book of Exodus how this same One, who is both Angel, and God, and Lord, and man, and who appeared in human form to Abraham and Isaac, appeared in a flame of fire from the bush, and conversed with Moses... “These words are in the book which bears the title of Exodus... Go and gather the elders of Israel, and thou shalt say unto them, The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath appeared to me, saying, I am surely beholding you, and the things which have befallen you in Egypt.’ In addition to these words, I went on: “Have you perceived, sirs, that this very God whom Moses speaks of as an Angel that talked to him in the flame of fire, declares to Moses that He is the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob?”
- g. Sword from Heaven
 - i. Plague of the firstborn
 - 1. **Ex 11:4-6**
 - a. Plague of the firstborn described
 - 2. **Sol 18:11-19**
 - a. Plague of the firstborn administered by the Word
 - 3. **Num 33:1-5**
 - a. History of Israel escaping Egypt described
 - ii. Angel defending Israel

1. Ex 14:19-20

- a. The Angel stood between Israel and Egypt as they passed through the Red Sea

iii. Balaam

1. Num 22:20-28

- a. The Angel stood between Balaam and his corrupt goals

iv. Joshua and the Captain

1. Joshua 5:13-15

2. After crossing the Jordan and before the siege of Jericho, Joshua is visited by the Captain of the army of the Lord.
3. He is told that the ground is holy and that he must remove his sandals, like Moses at the burning bush.
4. Justin's Dialogue with Trypho 61, "He calls Himself captain when He appeared in human form to Joshua son of Nun."
5. Image of Christ as a warrior king seen in NT, **Rev 19:11-14**

h. Bonus Round

i. Manoah

1. Judges 13:18-20

2. Manoah and his wife are visited by the Angel, and Manoah claims that they have seen God.
3. Just like the encounter with Jacob, He does not reveal His name.

ii. Daniel

1. Dan 3:24-25

2. The man in the fire looks like a "son of the Gods" according to the king.

iii. Proverbs

1. Prov 8:34-36

2. Early Christians believed that the book of Proverbs is speaking of the Word.
3. Justin's Dialogue with Trypho 61, "The Word of Wisdom, who is Himself this God begotten of the Father of all things, and Word, and Wisdom, and Power, and the Glory of the Begetter, will bear evidence to me, when He speaks by Solomon the following: If I shall declare to you what happens daily, I shall call to mind events from everlasting, and review them. The Lord made me the beginning of His ways for His works. From everlasting He

established me in the beginning, before He had made the earth, and before He had made the deeps... When He made ready the heavens, I was along with Him, and when He set up His throne on the winds... Blessed is the man who shall listen to me, and the mortal who shall keep my ways, watching daily at my doors, observing the posts of my in-goings. For my outgoings are the outgoings of life, and my will has been prepared by the Lord. But they who sin against me, trespass against their own souls; and they who hate me love death.”

iv. 2 Macc 3:22-28

1. Three men appear in the temple
2. One angel is on a white horse with a gold sword
3. Similar to the rider in **Rev 19**

10. Jesus is the one who was and is and is to come.

- a. Jesus appeared in the OT
- b. Jesus was incarnate through the virgin birth
- c. Jesus will come again
- d. Jesus was all throughout the story and is still with us now
- e. In communion, we do not simply believe that Jesus is to be remembered, but that He is really present in the elements during communion.