

John 1.1-18

God Taking Flesh

The coming of Christ is the central theme of the entire Old Testament. The promised deliverer, Messiah, God made flesh was and is the story of the whole revelation of God. The people of Israel were set apart by God to produce that Messiah and were intended to be the revelation of God's glory among the nations. It is thus that the Christmas season is a continuation of the whole Old Testament, the retelling of our expectation of and the fulfillment of the promised Christ is the faithful reminder that God always keeps His promises in the fullness of time. To make sure that we had all that we needed to understand just what was promised, Christ made many appearances throughout the Old Testament to show us just exactly who was coming and just exactly what He was to do when He came. These appearances are pre-incarnate instances of the intervention of Christ, and we will be spending this advent season considering some of them, to understand more of the Christ who came to set us free; to worship Him for all that He has done and to stir up our hearts with love for Him. But first we must

begin with some basic definitions of ideas and their implications. The simple fact is this: we are NOT at all like God, and He is NOT at all like us.

I. THEOPHANY-

Theophany is a visual manifestation of God to human beings. This is not visions or metaphor, but a real encounter , temporary appearances of God in the form of a human being.

a.Revelation

- i. Every time there was an appearance there was a point, a need, a lesson to be learned. God cannot be comprehended or even seen by us, He is too great, too awesome, too wonderful. God is MORE. He is not like us, He is Holy, and the core definition of Holy is OTHER.

Psalm 50.21 - Holiness

Psalm 35.10 - mercy and deliverance

Psalm 71.19 - righteousness

Jeremiah 10.6-7 - great, mighty, singular

Micah 7.18 - pardon and delight in mercy

Isaiah 55.8-9 - thoughts and ways alien

ii. So God revealed Himself to us by allowing us to "see" Him in some manner that we could comprehend. A Theophany.

b. It must be understood however that this definition has a real problem...

John 4.12

John 1.18

John 6.46

1Timothy 6.16

Matthew 11.27

II. CHRISTOPHANY

If no one has ever seen God, nor indeed can see Him... nor even, as Jesus points out can KNOW the Father... then how are there any Theophanies at all? Something else must be going on here.

Let's consider John 1.18 and Matthew 11.27 again... both of these verses give us some important insight into what is really going on.

- i. First - anyone who has any revelation or knowledge of God, has been given a gift by the Son of God. Jesus has willed (chosen) to reveal that knowledge of God to the one who now possesses that knowledge.
- ii. Secondly, John and Paul both tells us plainly that no one has EVER seen the Father, nor CAN anyone ever see the Father....
- iii. Throughout history, if God has willed to reveal Himself to us it has been through the person of the Son, stepping into human history for a moment, then stepping back out. Only to step back in again for another temporary instance... this was the pattern of the Old Testament. There are a whole host of persons given names in the Old Testament which names are reserved for God Himself.

1. Angel of the Lord
2. Commander of the Army of the Lord

Joshua 5.14

Revelation 19.11-16

3. Jehovah (YHWH)

Zechariah 12.10

(verse 1 establishes the YHWH is speaking)

Revelation 1.4-7

Establishes that it was Christ who was
pierced

Jeremiah 23.5-6

4. Elohim

Isaiah 40.3

uses both Jehovah and Elohim

Mark 1.2-3

applies this directly to Christ

Isaiah 9.6

Mighty God is Elohim

- iv. But note again what Paul and John say. No man has ever, nor can see the FATHER.
- v. When we are glorified saints, we will see Him and know Him as He is, unfiltered and eternally.

1 Corinthians 13:11–12(NKJV)

When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. ¹² For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.

2 Corinthians 5:8(NKJV)

We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.

- vi. But for now, the revelation of God to us was confined to these appearances, when God took on flesh for a brief moment and we could relate to Him in some fashion... All of this temporary coming and going was about to change.

III. INCARNATE GOD –

Isaiah 9.6-7

- a. The second major consideration is that all theophanies ended after the coming of Christ. Their place is taken by Christ in the New Testament. God no longer needs the old methods to reveal Himself, He now has spoken through the incarnate Christ who is the very essence of and representation of the Divine nature.

John 1.14
Colossians 1.15
Hebrews 1.1-3

- b. Before, Christ only appeared as a man, but now He has become fully man even as He has always been fully God. He is the God-man who reveals God to us as no one else ever could. He fully understands God, for He IS God and can reveal Him to us. But He also fully understands mankind for He IS truly one of us, and can faithfully and accurately represent us before the throne of judgement. This transformation is essential to our redemption.
- i. Adam was our first father - He stood in our place and represented us
 - ii. Adam failed and fell; as a result his guilt was imputed to us, while his nature was imparted to us.
 - iii. Thus we needed a new federal head. A new representative, a new firstborn. We needed a new allegiance. This is part of the work that Jesus came to accomplish

Romans 5 (esp 18-19)

- iv. But more than a new allegiance, we needed to have the old record obliterated. Our sin atoned for, our guilt removed and the sentence against us dealt with... As God made flesh Jesus had the power to do this work, as man who was divine, He had the right to stand in our stead and bear the burden of our sin. This is the heart and soul of the gospel. God has paid the full price for our redemption, and all of our failures, all of our rebellions, all of our sin (the overarching, nature driven, sinning while merely breathing part) and more all of our sins - the specific intentional defying of our God have all been done away with and the justice of God has been fully satisfied in this God-Man Jesus' death, burial and resurrection.

Romans 6.5-11

- v. Further, we needed a complete new nature and a new destiny - and that is given to us in the

work of Christ in the giving of His Spirit to dwell within us.

Romans 8.9-11

- vi. What is more, God was not content to leave us merely as new creations (as profoundly wonderful as that is) He went further and adopted us into His own family making us sons and daughters of the Most High God.

Romans 8.12-17

- vii. And finally, He promises that through the working of Christ as our representative, we are not only sons here, but will ourselves be transformed into the full likeness of Christ and made into His perfect image.

Romans 8.28-30

This perfect image bearing is our own sort of incarnation, not in a Mormon sort of way, but to say that God makes us like Him who is our head, is an echo, an homage, of the manner in which He became one of us.