Theophany A Bible Study 2016

**Theophany: Jesus Christ in the Old Testament**

**Part 1: Present at Creation**

Foundational Text: **John 14:21 (NKJV)**

Introduction:

* A *theophany* is a manifestation of God in the Bible that is tangible to the human senses. In its most restrictive sense, it is a visible appearance of God in the Old Testament period, often, but not always, in human form. The word, *Christophany* is sometimes used to specify Jesus Christ as the term theophany is sometimes used to describe heathen gods with human forms.
* **1 John 5:7** (NKJV or KJV) -- Jesus Christ is the second person in the Trinity. What does this imply about His existence in the Old Testament?
* Why do some Bible translators mess with **1 John 5:7**?
* Why did Jesus then need to be “born of a Virgin?” **Philippians 2:5-11 Hebrews 4:14-15**
* Consider **John 14:21** – What does *manifest* mean?
* The implication of John 14:21 is that Jesus Christ can be made real to EVERY obedient believer in a tangible spiritual and/or physical sense – including obedient Old Testament saints!
* Did Jesus Christ ever teach about His “theophany” appearances in the Old Testament? **John 8:56-58 Exodus 3:1-2, 13-14**

1. Jesus Christ was present at Creation

* **Genesis 1:1-2, 26** – Who is the “Us” in this verse? Identify the Trinity in this text.
* How would we know the “Us” includes Jesus Christ?
* **John 1:1-5, 14-15, 16** – Who can “see God and live?”
* The Heavenly Father has a different nature than Jesus Christ: **John 4:24**
* How does Jesus Christ make the Father real to us? **John 14:7-11**
* Paul develops this further in **Colossians 1:15-17**. The last part of that phrase means “held together.” What holds together the atoms that make up physical things?
* **Revelation 22:12-13**

2. Questions or Comments?

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**Theophany: Jesus Christ in the Old Testament**

**Part 2: From the Garden to Babel**

Foundational Text: **John 14:21 (NKJV)**

Review

* What is a *theophany*?
* How is a *Christophany* different than a *theophany*?
* Using information you learned about God’s nature(s) from lesson 1, explain the Trinity.
* Name one scriptural proof text for the reality of the Trinity.
* Did Jesus ever teach about Himself as a *theophany* in the Old Testament?
* If Jesus already existed in the Old Testament, why did He need to be “Born of a Virgin” in Bethlehem? Explain why God became a Man using the Ant analogy.

1. *Theophanies* in the ancient world

* Pagan religions and ancient myths are full of stories about “god-men” i.e. semi-divine beings that were “gods in the flesh.” Where do you think these ideas came from? **Genesis 6:1-4**
* What were these pagan mythological “god-men” like? **Genesis 6:5**
* How would a *Christophany* be different? **Genesis 1:27**, **Genesis 2:16-18**
* Consider this text and what you have learned already: **Genesis 3:8-10**. Is this a theophany? What are your clues?
* There are two different words for “God” in Genesis 1 and 2. In Genesis 2, the word “LORD” appears instead of God. Explain why the change.
	+ The word for God, *Elohim,* denotes an impersonal, commanding God whose Hand is at work in the earth; the word for the LORD, *Yahweh,* denotes God’s redemptive, personal Heart in the relationship between Elohim and the object of that personal love
* God does not give up on mankind. Nor does God stop *appearing* to those He desires to save!
	+ **Genesis 4:8-12, 16** – Discuss
	+ However it would not be until a generation later that mankind would begin to cry out to God: **Genesis 4:25-26**
* The term “Walking with God” has a double meaning. Can you explain it?
	+ In the New Testament, unique language is used to describe us walking “with the Spirit of God” -- **Galatians 5:25**
	+ Yet in the time of the apostles, there was distinct language used to describe physically walking with Jesus as in **Acts 4:13**
	+ So how do you interpret this verse? **Genesis 5:22-24** (Note it is the word, “God,” not the word, “LORD”)
* The LORD (Yahweh) was particularly near to Noah as these scriptures indicate. They have some theophany characteristics but are not conclusive: **Genesis 7:1, 15-16, 20-21**
	+ The “LORD” here denotes the close “heart of God” relationship between Noah and God as opposed to a *theophany.*
* The destruction of man’s evil work at Babel seemed to require a personal visitation of God: **Genesis 11:1-4, 5-8** – does this remind you of another, similar judgment? **Genesis 18:20-21**

2. Questions or Comments?

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**Theophany: Jesus Christ in the Old Testament**

**Part 3: Jesus in Genesis – Abraham’s Story**

Foundational Text: **John 14:21 (NKJV)**

1. Review

* What is a *theophany*?
* How is a *Christophany* different than a *theophany*?
* How do the divine god-men of pagan myth differ from a *theophany* of God?
* What are the two names of God used in the Old Testament? Explain their difference in meaning.
* Briefly describe how God appeared in human form (Jesus) to Adam, Enoch, Noah and in Babel.

2. Jesus appears to Abram/Abraham

* **Genesis 12:7** – What two words here suggest this is a *Christophany?*
* How had Abram proved his faith that Jesus would manifest to him?
* Now note this text: **Genesis 15:1**. How can we know for sure that this is NOT a theophany?
* The next time we record a theophany in Genesis may surprise you: **Genesis 16:7-8, 9-12, 13**
* What surprises you about this scripture?
* Why might Jesus make an appearance here?
* Note the use of the word “Angel” with a capital A. This is a physical being not a winged apparition. What does the word “angel” actually mean?
* **Genesis 17:1-4** – Note Abraham’s age. Why might this be significant?
* The most incredible appearance of Christ in Genesis occurs in Genesis 18 – Discuss:
	+ **Genesis 18:1-5, 6-12, 13-15, 16-17, 22-26, 32-33**
* The LORD does not go to Sodom and Gomorrah personally but the other two angels do. This is because of the principal found in **Ezekiel 22:30**. How does Abraham fulfill this role?
* Whose job is it to fulfill that role today? In what way? **Mark 16:15-16**
* We have no more recorded *theophanies* in the life of Abraham or in the life of his son, Isaac. The next time we see Jesus in Genesis will be in the life of Jacob.

3. Questions or Comments?

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**Theophany: Jesus Christ in the Old Testament**

**Part 4: Jesus in Genesis – Jacob’s Story**

Foundational Text: **John 14:21 (NKJV)**

1. Review

* What does *manifest* mean?
* What are the conditions for Jesus to *manifest* to someone?
* What is a *theophany*? What is it called when it’s an appearance of Jesus Christ specifically?
* How do the divine god-men of pagan myth differ from a *theophany* of God?
* What are the clues in the Biblical terms used for God to denote a possible encounter with Jesus Christ in the Old Testament?
* Who did Adam walk in the garden with? How do we know?
* Who did Hagar talk with after Sarai cast her away? Why did this happen?
* Who did Abraham have lunch with? How do we know?
* What is Abraham’s response to the message of judgement against Sodom and Gomorrah?

2. Jesus appears to Jacob/Israel

* **Genesis 28:10-13, 16-17** – This is not a theophany but a vision of Christ – Can you give the clues?
* The most important clue is actually in the New Testament: **John 1:49-50** -- What was Jesus probably explaining here about who or what Jacob saw?
* Why do you think Jesus appeared to Jacob at this point in his life?
* Remember, *theophanies* are very rare – why doesn’t Jesus physically to His followers today?

**1 Corinthians 12:27 Hebrews 10:38**

* The next theophany in Jacob’s life will appear decades later – during a great crisis of his faith:
* **Genesis 32:24-27, 28-30** – Who is this Wrestler? Explain your answer.
* Why did Jesus Christ appear to Jacob at this time in his life?
* According to **John 14:21**, why does Jesus manifest for Jacob?
* Jacob has one more encounter with God but it is far less personal: **Genesis 35:9-15**
* There is no more record of God “appearing” to Jacob in a personal way – but Jacob will see God move in a powerful way in the life of his son, Joseph – Joseph is sometimes referred to by Bible scholars as “a type of Christ” – Discuss how and why that might be. **Genesis 50:19-21**

3. Questions or Comments?

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**Theophany: Jesus Christ in the Old Testament**

**Part 5: Jesus, the Burning Bush of Exodus**

Foundational Text: **John 14:21 (NKJV)**

1. Review

* What does *manifest* mean?
* What are the conditions for Jesus to *manifest* to someone?
* What is a *theophany*? What is it called when it’s an appearance of Jesus Christ specifically?
* When God appeared to Jacob the first time, was it a *theophany* or a vision? Explain
* How do we know it was Jesus who appeared to him?
* Who did Jacob wrestle? How do we know?
* Why did Jesus appear to Jacob at that time?
* Explain how Jacob won by losing.
* What did God change Jacob’s name to? Why?

2. Jesus appears to Moses

* **Exodus 3:1-3** – Is it the burning bush talking to Moses?
* What is our first clue that this is a theophany?
* **Exodus 3:4-6** – Note that both Elohim and Yahweh are used here. Can you see? Where?
* This proves that the Angel of verse 2 is who?
* **Exodus 3:13-14** – How can we connect this incident to Jesus?
* Who did Jesus say that He was? **John 8:53-58**
* What does Jesus mean? How do you know?
* When did Abraham “rejoice to see [Jesus’] day?” **Genesis 18:1**
* When we know the story of the *Theophanies* of Christ then we can better appreciate scriptures like this one: **Luke 20:37-38**
* What did Jesus know and teach about Himself that many people still don’t believe today?
* **Exodus 33:7-9, 10-11, 13-14, 17** – The tabernacle was a type of the church – This doesn’t seem like much of a theophany but what are some clues here? Remember **John 14:21** -- compare
* Did Jesus ever make such a promise to His followers about His Presence? **John 14:15-18**
* The LORD in Exodus 33 is having the same conversation, more or less, with Moses and Joshua that Jesus had with His Disciples in John 14!
* And we know that the LORD in Exodus 33:7-17 is not the same as the Father because of the rest of the conversation: **Exodus 33:18-23** – Note **verse 20**, is this a contradiction of **verse 11**?
* Remember the Trinity – God in three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit! The Trinity is clearly present in Exodus 33! **Exodus 34:5** – and what is the name of the LORD?
* What is a *Christophany?* Once you figure out the clues that reveal the Christophanies you begin to see Jesus Christ is all over the Old Testament! **Hebrews 11:6**
* Why was Moses able to serve God faithfully? Because Moses was following \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
	+ Who? **Hebrews 11:24-26**

3. Questions or Comments?

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Theophany - A Bible Study 2016

**Theophany: Jesus Christ in the Old Testament**

**Part 6: Jesus leads Joshua**

Foundational Text: **John 14:21 (NKJV)**

1. Review

* What does *manifest* mean?
* What is a *theophany*? How is a *Christophany* different than a *theophany*?
* What are some clues that an Old Testament manifestation is truly a *Christophany*?
* Did a burning bush talk to Moses?
* Who identified Himself with the Angel in the Burning Bush? Explain how.
* Jesus said, “Abraham rejoiced to see this day.” What did He mean? When did Abraham do that?
* The Tabernacle outside the camp in Moses day was a type of what?
* Who appeared at the Tabernacle outside the camp?
* Who prayed there who also shared his name with Jesus Christ (Explain)
* According to Hebrews 11, who was Moses following?

2. The Preparation of Moses’ Successor

* There is a preparation during the course of the books of Moses for Moses’ successor, Joshua
* Part of this preparation include our LORD manifesting Himself in physical form
* **Exodus 24:6-8, 9-11, 12-15** – Why would Jesus manifest Himself to the elders at this time? [Hint: remember John 14:21]
* Exodus 24:8-11 is a type, or a proto-type of what event in the life of Jesus and His disciples? **Matthew 26:26-30**
* This is because Moses was following who? And who was following Moses? **1 Corinthians 11:1**
* Just as Jesus prepared His Disciples to lead the church after His ascension; and as Paul discipled men like Titus and Timothy to lead Christ’s church into the next generation, Moses also prepared his successor – Joshua/Yeshua – who is also a type of Christ figure.
* **Exodus 33:1-2** – Who is this “Angel” that the people will follow into the Promised Land?

3. Jesus leads Joshua/Yeshua

* **Joshua 1:1-3**, **8-9** – Where did Joshua learn to know the voice of the LORD? **Exodus 33:11**
* **Joshua 5:13-15** – Who is this Man? What are the clues?
* Abraham Lincoln was once asked if he thought the LORD was on his side in the Civil War. His answer is an indirect reference to this last scripture: "Sir, my concern is not whether God is on our side; my greatest concern is to be on God's side, for God is always right."

4. Questions or Comments?

*Christophany* Clues: The word “LORD” (Yahweh) is used for God, usually singularly or alongside “God” (Elohim); physical attributes are given (hands, legs, feet); human physical actions (eating, drinking, walking); the witness to a *Christophany* doesn’t die; not called a “vision” or “dream” but physically seen; “Angel” with a capital *A* or “Man” with a capital *M*; physically present at critical times of challenge or judgement; accepts worship; confirms the Word of God; sometimes possesses physical limits of place or power; wherever the trinity is present in some fashion; when Jesus, in a New Testament passage, confirms His presence during an Old Testament event such as when He told the Pharisees that Abraham “longed to see” the day of His incarnation and then said, “I AM,” the name God gave Himself when He appeared to Moses as the Angel in the burning bush.

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Theophany - A Bible Study 2016

**Theophany: Jesus Christ in the Old Testament**

**Part 7: The Angel of God**

Foundational Text: **John 14:21 (NKJV)**

1. Review

* What does *manifest* mean? What are the conditions for Christ to “manifest Himself” to us?
* What is a *theophany/Christophany*?
* What are the clues that an Old Testament manifestation is truly a *Christophany*?
* According to Hebrews, who did Moses follow?
* Who was Moses’ successor? Whose name does he share in the Hebrew language?
* How did Moses’ successor prepare himself to lead God’s people?
* Did Jesus “manifest Himself” to Moses’ successor? Why? When?

2. For a people weak in faith – Read each incident; discuss why it is likely a *Christophany*; answer the questions

* The Closing Days of Joshua’s Leadership: **Judges 2:1-6** – What are some clues that this is a *Christophany*?
* Joshua is about to die, why is it important for the LORD to appear personally at this time?
* Although we walk by faith, it is always easier to follow someone we can see or experience. That being the case, why is it so important that we obey the commandments of Jesus? **John 14:21**
* The time of the Judges was a time of weakness of faith; God’s people mostly lived by the dictates of their own heart: **Judges 21:25** -- How is that like people today?
* In the stories of Gideon and Samson, God is raising up deliverers who are “types of Christ”
* This seems to be why the LORD appears as a *Christophany* during the preparation phase of their era as judge over Israel. We saw this in the life of Abraham, Moses and Joshua. When we follow anointed men of God we are actually following who? **1 Corinthians 11:1**
* Preparing a Deliverer: Gideon – **Judges 6:11-13, 14-15, 16-18, 19-22, 23-27** – What are some clues that this is a *Christophany*?
* Preparing a Deliverer: Samson – **Judges 13:2-7, 8-12, 13-18, 19-21** – What are some clues that this is a *Christophany*?
* It is notable that in the era of the Kings of Judah and Israel, we find no examples of a *Christophany.* They may be there but they are obscure – **2 Chronicles 1:6-7, 7:12** -- Why might this be? **Isaiah 6:1**

3. For a people of great faith – Read the following; discuss why it is likely a *Christophany*; answer the questions

* Despite the disaster of the Babylonian captivity, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego seemed to possess great faith when they uttered these words: **Daniel 3:16-18**
* Note what happened next: **Daniel 3:19-23, 24-25, 26-27, 28-30**
* What was it about these three men that they had had so much faith? **Daniel 1:6-8, 11-14**
* What is it that we must be able to do in these Last Days if Jesus Christ is going to make Himself real to us? **1 Peter 1:6-9,** **Titus 2:11-14**

4. Questions or Comments?

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