

Jesus in Genesis Theophanies

Jesus name does not appear in Genesis. Jesus of Nazareth would not be born for 1000s of years so why look for Him here? New Testament authors and Jesus himself point us here to look for Him. Jesus said, *"Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad."* *"Before Abraham was born, I am."* John 8:56,58b NIV *"Moses wrote of me"* John 5:46 And then there was that personal Bible study by Jesus with the two on the road to Emmaus. *"And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in **all** the Scriptures concerning himself."* Luke 24:27NIV (bold mine) Those two disciples were downcast because of Jesus death. Before Jesus showed them He was alive and speaking with them, He wanted them to see God was working out a plan that had not changed. He was showing them the Sovereignty of an all-powerful God. In seeing that, they came to faith in the greatness of God that overcame their fears and concerns. Jesus showed the other disciples the same wonderful truth. *"He said to them, 'This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.'"* Luke 24:44 (NIV) It's all about Jesus!

The Rabbis often refer to Genesis as "The Book of Creation". With that in mind read the words of the Apostle Paul to the Colossians 1:15-18 *"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones of powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy."* How could the "Book of Creation" not be filled with Jesus when He is the instrument of creation and the reason for creation? If all things were created for Him what should that mean to your life? Actually, everything is about Jesus! In this book of beginnings He has the supremacy.

There are three ways in which we will look at the revelation of Christ in Genesis. The first is His very being. This study will begin with glimpse of Jesus before His incarnation. The theological term for a preincarnation appearance of Christ is 'theophany'. But not all these references deal with an appearance. Some simply refer to Him. We will begin right in chapter one. This is one of the most debated and disputed chapters of the Bible. Until approximately 30 years ago the first line was mocked. Scientists were sure there was no creation event, no beginning. Today the tune has changed as the theory of the Big Bang has gained wide acceptance. If you refer to Stephen Hawking's formulas of creation there is an interesting factor called the outside influence or force. There is no

explanation as to what or whom the force is, but it is required to have the universe as we see it today according to the formulas that Hawking has derived.

Lets look at the Biblical account. Genesis 1:1 *In the beginning God...* God is the Hebrew word Elohim. El is singular for God. The im ending makes Hebrew words plural so we literally have, "In the beginning Gods..." All Jews are familiar with the shema, a quote from Deuteronomy. "Hear O Israel the Lord our God is one." Here too, Elohim is used. The Lord our Gods are one. So we see a plural proper noun that is in complete unity. Sounds like Jesus statement in the gospel of John, *"I and my Father are one."* John 10:30

Is Jesus the Christ at work here in creation? We read Colossians 1:16 that claims it was by Him (Jesus) that all things were created. 1 Corinthians 8:6 says that all things came from God, but it adds they came through Jesus Christ. Hebrews 1:2, 10-12 also says that through Jesus the universe was made. Psalm 102:24-27 refers to Elohim as the One whose hands made the universe. The only way to understand these verses together is to know that Jesus was speaking the truth when He claimed to be one with the Father. Proverbs 30:4 is an interesting reference to the Creator and his Son.

Now, understanding that John 1:14 teaches us that Jesus is the Word of God made flesh, look at Genesis 1:3. *"And God said..."* God is the One from whom the words come, and those words are Jesus. The words through Whom creation comes into existence are Jesus, the Word of God. Each time you read of God speaking, you are reading of Jesus. *"By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God so that the things that were made were not made from things which do appear."* Hebrews 11:3. The Targums, (explanatory versions of the Old Testament in Aramaic by expositors of the Torah) refer to the Word as *Mimra* and out of the 596 usages half are personified.*

We are going to save the many revelations of Jesus in types and prophecy for later studies and jump to the next direct reference to Jesus. Genesis 1:26 Who is the *us*? He's the same that we have already been referring to as the instrument of creation. Genesis 3:8 Who walked with Adam and Eve in the Garden? God the Father is a spirit. (Jn 4:24) Only Christ takes on a form. (Hebrews 10:5) Compare Genesis 4:26 with Acts 4:10-12.

Genesis 14:18 Melchizedek is in my opinion a theophany. He is the King of Salem (peace) see Hebrews 7:1-4 Jesus is referred to as the Prince of peace. He serves communion to Abraham the father of faith. He is a priest of God Most High and the author of Hebrews calls Jesus our great High Priest. He blesses Abraham and without exception the lesser is blessed by the greater. There are many scholars who do not reach the same conclusion, but I do not see how it could be anyone but Christ. If he is a mere man, how could Christ be a priest

after his order? Would that not make Christ's authority only an earthly one? The founder of the order is greater than those who come after him in almost every case. If He is King of Righteousness and Peace does that make him greater than Jesus the Prince of Peace? It is OK to disagree here that this is not Christ. This is a debated theophany. But to say he is not Jesus raises many more questions.

Next we have the three strange guests come to visit Abraham and to inspect Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 18. Notice first verse says the LORD appeared to Abraham. When you see all capital spelling of LORD it is a translation of the Hebrew word Jehovah. This is the solemn name for God that a Hebrew could not utter aloud. In writing the name the vowels are dropped. JHWH – when it is written on vellum the custom is to write it in gold so that it will not accidentally be pronounced. Who are these other two 'men'? Perhaps they are angels of the next chapter. See 18:20 Abraham has a conversation with this theophany who looks like a man but he acknowledges to be Jehovah. They discuss judgement of the city and the number of righteous people that would be required to save it. The Son is given authority to judge. John 5:27 What lessons can we learn with Abraham's discussion with Jesus? See verses 14,15 and 20-33. Abraham saw both Melchizedek and this appearance of Jehovah. I wonder if they looked the same or were a different manifestation? Food for thought.

Isaac visually sees the LORD in Genesis 26:24, and the covenant is renewed to him. Jacob sees the LORD in a dream, and the covenant is renewed to him. 28:13-17 Verse 21 is interesting. Jehovah will be my Elohim.

In 32:24 –30 Jacob wrestled with a theophany. Not something I would want to try. In verse 30 he calls the man, "God". Notice the 'el' on the end of Peniel. The Rabbis say that this "angel of his presence" means the "Angel of the Covenant and the Prince of the Countenance". In Hebrew the phrase Sar ha-Panim, literally 'the Prince of faces' or 'countenance'. The Jewish prayer book, the *Sidur ha-Shalem*, contains, in the New Year prayers in connection with the sounding of the *shofar* horn, a remarkable prayer which speaks of "Jesus the Prince of the Countenance". The prayer also refers to Jesus as the *Metatron* meaning the One who sits on the throne.*

Do you ever wrestle in some sense with Jesus? In what way? Did Jacob win or lose the wrestling match?

Did I miss any direct references to Jesus? See Genesis 16:6-16 22:9-18 Next week we will look at the prophecies concerning Jesus. Then we will cover the types and shadows in the other two weeks.

* Risto Santala, *The Messiah in the Old Testament in the Light of Rabbinical Writings*, p 89

*Ibid p 86