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Jesus 3D, Part 1 The Pre-Incarnate Christ

The direction and goal of this series:

1 Peter 1:8-9 *though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.*

We use "...logy" to mean: the study of something
"Biology" is the study of living things. "Zoology" is the study of animals
"Theology" is the study of God
"Christology" is the study of Christ

The word "logy" really means: the word on something
The word for "word" was "logos"
Jesus was/is the "word on God"

J.I. Packer: "Christology is the true hub around which the wheel of theology revolves, and to which its separate spokes must each be correctly anchored if the wheel is not to get bent."

We cannot fully understand who we are apart from the identity of Christ as the Son and true image of God.

Two current problems with the incarnation of Jesus: 1) the continued attempt to discover the historical Jesus in distinction from the Biblical Jesus, (human reason over divine revelation) 2) the attempt to make Christ fit within the paradigm of religious pluralism (so the Jesus of Christianity is not exclusive.)

Our secular world struggles with Jesus:
He was the priest who became the sacrifice
He was the King who took on the form of a servant
He was the prophet who Himself was the Word of God

What we think of Christ is of absolute importance. We can think he is the greatest of teachers and that he is sinless, we can dwell upon his perfection, we can believe he is brave and kind and honest, compassionate and truthful. We can idolize him. We can pray to him. But that is not enough.

Our spiritual growth is absolutely dependent on the size of our vision of Christ. Once we get away from a one-dimensional or overly narrow picture of Christ, once we see the fullness and glory of Christ in the Scriptures, our faith, hope and trust will be enlarged, and our lives will be transformed.

The Church through the ages has argued that we can grasp Jesus's identity correctly only when He is viewed in light of the entire Biblical story line, and that any attempt to do otherwise only leads to a Jesus of our own imagination.

Chalcedonian Confession: *Jesus is God the Son, the second person of the eternal Trinity, who at a specific point in history took to himself a human nature and was born as Jesus of Nazareth in order to accomplish our redemption.*

Jesus Christ is God the Son incarnate, one person subsisting in and acting through a fully divine nature and a fully human nature according to the attributes of each.

The question of Jesus's identity could not be fully answered until all of the great events of redemptive history were fully aligned with Jesus's own life, death, and resurrection.

John 1:1 *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

“Word” is that word “logos,” the “word on God”
“was” meaning “was continuing to be.” Jesus “always was ‘wasing’”
“with God” meaning “always toward God,” always “face to face”
“was God” meaning separate identity, but same in character

God as three-in-one, the Trinity is always present in the Old Testament

God as three-in-one was always present, therefore, not created, but the Creator:

Genesis 1:26-27 *Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.*

Colossians 1:16 *For by Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities - all things were created through him and for him.*

Therefore, God the Son was around in the Old Testament as well as the New Testament.

These appearances in the Old Testament were/are called: Theophanies, or even Christophanies.

In the New Testament the “Word became flesh,” which we call: “incarnation”

So Jesus showing up in the Old Testament is him “pre-incarnate”

Examples:

Genesis 18:1-2 *And the Lord appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the door of his tent in the heat of the day. He lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing in front of him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself to the earth and said, O Lord, if I have found favor in your sight, do not pass by your servant.*

Here’s what to look for:

If it’s not the Lord showing up, then that angel will not permit himself to be worshipped. (That angel is only a messenger)

If it is the Lord, worship is permitted as the only appropriate response

Joshua 5:13-15 *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?” And he said, “No; but I am the commander of the army of the Lord. 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?” And the commander of the Lord’s army said to Joshua, “Take off your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy.” And Joshua did so.*

The place was holy because God was there, and God is holy.

Sometimes in the Old Testament, these appearances are referred to as the “Angle of the Lord.”

Genesis 22:10-11 *But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, Abraham, Abraham! And he said, “Here I am.” He said, “Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing that you have not withheld your son, your only son from me.”*

Operative word here: “me”

1 Chronicles 21:15-17 *And God sent the angel to Jerusalem to destroy it, but as he was about to destroy it, the Lord saw, and he relented from the calamity. And he said to the angel who was working destruction, “It is enough; now stay your hand.” And the angel of the Lord was standing by the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. And David lifted his eyes and saw the angel of the Lord standing between earth and heaven, and in his hand a drawn sword stretched out over Jerusalem. Then David and the elders, clothed in sackcloth, fell upon their faces. And David said to God, “Was it not I who gave command to number the people? It is I who have sinned and done great evil. But these sheep, what have they done? Please let your hand, O Lord my God, be against*

me and against my father's house. But do not let the plague be on your people."

God is also the only One who swears by Himself

Genesis 22:16 *and said, By Myself I have sworn, declares the Lord, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son.*

Genesis 28:12 *And he dreamed, and behold, there was a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven. And behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it! and behold, the Lord stood above it and said, I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac. The land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring.*

Compare that to **John 1:47-51** *Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit." Nathanael said to him, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." Nathanael answered him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" Jesus answered him, "Because I said to you, 'I saw you under the fig tree,' do you believe? You will see greater things than these." And he said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."*

In other words, Jesus is telling Nathanael, who as a Jewish guy would have known the story well, that the ladder Jacob saw was in fact Jesus Himself.

When Jesus would show up physically in the Old Testament, it wasn't always in a human-like form:

Exodus 3:4-6 *When the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." Then he said, "Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." And he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God."*

Isaiah 63:9 *In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them all the days of old.*

Whenever the Logos of God showed up in the Old Testament ages:

We see covenantal moments/God's wrath placated/promises given

We see a clear picture of the gospel

Zechariah 3:1-5 *Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. And the*

Lord said to Satan, "The Lord rebuke you, O Satan! The Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is not this a brand plucked from the fire?" Now Joshua was standing before the angel, clothed with filthy garments. And the angel said to those who were standing before him, "Remove the filthy garments from him." And to him he said, "Behold, I have taken your iniquity away from you, and I will clothe you with pure vestments." And I said, "Let them put a clean turban on his head." So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed with garments. And the angel of the Lord was standing by.

Zechariah 3:6-10 *And the angel of the Lord solemnly assured Joshua, "Thus says the Lord of hosts: If you will walk in my ways and keep my charge, then you shall rule my house and have charge of my courts, and I will give you the right of access among those who are standing here. Here now, O Joshua the high priest, you and your friends who sit before you, for they are men who are a sign: behold, I will bring my servant the Branch. For behold, on the stone that I have set before Joshua, on a single stone with seven eyes, I will engrave its inscription, declares the Lord of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of this land in a single day. In that day, declares the Lord of hosts, every one of you will invite his neighbor to come under his vine and under his fig tree."*

The gospel is Jesus, Jesus who took on Himself the sins of the world to the cross, paying the blood price for our sins, so we could have a relationship with God.

Francis Schaeffer many years ago challenged a new generation by saying "May you live your lives to the glory of our triune God as radicals of truth and as those who are ambassadors of the King of kings and the Lord of lords. May Christ Jesus our Lord, God the Son incarnate, receive all praise and glory, for He is worthy."