

THE SEEING GOD FACE-TO-FACE DILEMMA

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Bible Verses Where Participants Claimed To See God, No One Has All Of The Answers, Depending On Leading Of The Holy Spirit, The Bible Does Not Contradict Itself, Our Fallible Human Understanding, Jacob At Peniel, Angels Who Refuse To Identify Themselves, Manohah And Wife Encounter An Angel, No Human Being Has Ever Seen God Face-To-Face, Theory: They Either Saw An Angel Or Jesus, "Before Abraham was, I am", Abraham's Encounter With Three Visitors In The Plain Of Mamre, Unbelieving Jews Were Children Of the Devil, Jesus Moses And The Burning Bush, Jesus' Cameos Throughout Human History, Jesus Represented His Father In the Old Testament, Be Persuaded In Your Own Mind, Conclusion, Reading List

In a conversation I had a number of years ago with a Christian friend posting in FidoNet, I was asked to clarify certain verses, which at first glance seem to contradict each other. The verses which my friend quoted are as follows:

"And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved."
Genesis 32:30, KJV

"And the LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend. And he turned again into the camp: but his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, departed not out of the tabernacle . . . And he said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live . . . And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen."
Exodus 33:11, 20, 33, KJV

"No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared [him]."
John 1:18, KJV

"Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom [be] honour and power everlasting. Amen."

1 Timothy 6:16, KJV

"No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us . . . If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?"

1 John 4:12, 20, KJV

My friend concluded his remarks with the following comments:

----- Begin Quote -----

"Now, in view of Ex 33:20, 23; Joh 1:18; 1Ti 6:16; 1Jo 4:12, 20, should there not be a logical answer to Ge 32:30 and Ex 33:11 that can be proven by The Scriptures themselves?

Time and study had precluded my research into it previously, and when your posts were read, it brought it back to mind again, so your assistance will be most appreciated, if you have the time!"

----- End Of Quote -----

Well, if there is one thing I have learned over the years, it is that none of us have all of the answers, myself included. When we try to figure things out with our carnal minds, we just make a mess out of them. So, as is my custom when faced with difficult questions such as the above, I asked the Lord to show me the answer. What often happens is that the Holy Spirit will quicken verses to me. That is, He will bring certain verses to my remembrance, just as Jesus promised His followers would occur in the following verse:

"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."

John 14:26, KJV

As I have said before, I do not believe that the Bible

really contracts itself. If there is any contradiction, it is usually in our human way of understanding things. Taking all of the above verses as a whole, I am inclined to believe that, in the case of Jacob at Peniel, his encounter was not with God the Father, but rather with either Jesus, or perhaps with some other Angelic Messenger. While I cannot conclusively prove this point, I suspect that Jacob was merely assuming that it was God. Notice that the person Jacob wrestled with did not identify himself as God. As a matter of fact, he was even hesitant to reveal his true identity, as we see by the following verse:

"And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there."

Genesis 32:29, KJV

It is right after this that Jacob makes the exclamation that he has seen God face-to-face. Either there are verses missing from my KJV Bible where this messenger actually identifies himself as God -- which I doubt -- or else Jacob is making an assumption. What is interesting here is that this is not the only incident where a Messenger from God refuses to identify himself. One incident which I overlooked, and which should have been included in the "The Manipulation of Time and Space" article, is the story of Manoah and his wife, who were the parents of Samson the Hebrew strongman. This wonderful account can be found in Judges chapter thirteen. This Angelic Messenger first appeared to Manoah's wife in a physical form, and then to both Manoah and his wife in a field. He was so physical, that they offered to prepare a meal for him, which he declined. Consider what it says in verse six of that chapter:

"Then the woman came and told her husband, saying, A man of God came unto me, and his countenance was like the countenance of an angel of God, very terrible: but I asked him not whence he was, neither told he me his name:"

Judges 13:6, KJV

Later on in the chapter, during the second encounter, when Manoah inquires as to the identity of the man of God, we read the following:

"And Manoah said unto the angel of the LORD, What is thy

name, that when thy sayings come to pass we may do thee honour? And the angel of the LORD said unto him, Why askest thou thus after my name, seeing it is secret?"
Judges 13:17-18, KJV

Just as with Jacob, for some unknown reason which is never revealed to us, the Angelic Messenger is hesitant to reveal his true identity. In spite of this, even though they both come to realize that he is an Angel or Messenger of God, look how Manoah and his wife react to the experience:

"But the angel of the LORD did no more appear to Manoah and to his wife. Then Manoah knew that he was an angel of the LORD. And Manoah said unto his wife, We shall surely die, because we have seen God."
Judges 13:21-22, KJV

Did Manoah and his wife actually see God the Father? No, I am convinced that they actually saw one of His many Angelic Messengers, possibly even Jesus, yet they still referred to him as God.

Here then we have at least two occasions where a Messenger of God is referred to as "God", even though it really isn't God the Father. All of the original verses quoted in this article make perfect sense and perfectly agree with each other. No human person has ever really seen God the Father face-to-face. So what does that imply? It implies that all of those Old Testament appearances were someone else. As I have demonstrated, in some cases, it was an Angelic Messenger. In other cases, my belief is that it may have been Jesus Himself, which the Old Testament refers to as Jehovah.

A case in point is that of Abraham and Moses. Jesus Himself tried to tell the Jewish religious leaders this very truth, but they refused to accept it due to the hardness of their own hearts. As I explain in "The Manipulation of Time and Space", as well as in "The Blood Atonement: In Jesus' Own Words", there is a very close link between Jesus and Moses. Moses made this clear, and Jesus made it clear as well. After reading this person's comments, the verses which immediately came to me are the following. I should have included them in the "The Manipulation of Time and Space" article as they are a direct confirmation of what I said there:

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death. Then said the Jews unto him, Now we know that thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and thou sayest, If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death. Art thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? and the prophets are dead: whom makest thou thyself? Jesus answered, If I honour myself, my honour is nothing: it is my Father that honoureth me; of whom ye say, that he is your God: Yet ye have not known him; but I know him: and if I should say, I know him not, I shall be a liar like unto you: but I know him, and keep his saying. Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad. Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am."

John 8:51-58, KJV

Now that my dear friends is a heavy revelation! What is Jesus talking about here? Well, if you have read my "The Manipulation of Time and Space" article, you will see that Jesus is making a reference to the fact that Abraham did have a very physical face-to-face encounter with the Lord -- that is, with Jesus -- and with two of His Angelic Messengers in the plain of Mamre near Hebron, which at that time was called Arba. It was on this occasion that the Lord told Abraham that Sarah his wife would have a child in her old age; that is, their heir, Isaac.

It is also during this same encounter that they dined together, and Abraham pleaded with the Lord to spare Sodom and Gomorrah where Lot lived. But you see, the Jews were so hardened of heart, that they were trying to understand things with their carnal minds, instead of seeing with the eyes of their spirit. Don't forget that it was just before this incident that Jesus told them that they were of their father the Devil, as we see here:

"Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it."

John 8:44, KJV

But notice the very last words that Jesus spoke: "Before Abraham was, I am." If you ask me, that is a veiled reference to Moses and the burning bush. Isn't that what Moses was told? Consider these two verses:

"And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you."
Exodus 3:13-14, KJV

It is my belief, as I state in "The Manipulation of Time and Space", that throughout human history, the Lord has made cameo appearances. In some cases, He materialized in a flesh and bone body -- such as in the case of Abraham -- while in others He appeared in His spiritual body. I believe this may be the case with Moses and the burning bush. I am convinced that it was Jesus who appeared to Moses, and not God the Father. This would perfectly harmonize with all of the verses regarding no man seeing God face-to-face. As can be seen, the term "God" was used rather loosely by those people who had such experiences. Either that, or the translators took a license of their own when translating from the original Hebrew text.

In some places we find the phrase "like unto the son of man". In others we find "Lord God". It is my view that these may be a reference to Jesus, and not to God the Father, or in some cases, to an Angelic Messenger. In conclusion, as I pointed out previously, I believe that it was Jesus who communed with His creations in the Old Testament, and not the Father. Just as Jesus represented the Father in the New Testament, so He did likewise in the Old Testament. Consider the words of John in one of the original verses that I quoted in this article:

"No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him."
John 1:18, KJV

This is my personal belief regarding this matter. Based on the Scriptural evidence I have provided here, I believe it is true. We will each have to decide for ourselves, and be

persuaded in our own minds. For as the Apostle Paul wrote:

". . . Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind."
Romans 14:5, KJV

With these thoughts I will bring this article to a close. I trust that it has been a blessing and an inspiration in your life. If you have enjoyed reading this article, I ask that you please consider sharing its URL link with your online friends. If you have an account with Facebook, Twitter or Google+, I would also very much appreciate if you would take the time to click on the corresponding link that is found on this page. Thanks so much, and may God bless you abundantly!

For additional information, you may want to refer to the list of reading resources below which were also mentioned in this article, or which contain topics which are related to this article, and which are likewise located on the Bill's Bible Basics web server:

God's Mercy, Judgment and Fallen Angels
Sex, a Bowl of Soup, and the Nature of Angels
The Blood Atonement: In Jesus' Own Words
The Judgment of Angels, Demons and Men
The Manipulation of Time and Space

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