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Steven Ritchie · Oct 23, 2016 · 5 min read

DID ANYONE ACTUALLY SEE GOD? John 1:18



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

The only invisible God is contrasted with the only visibly born son because there is only one true God as our Invisible Heavenly Father and only one visible image of that Father manifested in the flesh as one man. Paul wrote in Colossians 1:15 that Jesus is "the image of the invisible God" because Jesus was conceived and born through the Hebrew virgin as the physical image of the invisible God. No verse of inspired scripture ever says that Jesus literally existed as the image of the invisible God, or in a visible form of God prior to the incarnation.

The Testimony of the Earliest Christian Writers

Dr. James White and other prominent Trinitarians have said that God the Father cannot be seen by men, but the Son could be seen by men in the Hebrew Scriptures and again after his virgin birth. However, even the earliest Christians who were taught by the apostles believed that the God who became the Son was not seen before his virgin conception and birth.

Ignatius wrote to Polycarp 3:2, "Look for Him who is above all time, the timeless, **the invisible, who for our sake BECAME VISIBLE!**"

According to Ignatius, the God who became visible in the incarnation was first invisible so that the divinity of Jesus could not have been visible before he "became visible." Trinitarian apologists such as James White and others have cited Philippians 2:6 in debates with Oneness apologists to say that Jesus existed in "the form of God" as a divine person who could be seen in a visible form of God before his virgin conception and birth. Yet the earliest Christian writers who were taught by the apostles said that the God who became the Son was never seen before the incarnation. Therefore, Jesus must be the image of the invisible God as the image of the invisible Father.

Mathetes (80 – 120 AD) claimed to be taught by the apostles within the first century. Mathetes wrote in his Epistle to Diognetus, chapter 11, "He who is from everlasting is today called the Son." According to Mathetes, the God who existed "from everlasting is TODAY CALLED THE SON" because the Son did not exist as a Son who could be seen until "TODAY." Mathetes' teaching is in harmony with Hebrews 1:1-2 which

says that God spoke to the Israelites by the prophets, "has in these last days spoken to us by His Son." Hence, God did not speak through a Son until "these last days."

The Apology of Aristides was written about 25 years after the death of the apostle John (AD 125). Aristides wrote in his epistle to Diognetus, chapter one,

"I say, then, that God is not born, not made, an ever-abiding nature without beginning and without end, immortal, perfect, and incomprehensible ... Form he has none ..." (*Apology of Aristides, chapter one – 125 AD*)

Aristides wrote nothing of an alleged God the Son who later Trinitarians say pre-existed in a pre-incarnate, "form of God." Yet how could God as God pre-exist in a pre-incarnate "form" without having a "form" ("*form he has none*")? Since Aristides wrote that "God is not born" and "form he has none," we know that the earliest Christians did not believe that an alleged God the Son existed in a "form of God" before the incarnation occurred.

The Apology of Aristides chapter two says, "And it is said (*the majority of the Christians said*) that **God came down from heaven**, and from a Hebrew virgin **assumed and clothed himself with flesh; and the Son of God lived in a daughter of man.**" (*Apology of Aristides, chapter two – 125 AD*)

Aristides said that God came down from heaven to assume and clothe "himself with flesh." Then Aristides wrote that "the Son of God lived in a daughter of man" only after God's invisible Holy Spirit "assumed and clothed Himself with flesh." Thus, Aristides and the early second century Christians clearly taught the Son did not exist as a Son before his human conception within the virgin.

When we link the theology of Aristides chapter one with chapter two, we find that God never existed in a "form of God" because Aristides wrote, "form He has none." Hence, the invisible formless God "came down from heaven, and from a Hebrew virgin assumed and clothed himself with flesh (*Jesus said in John 6:38, "I came down from heaven"*)." That is when the Son of God was conceived within the virgin to "live in a daughter of man." Wherefore, Jesus as a son must be the image of the invisible God (*Colossians 1:15*) as the image of the invisible Father.

Was God Seen Face to Face By Humans?

Deuteronomy 5:4 says, "JEHOVAH SPOKE TO YOU FACE TO FACE at the mountain FROM THE MIDST OF THE FIRE."

But Deuteronomy 4:12 states, "And JEHOVAH SPOKE UNTO YOU OUT OF THE MIDST OF THE FIRE: you heard the voice of the words, BUT SAW NO SIMILITUDE; only you heard a voice ..."

Therefore the words "face to face" must be a Hebrew idiom for closeness or nearness to the divine presence rather than visually seeing God's face.

The same is true when an angel wrestled with Jacob in Genesis 32:24.

"Then Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him until the breaking of day."

Then Genesis 32:30 says,

"So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: 'for **I HAVE SEEN GOD FACE TO FACE**, and my life is preserved."

YET Hosea 12:3-4 PROVES THAT THE ANGEL WAS NOT GOD.

"He took his brother by the heel in the womb, and by his strength he had power with God: Yes, he had power over THE ANGEL, and prevailed."

Judges 13:22 says, "Then Manoah knew that he was the angel of the LORD. So Manoah said to his wife, "We will surely die, for **WE HAVE SEEN GOD.**"

Exodus 33:11 says, "Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses **FACE TO FACE**, just as a man speaks to his friend."

Deuteronomy 5:4 records Moses saying to the Israelites,

"JEHOVAH SPOKE TO YOU **FACE TO FACE** at the mountain (Mt. Sinai) **FROM THE MIDST OF THE FIRE.**"

We know that the Israelites did not literally see God "face to face" at Mount Sinai because Moses wrote in Deuteronomy 4:12,

"And JEHOVAH SPOKE UNTO YOU OUT OF THE MIDST OF THE FIRE: **you heard the voice of the words, BUT SAW NO SIMILITUDE; only you heard a voice ...**"

Three Scriptural Facts About Seeing God "face to face"

Fact 1. No man has physically or literally seen the invisible God.

Fact 2. The words "face to face" are clearly a Hebrew idiomatic expression for closeness or nearness to the divine presence.

Fact 3. Some people saw visionary images of God that were not physical.

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"God was manifest in the flesh" or "He was manifest..."

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