



Steven Ritchie · Nov 15, 2016 · 7 min read

Did The Prophets Physically See God? Isaiah 6:1-3



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Trinitarians often cite Isaiah 6:1-3 to allege that a visible God the Son was physically seen on the throne of God as a Son before the incarnation while the invisible Father could not be seen because God the Father is invisible. However, the prophet Isaiah saw One God on One Throne in Isaiah 6:1-3 with no reference to the Father and the Holy Spirit. The argument that an alleged pre-incarnate God the Son could be seen in the Old Testament fails because Isaiah was seeing spiritual visions of God with his spiritual eyesight rather than with his physical vision. This explains why the prophet Isaiah opened his book by saying, “**The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz**” (*Isaiah 1:1*). Thus it is apparent that Isaiah was seeing visions of invisible heavenly things rather than actually seeing them with his physical eyes. This would include his vision in Isaiah chapter six.

If the prophets were regularly seeing God and the holy angels with their natural eyesight, then why did the prophet Elisha pray for his servants eyes to be opened to see the invisible army of heavenly angels over the town of Dothan that outnumbered the great army which the king of Aram had sent (*2 Kings 6:15-17*)? In *2 Kings 6:15-17*, only Elisha and his servant's physical eyes were spiritually opened to see the vast invisible army of heavenly angels, while the rest of the inhabitants of Dothan did not see that army. Thus, the inspired passage proves that natural eyesight alone cannot see “ministering spirits” (*Hebrews 1:14*) unless God chooses that they be seen in a physical form. Hence, the only proper exegesis of the passage is to understand that Elisha and his servant were seeing in the spiritual (invisible) realm while the rest of the inhabitants of Dothan could not see that invisible army because they were only seeing with natural vision.

In like manner, only the prophet John the Baptist saw the invisible Spirit of God descending and remaining upon Christ Jesus at his baptism rather than everyone seeing the invisible Spirit on that day. “John testified, I SAW THE SPIRIT descending from heaven like a dove and resting on Him.”

John 1:32 states, “As soon as Jesus was baptized, He went up out of the water. Suddenly the heavens were opened, and **HE SAW THE SPIRIT OF GOD** descending like a dove and resting on Him.” Matthew 3:16 also gives this account of Christ baptism, “As soon as Jesus came up out of the water, **HE SAW THE HEAVENS BREAKING OPEN AND THE SPIRIT DESCENDING ON HIM LIKE A DOVE** (*Mark 1:10*)”. Notice that the texts inform us that only John the Baptist saw the heavens opened and the Spirit of God descending like a dove upon Christ at his baptism rather than the crowd who were standing along the Jordan River on that day.

It is enlightening to know that most of the prophets who saw God actually opened their books with words like, “**the heavens were open and I saw visions of God** (*Ezekiel 1:10*)”. Isaiah opened his book by writing, “**The vision of Isaiah** the son of Amoz... (*Isaiah 1:1*)”. The prophet Daniel also claimed to have seen visions of God when he wrote in Daniel 7:13-14, “I kept looking **IN THE NIGHT VISIONS**, And behold, with the clouds of heaven one like the Son of man was coming, and he came up to the Ancient of Days (*Dan. 7:13*)”. Daniel clearly saw a prophetic vision of the Son of God coming before “the Ancient of Days” (the Father) which was a vision about a future event in heaven rather than a past event. Daniel’s vision was about a future event in heaven in which the ascended Messiah would be “given dominion, glory and a Kingdom that all peoples, nations and men of every language might serve him”. Since Christ Jesus is not yet reigning over a millennial kingdom as of yet, Jesus could not have had this dominion and glory over all peoples, nations, and languages of the earth given to him during the lifetime of the prophet Daniel.

Even Trinitarian scholars affirm that God does not have a physical body that can be physically seen with human eyes. Robert Deffinbaugh (graduate of Dallas Theological Seminary) affirmed that God is Spirit and has no literal face or body.

“Both the Old Testament and the New indicate to us that God has no form, that is, God has no physical body. God’s presence among men is spiritual, not physical. God is spirit, so that He is not restricted to one place, nor is worship any longer restricted to one place. God is invisible because He is spirit, not flesh”.

Mr. Deffinbaugh went on to say, “God spoke to Moses ‘face to face,’ but He would not allow Moses to ‘see His face’. Therefore, seeing God ‘face to face’ is not the same thing as seeing God’s face. **Speaking ‘face to face’ means speaking with someone on a personal, intimate basis as a friend speaks to a friend.** A similar figure of speech is found in Numbers 14:13. ‘But Moses said to the Lord, Then the Egyptians will hear of it, for by Thy strength Thou didst bring up this people from their midst, 14 and they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land. They have heard that Thou, O Lord, art in the midst of this people, for Thou, O Lord, art seen eye to eye, while Thy cloud stands over them; and Thou dost go before them in a pillar of cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night” (*Numbers 14:13-14*).

Mr. Deffinbaugh concludes, “God was ‘seen eye to eye’ by the Israelites. In the context, this means that God made His presence known to the Israelites by the cloud which led them and which became a pillar of fire at night. It does not mean God has physical eyes and that the Israelites saw those eyes. God’s presence was with His people, and He made that presence known. But nowhere did anyone see the face of God, because God has no face. God is Spirit and is not made of flesh. He is invisible to men because He has no body..” (*Online Article, “The Invisibility of God”, Bible.org, Robert Deffinbaugh - graduate of Dallas Theological Seminary*)

We are not to think of the invisible God as literally having a giant nose or a giant mouth in the heavens as His invisible presence fills the heavens and the earth. For even Trinitarian Bible scholars have noted that our invisible God regularly used anthropomorphic language attributing human attributes to Himself so that we finites can understand the nature of His Infinite Being. Thus it is an undeniable scriptural fact that God always spoke of Himself with anthropomorphic attributes as one Individual rather than as three distinct persons.

Exodus 33:20-23, “But He said, “You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!...22and it will come about, while My glory is passing by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock and cover you with My hand until I have passed by. 23Then I will take My hand away and you shall see My back, but My face shall not be seen.”

God had granted Moses a special opening of his spiritual eyesight to see a portion (*back parts anthropomorphically means a portion of God’s glorious presence*) of His glory in Exodus 33:23. For if Moses had actually been in the presence of the fullness of His glory he would have died. Here we see that the words “face to face” must be a Hebrew idiom for closeness or nearness to the divine presence rather than visually seeing God with a physical face or body. Moses was obviously much closer to the divine presence than the Israelites and most of the subsequent prophets because God spoke to him more directly than the majority of Old Testament prophets; yet even Moses could not literally see God with his physical vision.

None of the angels who appeared in the Hebrew Scriptures were actually being addressed as God because God’s omnipresent power allowed Him to speak directly through angelic agency. Hebrews chapter one verses one two and five clearly informs us that God never spoke to humanity through a heavenly or angelic begotten Son. Therefore Jesus as a Son could not have spoken to any of the Israelite ancestors as a heavenly pre-incarnate Son.

The Law was Commanded by Angels in the Hand of Moses

Acts 7:35 (NASB) says, “This Moses... God sent... with the help of the angel who appeared to him in the thorn bush”. Therefore Stephen spoke by the inspiration of the Spirit to inform us that the angel in the burning bush was a real angel that God spoke directly through just like the angel called “the captain of the hosts OF YAHWEH” in Joshua 5:13-15 could not have actually been Yahweh as he was “the captain OF” Yahweh’s hosts (heavenly angels).

Acts 7:53 says, “Who have RECEIVED THE LAW BY THE DIRECTION OF ANGELS, and have not kept it”. Thus, the commandments of the law were given “by the direction of angels” via angelic agency rather than directly by God Himself.

Galatians 3:19 explicitly states that the Law of Moses, “... **was ORDAINED BY ANGELS** in the hand of a mediator (Moses)”. The Greek word translated as “ordained” in Galatians 3:19 is “diatasso” which means “to command”. Thus we could translate Galatians 3:19 by writing that the Law of Moses “... was commanded by angels in the hand of a mediator,” namely Moses. Therefore we can see that the Law of Moses was given by the commands of angels rather than directly by God Himself on Mount Sinai.

Hebrews 2:2 - “For if THE WORD SPOKEN BY ANGELS was steadfast (THE LAW), and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation (NEW COVENANT SALVATION)...”

Acts 7:53 "Who have RECEIVED THE LAW BY THE DIRECTION OF ANGELS, and have not kept it."

The Law of Agency

The Jews defined the Semitic law of agency, "A PERSON'S AGENT IS REGARDED AS THE PERSON HIMSELF (*Ned. 72b; Kidd. 41b*)"

The Encyclopedia of the Jewish Religion, Adama Books, New York, NY, 1986, page 15 states,

"The angels that spoke the law were Yahweh's agents or representatives. As such, they had full authority to not only speak in His name, but to seemingly appropriate His name as in Exodus 20:2; 'I am Yahweh thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage'. They were speaking exactly what Yahweh wanted them to say."

Since some of the angels who spoke to the Israelite ancestors spoke on the behalf of God, many Trinitarians point to an alleged God the Son speaking through angels to lend support to a Trinitarian view of the Godhead. However, such a view is untenable in light of passage that prove that the Son did not speak to the Israelites (*Hebrews 1:1-2*) or exist as a Son prior to the incarnation (*Hebrews 1:5; 2 Samuel 7:14, Luke 1:35; Matthew 1:20; Hebrews 1:3; Psalms 2:7, Psalms 22:1, 10*).

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