



Theophanies of Jesus Christ

A theophany is a theological term for the manifestation of God the Son, the deity of Jesus Christ, prior to His First Advent. Jesus Christ as eternal God is the only manifest person of the Trinity. Every Old Testament generation saw the only visible member of the Trinity – Jesus Christ at one time or another.

There are four different types of manifestations of Jesus Christ in human history – theophanies, the Incarnation of Jesus Christ (First Advent), Christophanies, and our Lord's Second Advent. A theophany is the appearance of Jesus Christ prior to His First Advent. The Incarnation was where the Son of God took on the form of a human and became the unique God-man, Jesus Christ forever. He went to the Cross and was judged for the sins of all mankind. He is true humanity and undiminished deity in one person forever.

A Christophany is the appearance of Jesus Christ after His resurrection in His resurrection body before the completion of the written Canon of Scripture. The Second Advent will be the return of our Lord to earth to save the Jewish remnant from destruction, to destroy all of His enemies, to usher in the Kingdom on earth for 1,000 years, and to fulfill God's four unconditional covenants to Israel.

Old Testament Theophanies

Jesus Christ appeared to Old Testament believers in the nation of Israel during the dispensation of the Age of the Jews. He appeared as either a man, a supernatural phenomenon, or as the Angel of the Lord.

Appearances as a Man

The Lord appeared to Abraham as a man in Genesis 18:1-33.

"Now the LORD appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, while he was sitting at the tent door in the heat of the day." (Genesis 18:1, NASB)

"As soon as He had finished speaking to Abraham the LORD departed, and Abraham returned to his place." (Genesis 18:33, NASB)

He appeared to Jacob as a wrestler in Genesis 32:24-32 and in Hosea 12:4.

"Then Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him until daybreak." (Genesis 32:24, NASB)

"So he said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." He said, "Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel; for you have striven with God and with men and have prevailed." (Genesis 32:27-28, NASB)

"Yes, he wrestled with the angel and prevailed; He wept and sought His favor. He found Him at Bethel And there He spoke with us," (Hosea 12:4, NASB)

Jesus Christ appeared as a man to the elders of Israel as the God of Israel in Exodus 24:9-11.

"Then Moses went up with Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and they saw the God of Israel; and under His feet there appeared to be a pavement of sapphire, as clear as the sky itself. Yet He did not stretch out His hand against the nobles of the sons of Israel; and they saw God, and they ate and drank." (Exodus 24:9-11, NASB)

Our Lord appeared to Joshua as a man with a sword in hand as the "captain of the host of the Lord" in Joshua 5:13-15.



"Now it came about when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing opposite him with his sword drawn in his hand, and Joshua went to him and said to him, "Are you for us or for our adversaries?" He said, "No; rather I indeed come now as captain of the host of the LORD." And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and bowed down, and said to him, "What has my lord to say to his servant?" The captain of the LORD'S host said to Joshua, "Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did so." (Joshua 5:13-15, NASB)

Appearances as a Supernatural Phenomenon

Our Lord appeared to Moses as the burning bush. Exodus 3:2; Acts 7:30.

"The angel of the LORD appeared to him in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, yet the bush was not consumed." (Exodus 3:2, NASB)

"After forty years had passed, AN ANGEL APPEARED TO HIM IN THE WILDERNESS OF MOUNT Sinai, IN THE FLAME OF A BURNING THORN BUSH." (Acts 7:30, NASB)

The Shekinah Glory appeared to the nation of Israel as the pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night above the entrance to the Tabernacle. The theophany of the cloud meant that Jesus Christ as "the glory of the Lord" was present. Israel was guided by the pillar of cloud and pillar of fire while they travelled in the desert. Exodus 33:9; Lev. 9:23; Exodus 16:10; Num. 14:10; Num. 16:19; Num. 16:42; Exodus 40:34-38.

"Whenever Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the entrance of the tent; and the LORD would speak with Moses." (Exodus 33:9, NASB)

"Moses and Aaron went into the tent of meeting. When they came out and blessed the people, the glory of the LORD appeared to all the people." (Leviticus 9:23, NASB)

"But all the congregation said to stone them with stones. Then the glory of the LORD appeared in the tent of meeting to all the sons of Israel." (Numbers 14:10, NASB)

"It came about, however, when the congregation had assembled against Moses and Aaron, that they turned toward the tent of meeting, and behold, the cloud covered it and the glory of the LORD appeared." (Numbers 16:42, NASB)

"Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. Throughout all their journeys whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the sons of Israel would set out; but if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not set out until the day when it was taken up. For throughout all their journeys, the cloud of the LORD was on the tabernacle by day, and there was fire in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel." (Exodus 40:34-38, NASB)

The cloud by day and the fire in the cloud by night conveyed to the people of Israel that God was with them. This visible supernatural presence of the God continually confirmed to the Jews that their motivation, security, life, and blessing was tied to the God of Israel. The Jews were guided by the God of Israel as they followed the cloud. Every Jew knew by looking at the cloud that the God of Israel dwelt in the Tabernacle. They were constantly assured by God's visible presence that God would guide them and provide security and blessing.

The Shekinah Glory is identified as the God of Israel in Leviticus 26:11-12 and Isaiah 63:9.



"Moreover, I will make My dwelling among you, and My soul will not reject you. I will also walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people." (Leviticus 26:11-12, NASB)

"In all their affliction He was afflicted, And the angel of His presence saved them; In His love and in His mercy He redeemed them, And He lifted them and carried them all the days of old." (Isaiah 63:9, NASB)

In Romans 9:4, "the adoption" refers to the four unconditional covenants to Israel and "the glory" refers to the Shekinah Glory indwelling the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle and later in the Jewish temples during the dispensation of the Age of the Jews. See category on [The Shekinah Glory](#).

"For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises," (Romans 9:3-4, NASB)

Appearances as the Angel of the Lord

Where the angel of the Lord is identified as the Lord, it is the declaration of the deity of Christ. The angel of the Lord spoke to Hagar in Genesis 16:7-13.

"Now the angel of the LORD found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, by the spring on the way to Shur. He said, 'Hagar, Sarai's maid, where have you come from and where are you going?' And she said, 'I am fleeing from the presence of my mistress Sarai.' Then the angel of the LORD said to her, 'Return to your mistress, and submit yourself to her authority.'" (Genesis 16:7-9, NASB)

The angel of the Lord spoke to Jacob in Genesis 31:11.

"Then the angel of God said to me in the dream, 'Jacob,' and I said, 'Here I am.'" (Genesis 31:11, NASB)

The angel of the Lord is God. He called to Abraham from heaven in Genesis 22:11 and Genesis 22:15-17.

"But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, 'Abraham, Abraham!' And he said, 'Here I am.'" (Genesis 22:11, NASB)

"Then the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven, and said, 'By Myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son, indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies.'" (Genesis 22:15-17, NASB)

The angel of the Lord spoke to Gideon in Judges 6:11-23.

"Then the angel of the LORD came and sat under the oak that was in Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite as his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the wine press in order to save it from the Midianites. The angel of the LORD appeared to him and said to him, 'The LORD is with you, O valiant warrior.'" (Judges 6:11-12, NASB)

"When Gideon saw that he was the angel of the LORD, he said, 'Alas, O Lord GOD! For now I have seen the angel of the LORD face to face.'" (Judges 6:22, NASB)

The angel of the Lord spoke to Manoah and his wife in Judges 13:3-23.



“Then the angel of the LORD appeared to the woman and said to her, “Behold now, you are barren and have borne no children, but you shall conceive and give birth to a son.” (Judges 13:3, NASB)

“So the angel of the LORD said to Manoah, “Let the woman pay attention to all that I said.” (Judges 13:13, NASB)

The angel of the Lord is the second person of the Trinity, because Jesus Christ is declared to be visible God in John 6:46.

“Not that anyone has seen the Father, except the One who is from God; He has seen the Father.” (John 6:46, NASB)

Jesus Christ, the God of Israel, as the angel of the Lord warned the judges of Israel in Judges 2:1-4.

“Now the angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim. And he said, “I brought you up out of Egypt and led you into the land which I have sworn to your fathers; and I said, ‘I will never break My covenant with you, and as for you, you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall tear down their altars.’ But you have not obeyed Me; what is this you have done?” (Judges 2:1-2, NASB)

Theophanies are theological proof of the pre-existence of the Jesus Christ as the visible God of the Old Testament. During the time of our Lord’s Incarnation, theophanies had ended. There were appearances of Christ in His resurrection body from the time of His resurrection until He ascended called Christophanies. See category on [Jesus Christ, Post-Resurrection Appearances](#).