

GIDEON'S THEOPHANY

The call of Gideon to become the 5th Judge of Israel came by a theophany.

“The angel of the Lord came and sat down under the oak in Ophrah that belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, where his son Gideon was threshing wheat in a winepress to keep it from the Midianites. When the angel of the **Lord appeared** (raah / niph'al impf. / theophany) to Gideon, he said, ‘The Lord is with you, O Valiant Warrior.’”

The word *theophany* consists of two Greek words: *theos* (*God*) and *phaneros* (*appearance, visible*). *Theophany* is a theological word not a biblical word. However, it has both a theological and biblical concept as illustrated in the call of Gideon. Westminster Dictionary defines a *theophany* as the manifestation of God to man by actual appearance (pg.600).

This lesson will study FIVE aspects of a Theophany that was used in calling the 5th Judge of Israel.

1. Chafer explains that a theophany was the manifestation of the second member of the Godhead (Son) in visible form before His incarnation (vol.5, pg.31, Systematic Theology).

The theophany was doctrinal proof of the pre-existence of Christ (John 1:1-3,10; 3:13, 31; 6:38, 42; 8:58; 1 Pet.1: 20; Phil.2: 6-8; Heb.1: 3; 2:9-10).

“Here is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that *Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all.*” (1 Tim.1:15)

2. Theophany was one of many ways God chose to reveal Himself and His message to mankind.

- Dreams – Job 33:12-18; (Joseph) Gen.37; Matt.1: 20.
- Trances – Acts 10:10, 17; 11:5
- Visions – Gen.15:1-2; Matt.17:9
- Angels – Gen.18:1-2; Luke 2:9-11
- Prophets – OT and NT; Num.12:6; Acts 21:9-12
- Theophany – Gen.12:1; 17:1; 18:1-2; 26:2; 35:1 (Patriarchs)

With the completion of the Bible, we believe these forms of divine revelation ceased.
(1 Cor.13: 8-12; Eph.3: 1-5).

3. There were four different forms of theophanies.

- Appearance as mankind (Gen.18:2, 22; 32:22-32; Dan.3:25; 10:5-21; Josh.5:13-14)
- Inanimate objects (Ex.3; Acts 7:30; Ex.33:21-22; Ps.68:8,17; Ex.17:17; 1 Cor.10:4)
- Angel of Lord (Gen.16:7-13; 22:11-18; 31:11-13; 1 Chron.21;15; Judges 6:11-23; Dan.6:22)
- Shekinah glory (Ex.24:16-17; Lev.16:2; Heb.9:25; Deut.33:7-23; 40:34-38; 1 Kings 8:10-11)

4. Incarnation of Jesus Christ was the manifestation of the second member of the Godhead to the world (John 1:14-18; 3:13; 6:38, 42).

Theologians refer to the Incarnation of Jesus Christ as “the divine presence dwelling in the body of Jesus Christ as in the holy of holies of the temple.” (Westminster, pg.601)

“Not that any man has seen the Father, except the One who is from God; he has seen the Father.” (John 6:46)

“Who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light; whom no man has seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion! Amen.” (1 Tim.6:16)

“He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When he had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.” (Heb.1:3)

5. There are three ways to explain the theology of the manifestation of Jesus Christ in the Scriptures.

- Theophany – pre-existence of Christ (Judges 6:11-12)
- Incarnation – historical existence of Jesus Christ (1 John 4:2)
- Christophany – resurrection-ascension existence of Jesus Christ (Rapture) (1 Thess.4:13-18) and (Second Coming) (Rev.1:7; 19-22)

“I am Alpha and Omega,” says the Lord God, ‘who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.’” (Rev.1: 8)

With the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, theophany ceased (1 John 1:1-3). “And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding, in order that we might know Him who is true, and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.” (1 John 5:20)

6. After the resurrection of Jesus Christ, His manifestation is referred to as Christophany. There are two categories of Christophany: eleven post-resurrection appearances and post-ascension appearances.

Three post-ascension appearances are Stephen (Acts 7:55-56) and Paul (Acts 9:3-5, 17) and John (Rev.1: 8-20).

The Rapture and Second Coming will be the final manifestation of Jesus Christ to the world (Acts 3:20-21; Rev.1: 7; Titus 2:13).

“And they also said, ‘men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.’” (Acts 1:11)