

Christ Before and After Creation II

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Preacher: Marvin Wiseman

[0 : 0 0] It should become readily apparent as you read over the first chapter of Ephesians chapter 1 that there are statements made in there regarding and referring to our Lord Jesus Christ that simply cannot be explained or understood in any way, shape, or form apart from the fact of His being deity.

That is, very God of very God. And not only here in Hebrews chapter 1, but also in John chapter 1, we will consult later, as well as Colossians chapter 1.

There are unmistakable references that ascribe a deity to our Lord Jesus Christ. And during His earthly ministry, Christ made enigmatic statements that seemed utterly intelligible, unintelligible.

For instance, in John 8, when He was conversing with the Jews who were being very critical of Him, He said, Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and was glad.

And they said, You aren't even 50 years old. And you have seen Abraham?

[1 : 2 2] And Jesus said, Before Abraham was, I am. How can you possibly explain a statement like that?

And in John 17 and verse 24, Christ said, Restore, in His high priestly prayer, He said, Restore unto me the glory which I had with thee before the world was.

And then again, Thou didst love me before the foundation of the world. No explanation can satisfy these statements apart from Christ the Son being very God of very God.

And by way of some preliminary comments, introductory to what we're going to be looking at today, while the Scriptures speak with crystal clarity to their being but one God, who is the true God, it speaks with equal clarity to the Fathers being God, the Son being God, and the Spirit being God.

The Trinity, by necessary and logical deduction, is the only possible explanation. There is but one God, not three gods, and this one God subsists in three distinct persons, each of whom is fully God, co-equal, co-eternal, and infinite.

[2 : 5 3] And by the way, when you think in terms of the infinite God, you realize, and I'm sure that logic and philosophy will compel us to agree, that infinity can only belong to one entity.

There cannot be multiple infinities. There can only be one who is infinite. And there is only one who is infinite. And this one who is infinite subsists in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Each of them co-equal and co-eternal, and each of them infinite in their own right. Yet there is but one infinite God. And the key is, I think, subsisting in three persons.

Granted, that is contradictory to our line of reasoning in connection with humanity as we know it, and the makeup of human beings. But we would remind you that God dwells on a different plane.

We noted the first and the most frequent usages of names for the deity. And we discovered that being Elohim. It is used in the plural.

- [4 : 01] And it is in Genesis chapter 1 and verse 1. It is a very mysterious usage of the word. And this is, of course, an English spelling of the word Elohim.
- I do not have the ability to write it in Hebrew, because I don't know Hebrew, but I have at my fingertips and my access lexicons, concordances, etc.
- grammars of those who are very proficient in Hebrew. And this is one thing that they agree on. And by the way, this is something that even the Jewish scholars agree on.
- In the beginning, God. And it is plural. But it isn't translated gods. And yet, that is exactly what it is in the original.
- And I suppose that they simply could not bring themselves to use that plural in the English or in their translations. So, even though it is plural in the Hebrew, it is rendered singular in the English.
- [5 : 04] Curious, is it not? And not only is this found in Genesis 1. It is found 32 times. In the first chapter of Genesis.
- And in so far as the whole Bible is concerned, it is found 2,570 times. Elohim. Elohim.
- This is the plural. The English for the singular is Eloah. Elohim. And when you want to make it plural, then it becomes Elohim.
- The only word for the deity that is used more times than this is translated in the English. This way. Elohim. Elohim. Elohim. Elohim.
- Elohim. Elohim. Elohim. Where it is all capital letters. And any time you see this in the English with all capital letters, it always refers to the Tetragrammaton, which is...
- [6 : 02] The Tetragrammaton means the four letters. And they are, in the English equivalent, YHWH.
- Now tell me, how would you pronounce that? And a curious thing about Hebrew is, it doesn't have any vowels. There are no vowels in the Hebrew language.
- Only consonants. So that makes it somewhat problematic in translating into English. So what the English has done, by way of translation, in order to make the sense, is they put some vowels in there.
- And here's what they did. And in some cases, these were O's. A's or O's.
- And it comes out... Yehovah.
- [7 : 09] Or in some translations, it's Yahweh. And the reason they use a Y instead of a J is because, in Hebrew, there is no J.
- And there is no equivalent to the J. So they use a Y. And it comes out, Yehovah, or Yahweh, as some would pronounce it. And each time you see this in your English Bible with all capital letters, that is the word for Jehovah.
- This is the Tetragrammaton that God gave to Moses when Moses said, And I go to Pharaoh, and he asks, Who is this God of yours who sent you and demands that the children of Israel go free?
- You shall tell them, My name is the I am. And this form, and these letters, comprise the Hebrew expression of the verb to be.
- And it means, I am that I am. Literally, it means, I am the one who is because of myself. I am the self-existent one.
- [8 : 16] There is only one self-existent one. And that's the one who presented himself to Moses. Every other entity that exists, every other being, mortal, angels, whatever, every other being, apart from God, exists because something or someone else existed before them.

But with God, this is not the case. He is the self-existent one. And when it comes down to the idea, well, who created God? Well, we have to begin with an eternal being somewhere or an eternal thing.

And the Christian position, of course, is that we did not begin with an eternal thing. We began with an eternal being.

If you want to adopt the evolutionary hypothesis that does not need God to account for creation and all that exists, then you can begin, as they do, with inanimate matter.

And you can say that that which has no life of its own created life. Or you can say that which has life of its own created life.

[9 : 33] It's up to you to choose what you think is the more logical. I think the position ought to be quite clear. Now, there is just a slight change here. I would point this out to you.

Anytime you see this with a capital L and the other letters O-R-D being in the small case, that is referenced to a different word in the Hebrew.

And the word in the Hebrew is Adonai. Sometimes these words are put together.

Lord God and the Lord God said. The word Adonai and Lord, although they refer to the same person, reflect two different aspects of his being.

When the term God is used as we see in Genesis 1, in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The Elohim refers in the Hebrew to raw, naked power, energy, explosive, unlimited energy.

[10 : 49] That's conveyed in the word God. And God describes what the deity is. He is God.

He is power. He is the all-powerful one. When you use the word Jehovah or Lord with all capital letters, you are referring to the nature or the being, the relational aspect of God.

In other words, Lord or Jehovah is God's personal name. That is not reflected in creation. Because in creation, personality was not the issue, at least not until Adam came on the scene, because there was no relational aspect to it.

There was just this deity removed from creation who said, let there be. And there was. And each time, God, Elohim, expressed that, it was the release of unbelievable power and energy that is all reflected in the name Elohim.

In the beginning, God, Elohim, created the heavens and the earth. And then when you get into the usage of the word Lord or Jehovah, that's the relational name.

[12 : 13] The best way that I can illustrate this is that God is what he is. Jehovah is who he is. That is his name.

And to relate that to our human nature, we would say, man is what I am. Marv is who I am.

There's nothing particularly relational about man, but there is when you put a name on man, because then there is a connection with other related beings. So, this is used 32 times, Elohim is used 32 times in Genesis chapter 1 alone, and a total of 2,570 times in the Bible, but Lord outstrips that because I think it is 6,823 times in the New Testament, and that's Jehovah.

That's the personal name. So, he is telling Moses, I am the one who is because of myself. He is the self-existent one. And, this by the way, is what Christ was claiming for himself in John 8, 58.

When they said, you aren't even 50 years old, and you're saying that you saw Abraham? And Jesus said, before Abraham was, I am. And they were incensed because he really communicated to them.

[13 : 39] Do you know what he was saying? He was identifying himself with Exodus 3,14. The I am that Moses was told to deliver to Pharaoh, the self-existent one.

And the Jews took up stones to stone him. And, well, they should have. Not understanding any more than they did, because what Jesus Christ claimed there was equality with God.

he claimed to be deity. And they were taking up stones to stone him. And the only reason they didn't was we are told that he passed through their midst so that they weren't able to stone him, but that was their intent.

And the reason they were going to stone him was because he was guilty of blasphemy. And the penalty for blasphemy under the law of Moses was to stone him to death.

And on another occasion in that same gospel of John, Jesus said, many works have I done, many good works have I done, for which of these works do you stone me?

[14 : 43] This was another occasion when they were prepared to stone him. And they said, for a good work we do not stone you, but because you, being a man, make yourself out to be God.

And that's grounds for stoning you. And that's when they were prepared on another occasion to put him to death. And the only reason they weren't able to was simply because his hour or his time had not yet come.

The life of the Messiah was not to end under a barrage of stones. It was to end on an old rugged cross. And that's the way that was going to play out.

So, this is what Christ claimed for himself, and the Jews understandably took that as blasphemous. Pure human logic compels us to render the concept of the Trinity as impossible.

And so it is. But are there not many things and truths concerning the deity that are impossible? All the impossible means is that it is beyond the realm of human capability.

[15 : 56] The whole concept of the miraculous is impossible, but with God all things are possible. And Gabriel reminded Mary the Virgin who was to be the mother of our Lord Jesus.

With God all things are possible. The same crowd that dismisses the miracle of creation by God out of nothing as impossible. This is amazing.

I've written this and read it over three or four times. And it strikes me as dumbfounding again every time I read it. Listen to this. The same crowd that dismisses the miracle of creation by God out of nothing as impossible regards the creation of everything by itself as very believable declaring no God is necessary.

glory. Isn't that amazing? One of the most brilliant minds on the scene today acclaimed the world over as probably the world's greatest living physicist Stephen Hawking renders it completely logical that because the law of gravity exists it was very possible for the world to create itself out of nothing because of the law of gravity.

But then he did not go on to say where the law of gravity came from or how it got here. But it is preposterous. Let me tell you there is no blindness in the world like spiritual blindness.

[17 : 41] Peter described those as those who are willingly ignorant. ignorant. To be ignorant is one thing. To be willingly ignorant is far more serious.

So we want to consider the babe of Bethlehem before and after creation and before his existence in eternity both spaceless and timeless existence in spirit form.

Now let me touch on that a little bit because it is really mind boggling and I've been wrestling with this trying to get my brain around it and I can't. I just can't. So I'm going to share it with you so you can't get your brain around it either with me and we'll be in this mess all together.

We've got a picture of eternity. Eternity has no connection at all with time in any way shape or form.

Nor is there any space in eternity because none is required. Where you have time you need space. Where you have space you need time etc. But there was there I hesitate to use this word there was a time there was an instance when absolutely nothing had ever been created.

[18 : 59] No heavens no stars no planets no people no angels no anything there was nothing. But there was this self-existent God subsisting in three persons what did they look like?

They were in spirit form. What does that mean? It means they were not material. It means they had no physicality to them.

It means that Jesus Christ along with the Holy Spirit and the Father all three existed in eternity co-equal co-eternal all in spirit form.

What did they look like? They didn't look like anything. Because something that looks like something has shape and form and materiality to it. But none of them did.

When Jesus said God is spirit and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. That's exactly what he meant. Spirit is something that dwells in you.

[20 : 10] You have a human spirit. And you cannot see it. You cannot hear it. It is very real but it has no physicality to it at all.

No material properties at all. It is utterly non-physical. That's what makes it spiritual. God in the existence of the Trinity dwelt that way.

And the only reference we have is in Isaiah 57 that says thus saith the high and lofty one who inhabits eternity. So in this eternal state you say how long ago was that?

It wasn't any time ago. Because it has nothing to do with centuries or millennia. It has to do with a state of being. Eternity is all around us.

Eternity is a sphere. It is not a geographical place. Eternity is not a geographical place in the heavens. Eternity is a state of being that we just cannot identify with.

[21 : 18] I suspect that 30 seconds after you die you will. But not now. So here we have all three of these beings existing in spirit form in eternity.

and as a result of an agreement among the three the concept of creation was hatched.

And all three of these members were active in the creation of the heavens and the earth. In the beginning Elohim plurality of persons created the heavens and the earth.

We know that God the Father was involved in that and is repeated many times throughout the Old Testament and the New. And we know according to Colossians 1 Jesus Christ is before all things and by him all things are made and all things consist.

And we know that in John 1 he was before everything and without him was not anything made that was made. And then we saw in our passage in Hebrews this morning that he is referred to as God by God the Father.

[22 : 27] These things are just absolutely unmistakable. But because they will not compute with human logic the tendency is to just dismiss them. We do not believe these things.

We do not accept these things because they seem perfectly logical to us. They don't. You might as well admit it. They are not logical to the human mind. The three in one and the one in three.

But we believe them because of revelation. The scriptures make it very clear the Father is God. Make it equally clear that the Son is God and equally clear that the Spirit is God.

But there are not three gods. There is one God subsisting in three persons. We don't understand how that works. But ought there not to be some things about the deity that we don't understand?

And cannot his character, nature, and makeup be at the top of the list? God is God. God is not a man. He is God.

[23 : 34] And we dare not apply our finite logic and our flimsy human reasoning to him and demand that he fit into a mold that we create.

He'll have none of it. He is who he is. He is what he is. And he has been pleased to reveal who and what he is. Out of nothing, out of nothing, no pre-existing material, this triune God brought the heavens and the earth into being.

And by heavens, it consists of all of the universe, all planetary bodies, all galaxies, all of everything that is everywhere it is.

And out of all of the planetary bodies, one is designated as earth. earth, and it, of all the created order, becomes the focal point and object of the creator God.

Now, having gotten those things on the desk, let's go to Genesis chapter three, first of all, for some penetrating questions, and I trust some thought provoking answers.

[24 : 42] Genesis chapter three, passage that is very familiar to us because we've been over it a number of times. they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day.

How was it that this spirit being was walking in the garden in the cool of the day? Does he have legs? How does a spirit being that has no materiality and no physicality, how does he walk?

My suggestion is what we have here is a Christophany. Now, some would refer to it as a theophany, and I wouldn't argue with them, but I prefer the term Christophany.

In a Christophany, a Christophany simply means an appearance.

This offany comes from phanerou in the Greek, and it means an appearance of Christ, or a showing of Christ, or a display of Christ.

[25 : 48] A lot of the theologians, instead of calling it a Christophany, call it a theophany, which simply means an appearance of God.

And the word theo, of course, comes from the Greek word theos, from which we get the word theology, and it means God, and theology is the study of God, and a theophany is an appearance of God.

A Christophany is an appearance of Christ. But when you come to Genesis chapter 3, you do not expect an appearance of Christ, because he isn't supposed to show up until thousands of years later in Bethlehem, when he's born there.

And nowhere does the Bible call this a Christophany, or a theophany. It just says God. So, let's look at this. They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and the wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord among the trees of the garden.

Then the Lord God called to the man and said to him, where are you? And he said, I heard the sound of thee in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid myself.

[27 : 06] And he said, who told you you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat? Do you not see this as an obvious personal exchange between the deity, the creator, and the creature?

Is there any indication that Adam and Eve are communicating with some kind of amorphous blob, or sphere, or smoke, or a cloud, or a phantom of some kind?

I would go so far as to say that this person who assumes a position that enables him to communicate with Adam and Eve took upon himself a physical body, and in many respects looked a lot like Adam, but he was deity incorporated incorporated in that physical body.

Now, there's a problem with that, because we don't have physicality attributed to Christ until the word became flesh and dwelt among us, John chapter 1.

So, what is this? This, I think, is nothing more than the babe of Bethlehem in a physical form.

[28 : 36] Now, he's not a baby, but I mean, he is the same person as the one who will be the babe in Bethlehem, but I take it that he is a full-fledged human being, or appears to be a full-fledged human being, and Adam and Eve saw this one with whom they were communicating in some respects, much like themselves.

Only he was, of course, who he was, and apparently they had some appreciation for that. Well, what I'm saying is, this is a face-to-face conversation, eyeball-to-eyeball. We have no reason to believe that Adam was communicating with a mysterious voice that was coming out of heaven, like sometimes the voice of God is portrayed in movies, etc.

This is a face-to-face thing. And look, if you will, at Genesis chapter 6 and verse 9. These are the records of the generations of Noah.

Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time. Noah walked with God. Alright? Down to verse 13. Then God said to Noah, the end of all flesh has come before me, for the earth is filled with violence because of them, and behold, I am about to destroy them with the ark.

How did God say that to Noah? Did he just transfer the thoughts or the ideas to Noah's mind? Or did he use a voice from heaven that Noah was able to recognize and understand?

[30 : 15] Or did this being described here as God come down and talk face to face with Noah? And who would that have been?

I think it is the person of the pre-incarnate Christ. chapter 7 and verse 1.

And the Lord said to Noah, enter the ark, you and all your household, for you alone I have seen to be righteous before me in this time. Another face-to-face conversation.

I must confess, even after having spent five years in Genesis as we did many years ago and going through this verse by verse, I never picked up on this. And I don't think any of the scholars, and I've got several volumes from Genesis from both Hebrew and Christian scholars, and I don't recall them making an issue of this at all.

But I am satisfied that this is what this is. Noah wasn't talking to some mysterious ethereal presence, some spook or ghost or gaseous substance.

[31 : 28] He was talking with, conversing with, what appeared to be a human being. And the only reason perhaps that we cannot ordinarily assign that to it is because it seems out of sequence.

It seems like Jesus isn't supposed to be on the scene until you get to the New Testament. That's when he shows up. But I think not. Chapter 9, Genesis chapter 9 and verse 8.

This is just one more thing I have to confess to my embarrassment of having missed after studying the Bible for 50 years. You would think I would have seen this, but I didn't.

Verse 8, Then God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him, saying, Now behold, I myself... And there's no indication that these sons are saying, Hey, Dad, what is this?

Where is this voice coming from? Who is this? What is... I think this was a human being appeared to be very much like them standing before them. Only they recognized him for being who he was and what he was, the authority, the God himself.

[32 : 39] And they were responding to him. Now I would agree, and I'm sure you would agree, that to be able to talk face to face with the deity would be just so flabbergasting.

You just can't imagine talking face to face with God, the creator and sustainer of the heavens and earth. I can't imagine that.

And sometimes I think that's why we say that can't be this way, that can't be this, I can't imagine, well, neither can I. But you've got to remember, they were a whole lot closer to creation than what we are by far.

and the plot thickens as we go on. Look at chapter 11 of Genesis. Chapter 11 and verse 6.

And the Lord said, Behold, and by the way, verse 5 says, And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built.

[33 : 52] Now, I've got another question for you. Where did he come down from? Well, that ought to be intuitively obvious.

He came down from heaven. But it doesn't say that. It just says he came down. Do you have any idea how many times down is used in the Bible in reference to Jerusalem?

Jerusalem the Lord came down. He went down from Jerusalem to Judea. They went down from Jerusalem to Jericho.

They went down. What's doing in Jerusalem? As far as we know, Jerusalem doesn't even exist now. I mean, David hasn't purchased it from the threshing floor of Arona.

Jerusalem, the Jebusites who were going to be the original inhabitants of Jerusalem when the city was first named Jebus, and the Jebusites were the people who lived there.

[35 : 00] This is even before that. Where would he have come down from? I just want to throw this out. I'm not going to take time to develop it because in the first place I can't, but I think that there's something here.

Mount Zion, Jerusalem, that area in Israel has ever been designated as the throne and the place of God.

That's where he met with the children of Israel, that's where the Ark of the Covenant was situated, that's where the temple was built. There is something really super, super special about that plot of ground, Jerusalem.

And in a physical form, in a Christophany, in a pre-incarnate appearance, what he would have been doing there, I have no idea. Whether that's really where he was, I don't know.

But when the text says he came down, I kind of get the impression, I don't want to read into this something that isn't there, but I kind of get the impression this whole scene is on earth. It's physical.

[36 : 06] It's right here on this globe. And the Lord came down to see the city. And the tower, which the sons of men had built.

And the Lord said, Behold, they are one people. And they all have the same language, and this is what they began to do. And now nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible for them.

Come, let us go down. Who's us? us. And it's clearly a plural. You know, if I were writing the Bible and wanted to write this so as to get people to believe it, I wouldn't use us.

I wouldn't use a plural here. That seems unreasonable. I'd use a singular. But it's us.

It's plural. Let us go down, and they're confused their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of the earth, and they stopped building the city.

- [37 : 11] Chapter 12. Chapter 12 and verse 1. A verse that I've been over so many times, I can't begin to tell you. And the Lord said to Abram, how did he do that?
- Well, the common wisdom says he spoke to Abraham from heaven. He put it in Abraham's heart so that Abraham just knew. I don't think so. I think he spoke face to face with Abraham.
- Go forth from your country, from your relatives, from your father's house, to a land which I will show you, and I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and so on. And verse 4, so Abram went forth as the Lord had spoken to him.
- And he was now 70 years old. So, come with me to Genesis chapter 16. verse 7.
- The angel of the Lord, and the word angel simply means messenger, messenger. The messenger of the Lord found her, that is Hagar, by a spring of water in the wilderness, by the spring on the way to shore, and he said, Hagar, Sarai's maid, where have you come from, and where are you going?
- [38 : 31] And she said, I am fleeing from the presence of my mistress Sarai. And the angel of the Lord said to her, is there any reason to believe that this angel is not present on the scene?
- They're talking, communicating with her? She doesn't know it's an angel. I think she thinks this is a human being. She doesn't know who this is.
- And the angel of the Lord said to her, return to your mistress, and submit yourself to her authority. Moreover, the angel of the Lord said unto her, I will greatly multiply your descendants.
- Really? Since when did that become the job description of angels? Who is this angel of the Lord? Who is this messenger of Jehovah?
- It is a pre-incarnate revelation of Jesus the Messiah in human form, well before Bethlehem.
- [39 : 35] Behold, you are with child and you shall bear a son. And he goes on and look at her response in verse 13. Then she called the name of the Lord who spoke to her.
- Thou art a God who sees. and I can only believe that this messenger of the Lord told her who he was.
- And she acknowledges that. You are God who sees, who understands, who knows. Chapter 18, Genesis verse 1.
- Now, the Lord, this is Jehovah. And how many times have I told you over the years that the Jesus of the New Testament is the Jehovah of the Old?
- Now, the Lord appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre when he was sitting at the tent door in the heat of the day. How did he appear to him?
- [40 : 46] Same way I appear to you right now. physically, visibly, right before you. The text goes on and says, When Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, behold, three men.
- Men? But verse 1 says, The Lord appeared to him. Now, in verse 3 it says, Three men were standing opposite him. And when he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them, and bowed himself to the earth, and said, My Lord, Lord, and note the difference in the spelling here, if you would please.
- You see the word Lord in verse 1? It's all in capital letters. This is Yahweh. This is Jehovah. But do you see the word Lord in verse 3?
- You see the lower case letters? It's not the same word in the Hebrew. In verse 1, it is Jehovah. In verse 3, it is Adonai.
- Abraham. It simply means a superior one, a being who is elevated above me. It doesn't necessarily refer to deity at all. And there's no reason to believe at all that Abraham knew who these were.

[41 : 58] They looked to Abraham like three men, three strangers he'd never seen before. I think they were the proximate height and build. I think they were wearing the customary clothing of the day.

They looked like three strangers from the town next door. He didn't know them from Adam. But he said, My Lord, if now I have found favor in your sight, please do not pass your servant by.

Please let a little water be brought and wash your feet and rest yourselves under the tree. And I will bring a piece of bread that you may refresh yourselves. And after that you may go on since you have visited your servant.

And they said, So do, as you have said. And Abraham returned to the tent to Sarah and said, Quickly, prepare three measures of fine flour. Knead it and make bread cakes.

Abraham ran to the herd, took a tender and choice cap, gave it to the servant, and he hurried to prepare. We've got company. We've got to feed these people. This was customary hospitality. It would have been unthinkable for him to do anything less.

[42 : 57] So he's going to do what the occasion required. And then they start asking some questions. Where is Sarah, your wife? Verse 9. And he said, Oh, she's in the tent.

And he said, look at this. I will surely return to you at this time next year, and behold, Sarah, your wife, shall have a son.

And Sarah was listening at the tent. She was eavesdropping. And she laughed to herself.

She was well advanced in age, past childbearing. After I've become old, shall I have pleasure? My Lord, meaning Abraham, being old also. And look at who says what to Abraham.

Verse 13. And the Lord said to him, where did he come from? I thought these were just three men. But this is the Lord. And he said he would return and she would have a child this time next year.

[44 : 10] And the Lord said to Abraham, why did Sarah laugh, saying, shall I indeed bear a child when I am so old? Is anything too difficult for the Lord? At the appointed time, I will return to you at this time next year and Sarah shall have a son.

Sarah denied it, however. I didn't laugh. She was scared. And he said, no, but you did laugh. She was not only scared, now she's lying. And the men rose up from there.

The men rose up from there. Who are these men? men? They appeared as men. They talked as men. They ate as men.

They had their feet washed as men. They conversed as men. Men rose up from there and looked down towards Sodom, and Abraham was walking with them to send them off.

And the Lord said, shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do? Since Abraham will surely become a great and mighty nation and in him all the nations of the earth will be blessed.

[45 : 21] For I have chosen him in order that he may command his children and his household and so on and so on. And verse 22 says, then the men turned away from there.

And by the way, the men in verse 22 are the same as the men in verse 2 of the same chapter, the three men. The men turned away from there and went towards Sodom while Abraham was still standing before the Lord.

And then this bartering takes place where God is conversing with Abraham over sparing the city of Sodom. And verse 23, Abraham, look at verse 22, men turned away from there and went towards Sodom while Abraham was still standing before the Lord.

What does that mean? It means the Lord was right there. And Abraham was standing right before him, just like I'm standing right before you. And Abraham came near.

That means Abraham walked up and got close to the Lord. And he said to the Lord, will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked?

[46 : 39] suppose there are fifty righteous within the city. Wilt thou indeed sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous who were? Abraham isn't talking to heaven.

He isn't crying out to God out there somewhere. He's talking eyeball to eyeball, face to face with the deity. And I think the deity is none other than a pre-incarnate Christ.

And the Lord said in verse 26, if I find Sodom fifty righteous within the city, and you go on through the bartering that goes on, and Abraham says in verse 31, now Abraham knows who it is to whom he's speaking.

And I am convinced the only way he knows is that God told him. And then in verse 31, Abraham says, now behold, I have adventured, I have ventured to speak to the Lord.

Suppose there are twenty found there. And then in verse 32, oh may not the Lord be angry, and I shall speak only this once.

[47 : 53] I see this man standing there next to the deity, pleading with his hands as only a Jew can plead when he's trying to strike a deal. And that's exactly what he's doing.

He's bargaining with God, trying to get the city of Sodom saved. Why? Because his nephew's there, Lot's there, and his grandnephews are there. And look at verse 33.

And as soon as he, the Lord, had finished speaking to Abraham, the Lord departed, and Abraham returned to his place.

departed from where? He departed from the presence of Abraham, before whom he had been standing. And one more, if we need it, and we don't as far as I'm concerned, but it is a kind of a clincher, Exodus chapter 33.

Exodus chapter 33, chapter 33. Then the Lord spoke to Moses. How did he communicate with Moses?

[49 : 16] By mental telepathy? By some kind of remote control? By just putting into Moses' mind and heart what he wanted to say so that Moses knew and knew who it was from?

No, I think this was another face-to-face thing. The Lord spoke to Moses, depart, go up from here you and the people whom you have brought up from the land of Egypt to the land of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob say, to your descendants, I will give it.

and I will send an angel before you and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, the Hittite, and so on and so on and so on. Now, verse 10, when all the people saw the pillar of clouds standing at the entrance of the tent, all the people would rise and worship, each at the entrance of the tent.

Thus, and look at this, thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face just as a man speaks to his friend.

Could anything be clear? We just, or at least, I don't want to speak for you, but I guess I have just always had the impression that God did communicate with people in the Old Testament, but the way he did it was not like you and I talked to someone.

[50 : 49] It had to be supernatural, it had to be a voice from heaven, it had to be just implanted in their mind or heart, or they had to hear the message and nobody else did. But this reduces the whole scene to a very, very literal kind of picture.

And you know, we sometimes think in terms of God as being so great, we don't want him involved with physicality because material things are of this world, and of course he's not.

But let me tell you something, God is very, very much interested in and committed to the material and the physical. And that does not take anything away from the spiritual.

spiritual. I'm just saying, sometimes we want to make God so spiritual that we remove all physicality, and he's very committed to the physical.

And this is one reason why he absolutely insists on a bodily physical resurrection from the dead, not only for his son, but for you and for me as well.

[52 : 00] Scriptures, Old Testament and new, in so many ways, in so many places, are so much more physical and literal and real than we imagine them to be.

Because we somehow tend to think that God being God, he's just got to be so removed from anything we know or can comprehend at all. Well, in some ways he is. In many ways he is the utterly transcendent God above and beyond anything that we can ask or think.

But in some ways he is a deity who is really down to earth. And in the situation with us, he is both. So here we have what I think is an undeniable picture of the activities of the Christ of Bethlehem before Bethlehem ever happened.

He is involved. These three, someone would suggest, were these three persons, these three men who are described as men, sometimes described as angels or messengers of the Lord, could they have possibly been the Trinity, members of the Trinity?

I can't go so far as to say yes, nor can I say no. I don't know. I don't know. But they do appear to be equals.

[53 : 24] There's no indication that they are not. And what form did Christ exist in before he came to Bethlehem?

Before he was enfleshed in the incarnation? We know the eternal son existed with the eternal father and the eternal spirit in eternity.

In what form did he exist? I think all three of these beings before anything was created, they all existed in spiritual form.

When Jesus said God is spirit and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth, I think he was talking about the Elohim.

All members of the Trinity existed in this spirit form. None of them possessed materiality. And it just blows my mind to consider that it is non-material that created the material.

[54 : 25] it is a non-physical that created the physical. And yet, that is exactly what we have all throughout the scripture. Do you see probably why the only person to whom the word that is so radically overused by so many people, especially so many of our young people, but he is the only one who is really entitled to the term.

Awesome. Awesome. Young people today will call a slice of pizza Awesome. They don't know what they're talking about. There's only one that can really wear that title Awesome.

And it is this God of whom we are speaking. And what have we done here? We haven't done anything but just scratched the scratch on the surface of the God that we serve.

He is Awesome. And Father, we would not have nor own nor worship a God whom we could fully understand. We must confess that in so many ways we feel that we do not even have a partial understanding of your being because you are the infinite God.

That means our little finite corner and our little finite minds cannot begin to grasp grasp the enormity of yourself.

[55 : 57] We really do have an utterly awesome describable God. And yet you have been pleased for our sakes to reduce yourself to one of us and dwell among us.

And even in the Old Testament as we have seen, you have been pleased to reveal yourself from your first creatures on, Adam and Eve. And there is a response that is required from every revelation that you give of yourself and we want it to be one of wholehearted obedience.

We bless you for this time spent together and for perhaps just opening, just peeling back the page a little bit and looking into who and what you are.

thank you for being the God you are. If there was anything about you that we could change, we wouldn't. We bless you. Christ's wonderful name.

Amen.