

Reading: **John 1:14-18**

*INTRO. I'm sure that everyone here takes it for granted that Jesus was a real Person who lived & walked upon this earth. Not only do we have the historical (non-Biblical) accounts of men like **Polycarp, Ignatius, Josephus** & others who lived during the early years of the church, but also, we have the Biblical accounts of men who claimed to know Jesus personally! Men, like the **apostles**, talked to Jesus, walked with Him, ate with Him & saw Him perform miracles! Of course, critics of the Bible say these men made up these stories & that what we read in the Gospels is a fabrication. But, what would cause a group of men to make up stories about someone, knowing they're false, & then go out & die horrible deaths for saying they're true? No, the testimony concerning Jesus is as strong as any testimony you can find about any other person in history!*

*Jesus is the most unique Person who ever lived! Everything we read about Him in the NT is true. If people don't want to accept that, if they want to believe He was a **lunatic**, or a **liar**, that's their privilege. However, to take such a position, they must also be prepared to explain how a lunatic, or a liar could bless the world as much as Jesus did...more than any other person we've ever known? I wouldn't want to defend that position, would you? Jesus was no lunatic or liar, but He is the only begotten Son of God who came to this earth to seek & to save that which is lost.*

*Usually, if we're going to begin a study on the life of Jesus, we go to the NT, & we begin with His birth in Bethlehem of Judea. In fact, I did that in a series of sermons from the **Gospel of Luke**. But, is that really where Jesus' life began? No, it isn't! Jesus' existence didn't begin with His birth, for the Bible shows us that He existed before He was conceived in His mother's womb. In our reading from **John 1:15**, **John the Baptist** bore witness of Jesus saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me.'" John was an older cousin of Jesus; he was born before Jesus, yet he said Jesus existed before him! In another statement to His disciples, in **Jn. 6:62**, Jesus said, "What then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where He was before?" It's a casual reference to His pre-existence, & I wonder if the disciples even caught it. But, clearly, Jesus was saying He was somewhere else before He was born on earth!*

So, with this in mind let's talk about the Pre-existence of Jesus & see where Jesus was before He came to this earth. If you'll look at the words of our text again, **Jn. 1:18**, it says, **"No one has seen GOD at any time."** Well, in the OT, we find numerous occasions where it's said that GOD appeared to certain people. And usually, He appeared in the form of a man or angel. Since it's true that no man has ever seen GOD, we must conclude that **Jesus** is the One who made these appearances. There's a word for this, by the way; it's called a **"theophany"**...a visible & temporary appearance of God to man, but not necessarily touchable. And Paul made an interesting statement about Jesus in **Phil. 2:5**, when he said, **"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God..."** Paul's alluding to Jesus' pre-incarnate state, & he says He existed **"in the form of God"**. So, today, let's look some of these occasions when Jesus appeared as GOD before men.

1st...In the time of Daniel. Remember the story of Daniel's 3 friends ~ Shadrack, Meshack, & Abednego? They refused to bow down to the King's image, so he threw them into the fiery furnace. But when the King looked into the furnace, he said, **"Look, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; & they are not hurt, & the form of the 4th is like the Son of God,"** (**Dan. 3:25**). I don't know how the king knew what the Son of God looked like, but that's what he said! And how thrilling it must have been for those 3 young men to see the Son of God there with them, protecting them from the fire. Nebuchadnezzar said God sent **"His Angel"** to deliver them (**v. 28**), but when they came out of that furnace, they didn't even have the smell of smoke on their clothes! Later, when Daniel was thrown into the lion's den, for praying to God, the lion's mouths were stopped, & Daniel came out saying, **"My God sent His angel & shut the lions' mouths, so that they have not hurt me..."** (**Dan. 6:22**). Why would we ever doubt the Lord's promise to be with us, providentially, when He appeared to those going through great difficulties, even in OT times?

2nd...We find Jesus in the days of the Judges. Look at **Judges 13**. Here, an Angel of God appears before Samson's parents. **Vs. 3**, **"And the Angel of the Lord appeared to the woman & said to her, 'Indeed now, you are barren & have borne no children, but you shall conceive & bear a son.'"**

In vs. 6, the woman told her husband, Manoah, "A Man of God came to me, & His countenance was like the countenance of the Angel of God, very awesome; but I did not ask Him where He was from, & He did not tell me His name." A few verses later, Manoah meets Him & says vs. 17-18: "What is Your name, that when Your words come to pass we may honor You?" And the Angel of the Lord said to him, 'Why do you ask My name, seeing it is wonderful?'" Who, but Jesus could identify Himself as "wonderful"? That's a name that Isaiah used to identify the Messiah in Isa. 9:6, "His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting God, Prince of Peace." ~ A similar appearance was made to Gideon in Judges 6, where Gideon refers to the angel as "Lord GOD" saying, "For I have seen the Angel of the Lord face to face," (vs. 22). The Lord told Gideon not to fear because he wouldn't die! But, since no man has ever looked into the face of God, we conclude this "Man of God" whose countenance was "very awesome" & who described Himself as "wonderful" was none other than Jesus, in some pre-incarnate state. And He was there in the days of the Judges, giving His encouragement to them!

3^d ...Go back further to the time of Joshua. Look at Joshua 5:13-15. The Israelites had crossed the Jordan River, the manna God gave them had ceased, & Joshua had the huge task of leading them into Canaan. So, as the General, Joshua needed some encouragement. "And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted his eyes & looked, & behold, a Man stood opposite him with His sword drawn in His hand. And Joshua went to Him & said to Him, 'Are you for us or for our adversaries?' So He said, 'No, but as Commander of the army of the Lord I have now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth & worshipped, & said to Him, 'What does my Lord say to His servant?' Then the Commander of the Lord's army said to Joshua, 'Take your sandal off your foot, for the place where you stand is holy.' And Joshua did so." Can you imagine what that did for Joshua's courage? Do you think he ever forgot that encounter? Do you think he ever needed to be afraid, knowing that the real Commander of his army was Jesus, the Son of God? And if Jesus was there to lead Joshua, should we ever doubt His willingness to be with us as we go into the world to do battle with Satan?

4th ...Next, we find Christ with the Israelites in the wilderness. Paul confirms this in two statements in 1st Cor. 10. In vs. 4, he says of the Israelites, "For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, & that Rock was Christ." And again, in vs. 9, "Nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, & were destroyed by serpents."

Isn't it interesting how many times we've read the story of Israel's wandering in the wilderness, & even this passage from Paul, but never really thought about Jesus being there with them? But, clearly He was! He accompanied them! He was the **Rock** from which they drank, & He followed them through all of their wilderness experiences. And they tempted Him by their unbelief! And, what we can take from that is if He followed with them, He'll follow with us in our 'wanderings' through this world of sin. But, as Paul warns, we must not 'tempt' Him by unbelief as they did!

5th ...Next, we find Jesus living in the time of Moses. In fact, it's believed He appears as GOD several times to Moses. The first of these is in the **burning bush** in **Exodus 3**. On this occasion, Moses is tending the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro. And he sees a bush on fire, but it's not burning up! The Bible says it's "**an Angel of the Lord**" who appears in the midst of the bush, & that **God** speaks to him from the bush. And HE says not to come closer, & to take off his sandals because he's standing on holy ground. Moses hides his face because he's afraid to look upon God. Then, in the verses that follow, Moses is told to go to Egypt & deliver the Israelites from bondage. But Moses wants to know what he's supposed to say when the people ask, "**What is His name?**" And God says in **vs. 14**, "**I AM WHO I AM....Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'**"

Now, you remember all the times JESUS identified Himself by that simple expression? "**I am the bread of life,**" "**I am the light of the world.**" "**I am the resurrection & the Life.**" "**I am the Alpha & Omega.**" "**I am the bright & morning star.**" We've read those statements many times, & probably never stopped to think that each time Jesus said "**I am...**", He was saying that He was the One who appeared to Moses in the burning bush! You see, **Jesus** was the One who challenged Moses with this great decision: "**Moses, you can stay in Egypt & enjoy a life of ease, wealth & pleasure, OR, you can choose to lead My people out of Egypt ~ it'll be a harder life, but in the end, it will bring greater reward.**" Now, notice how the Hebrew writer described what Moses did, **Heb. 11:24-25**, "**By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward.**" Why would the Hebrew writer mention the name of "**Christ**" in connection with Moses & the

*decision he faced at the burning bush? Because it was **Christ** who appeared to him in the bush & challenged Him with that decision!*

*And then, think about when Moses went up to Mt. Sinai to receive the tablets of stone, the 10 Commandments. There He spoke to God, & then, later Moses goes into the tabernacle, w/the cloud hovering over it, the Bible says in **Exodus 33:11**, “So the Lord spoke to Moses **face to face, as a man speaks to his friend.**” But, how do you explain this statement in view of the fact that John said no man has ever seen GOD at any time? I believe we have to conclude that it wasn't God, the Father, who Moses saw 'face to face' but Jesus who appeared “**in the form of God**”, in a pre-incarnate state. And don't you know these were special times for Moses that would more than compensate for all the hardships he had to face in the wilderness.*

***6th ...Go back with me to the time of Jacob, before Moses.** In **Gen. 32** we find the unusual story of **Jacob** wrestling all night with a Man. Who was this Man? He touches Jacob's hip & puts it out of joint. Jacob refuses to let him go without a blessing, so the Man changes his name from **Jacob** to **Israel**. Jacob knows this is no ordinary Man for he says, “**I have seen GOD face to face, & my life is preserved,**” (**Gen. 32:30**). Jacob was never the same after this unusual encounter, but it wasn't GOD, the Father, he saw “**face to face**” but Jesus, the Son!*

***7th ...Go further back to the time of Abraham.** Did Jesus live then? Let's let Jesus answer. Look in **John 8:56**. Jesus is talking to some of His Jewish critics, & He says, “**Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, & he saw it & was glad.**” Then the Jews said to Him, ‘You are not yet 50 years old, & have You seen Abraham?’ Jesus said to them, “**Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I Am.**” So, yes, Jesus existed even before Abraham! And it's believed He appeared to Abraham twice: 1st, in **Gen. 18** when He informed him & Sarah that they were going to have a son; there he's called “**the Lord**”. And a 2nd time, in **Gen. 22** when Abraham was ready to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice. An Angel of the Lord stopped him, & provided a ram caught in a bush.*

But, even before Abraham, Noah, Enoch, Adam & Eve, there are

scriptures that show Someone, distinct from GOD, yet having the same nature as God acting as God! And, since all of these people either **spoke** to Him, **saw** Him, or **walked** with Him, we conclude that it wasn't GOD, the Father, but Jesus, the Son! *But how far back does the pre-existence of Christ go?* Well, in **Gen. 1:26**, we read this interesting statement, **"Then GOD said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness...'"** Clearly, Jesus was with God even in the beginning, & was involved in the creation. And other passages confirm this, like **John 1:3**, **"All things were made through Him (Christ) & without Him nothing was made that was made."** And the significance of this fact shouldn't be missed by us. For if Jesus was there in the beginning with God, creating us, then we should trust in His ability to provide for us, to sustain us, & to fix us, when we make a mess out of our lives.

I don't know about you, but I find these statements about Jesus & His appearances to be fascinating for a couple of reasons. First, they help me better understand God's Word. Since the Bible says no one has ever seen God, yet we read of people walking with God, talking with God & seeing God. But, now we know there's no conflict because the One they saw was Christ, in His pre-existent, pre-incarnate state.

*Secondly, the pre-existence of Jesus substantiates His deity. He wasn't just a Man who walked this Earth; He was & is GOD! He was with God in the beginning, & even before time began! He was with God in heaven, before God sent Him to earth. Yet, He left it all & came to this earth because He loved us & wanted to save us! *How could anyone know this about Jesus, then reject Him?* How could anyone see Jesus dying on the cross, & know that He lived with God in Heaven before He was born... know that He delivered Daniel from the lion's mouths... know that He inspired the prophets, like David...that He encouraged the Judges, like Gideon & Joshua... know that He followed after Moses & the Israelites in their wilderness wanderings? How could anyone see Jesus dying on the cross, & know that He was with God from the foundation of the world, planning how He would redeem us with His own precious blood? How could anyone know all this about Jesus & not believe that He is GOD, the Son, & that He died to save us? And, how could anyone, knowing all of that about Jesus, reject Him?*

Jesus not only lived before He was born, but even after He died, He arose, never to die again! And He lives even today ruling over His

kingdom, the church. I hope you'll consider all that we've said about Jesus today, & if you've never turned to Him for salvation, I hope you'll come today, confess your faith in Him as God's Son, & obey Him in baptism for remission of your sins. And if you've wandered away from Him, I hope you'll come back today, as we stand & sing. [Won't you come?](#)