

Foundations *The Book of Genesis*

Jesus in Genesis? *A Thematic Study*

Is 'The Angel of the Lord' the Pre-Incarnate Jesus?

Gen.16:7 Now the angel of the LORD found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, by the spring on the way to Shur...¹⁰ Moreover, the angel of the LORD said to her, 'I will greatly multiply your descendants so that they will be too many to count.'¹¹ The angel of the LORD said to her further, 'Behold, you are with child, and you will bear a son; and you shall call his name Ishmael, because **the LORD** has given heed to your affliction...'¹³ Then she called the name of **the LORD** who spoke to her, 'You are a God who sees.'

Gen.22:11 But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, 'Abraham, Abraham!' And he said, 'Here I am.'¹² He said, 'Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.'...¹⁵ Then the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven,¹⁶ and said, 'By Myself I have sworn, declares **the LORD**...'

Gen.31:11 Then the angel of God said to me in the dream, 'Jacob,' and I said, 'Here I am.'¹² He said, '...¹³ **I am the God of Bethel**, where you anointed a pillar...'

Gen.32:24 Then Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him until daybreak...³⁰ So Jacob named the place Peniel, for he said, 'I have seen **God** face to face, yet my life has been preserved.' (cf. Hosea 12:2 – 5)

Gen.47:15 He [Jacob] blessed Joseph, and said, 'The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day,¹⁶ the angel **who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads**; and may my name live on in them... [the angel received prayers]

Ex.3:2 The angel of the LORD appeared to him in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush...⁶ He said also, 'I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' Then Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look **at God**.

Ex.14:19 The angel of **God**, who had been going before the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud moved from before them and stood behind them. (cf. Exodus 13:21 – 22; 33:14 – 15)

Num.22:31 Then the LORD opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way with his drawn sword in his hand; and he bowed all the way to the ground [the angel received worship].

Why do Christians think that this is the pre-incarnate Jesus? Is that fair to the text? Or is it cleverness based on a conveniently worded text where the angel only represents God?¹

Framework: Binitarian, Trinitarian, Unitarian Models of God

For God to localize Himself to be seen or heard by someone, He must be both (local) immanent and universal (transcendent) at the same time. Therefore, he must have some kind of internal complexity within Himself that allows Him to do that. In the Old Testament, God must be *at least* binitarian. See my presentation on this subject.²

¹ Notice however that other angels refuse the worship of people and refuse to be identified with God Himself (Rev.19:9 – 10); cf. Umberto David Moshe Cassuto, *Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, 2 volumes

² Mako Nagasawa, *The Trinity: Can Other Gods Be Personally Known*; <http://nagasawafamily.org/article-trinity-&-god's-knowability.pdf>

The Revolutionary Claim: Jesus is YHWH

The New Testament phrase 'Jesus is Lord' (*kyrios*, Greek Septuagint) = 'Jesus is YHWH'

Examples:³

Old Testament	New Testament
<p>³² And it will come about that whoever calls on the name of the LORD will be delivered; for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be those who escape, as the LORD has said, even among the survivors whom the LORD calls. (Joel 2:32)</p>	<p>²¹ And it shall be that <i>everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved...</i> ³⁸ Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive <i>the gift of the Holy Spirit.</i> ³⁹ For <i>the promise</i> is for you and your children and for all who are far off, <i>as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself.</i> (Acts 2:21, 38 – 39, cf. Joel 2:28 – 32)</p>
<p>²² Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; For I am God, and there is no other. ²³ I have sworn by Myself, The word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness And will not turn back, That to Me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear allegiance. ²⁴ They will say of Me, 'Only in the LORD are righteousness and strength.' Men will come to Him, And all who were angry at Him will be put to shame. (Isaiah 45:22 – 24)</p>	<p>⁵ Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. ⁸ Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹ For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus <i>every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth,</i> ¹¹ <i>and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord [YHWH], to the glory of God the Father.</i> (Philippians 2:5 – 11)</p>

Basis: Jesus' Own Self-Identification:⁴

Name of God: "I AM"	Identity of Jesus: "I AM" – Ten times in John's Gospel: (1) <i>I am</i> the bread of life (6:35). (2) <i>I am</i> the light of the world (8:12). (3) Before Abraham was, <i>I am</i> (8:58). (4) <i>I am</i> the door (10:7). (5) <i>I am</i> the good shepherd (10:11). (6) <i>I am</i> the resurrection and the life (11:25). (7) <i>I am</i> the way, the truth, and the life (14:6). (8) <i>I am</i> the true vine (15:1). (9) <i>I am</i> (18:5). (10) I told you that <i>I am</i> (18:8).
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³ Sam Shamoun, *Jesus is Yahweh: Examining the New Testament Use of Old Testament Passages to Demonstrate the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ*: http://www.answering-islam.org/Shamoun/jesus_is_yahweh.htm has many more examples

⁴ To see how John uses the literary themes of Exodus in a very compelling way, see Mako Nagasawa, *New Creation, New Exodus, and New Humanity in the Gospel of John*; <http://nagasawafamily.org/john-theme-new-creation-&-new-exodus.pdf>

Anticipating the Renewal of Humanity in Jesus: 'Types'

'Typology is a method of biblical interpretation whereby an element found in the Old Testament is seen to prefigure one found in the New Testament. The initial one is called the type and the fulfillment is designated the antitype. Either type or antitype may be a person, thing, or event, but often the type is messianic and frequently related to the idea of salvation. The use of Biblical typology enjoyed greater popularity in previous centuries, although even now it is by no means ignored as a hermeneutic.'⁵

Example: Joseph as a 'Type' of Christ

Joseph Betrayed by His Brothers and Descends into the Pit

He was opposed to evil and careless treatment of life (37:2), as Jesus was opposed to those things (Jn.7:7; 10:1 – 21)
He was a shepherd, feeding the flock (37:2), as Jesus is the good shepherd (Jn.10:1 – 21)
He was loved by his father (37:3)
He was clothed by his father (37:3)
His robe symbolized his authority (37:3), as Jesus' robe symbolized his authority (Mt.9:20 – 21 and pars.)
He was conscious of his future sovereignty (37:7 – 8), like Jesus on trial
He was to be pre-eminent among his brethren (37:7, 9).
His brethren said, 'Are you really going to reign over us? We will not have this man' (Lk.19:14).
His father pondered the saying (37:11), as Jesus' mother Mary pondered the sayings (Lk.2:51).
Joseph was sent by his father to seek the welfare of his brethren (37:12 – 14).
He went from the valley of Hebron, which means 'fellowship,' where his father was (37:14), as Jesus went from and with the fellowship of his Father
He came to Shechem (37:14), meaning 'shoulder,' a city of later Samaria which is also called Sychar (Jn.4:4 – 5)
He was wandering in the field (37:15), as Jesus wandered to seek and to save (Lk.19:10)
He was looking for his brethren (37:16), as Jesus was looking for his brethren (Lk.15:4)
He found them in Dothan, which means 'the Law' in the sense of custom, practice, or tradition (37:17).
His brothers refused allegiance to him (37:18)
The brothers conspired against him (37:18) as Jesus' brethren conspired against him (e.g. Mt.27:1, Jn.11:53)
The brothers stripped him (37:23) as the Jewish leadership stripped Jesus (Mt.27:28)
They let him fall into Gentile hands out of envy of his leadership (37:27), as with Jesus (Mt.27:18).
His life was traded for silver: Joseph's price was 20 pieces of silver (37:28); Jesus' price was 30 pieces (Mt.27:3).
Blood was presented to his father (37:31)

Joseph Descends and Ascends in Egypt

He became a servant and prospered as a servant (39:2) as Jesus became a servant (Isa.53:10; Phil.2:5 – 11)
Others recognized that the Lord is with him (39:3), as with Jesus
All things are put into his hand (39:3), as with Jesus (Jn.3:35)
He became a blessing for others (39:5), as Jesus became a blessing for others (Eph 1:3; 4:32)
He was sorely tempted but he did not sin (39:7), as Jesus was (Mt.4:1 – 11)
He was falsely accused but made no defense (39:18), as Jesus was falsely accused and made no defense
He was cast into prison without a verdict (39:20)
He suffered although he was innocent (39:20), and while in captivity he suffered at the hands of Gentiles
He won the respect of his jailer (39:21) as Jesus won the respect of the centurion at the cross
He was numbered with two other accused people, the baker and the cupbearer (40:1), as Jesus was numbered with two other transgressors on the crosses next to him (Lk.23:39 – 43)
Joseph was the means of blessing to the one, and judgment to the other (40:20), like Jesus to the two criminals.
The cupbearer, representing wine, went free (40:21), as Jesus said his blood for the new covenant was for all
The baker, representing bread, is hung on a tree (40:22), as Jesus was hung on a tree (Gal.3:13)
He had a desire to be remembered (40:14), as Jesus said, 'Do this in remembrance of me...'
He was raised up to a high position and credited God for it (41:14)
He credited God for his supernatural abilities (41:16), as Jesus did (Jn.5:19)

⁵ http://www.theopedia.com/Biblical_typology

He warned of coming danger (41:25), as Jesus did (Mt.24)
 He urged provisions for people (41:33 – 36)
 He was filled with a 'divine spirit' (41:38), as Jesus was (Acts 10:38)
 There was none so discreet and wise (41:39), as Jesus possessed all the wisdom and fullness of God (Col.2:3)
 He was invested with great authority (41:40), as Jesus was (Phil.2:9)
 He was put over his Lord's house (41:40), as Jesus was (Heb.3:6)
 He was one before whom knees bow (41:43), as Jesus is and will be (Phil.2:10)
 The government rested upon his shoulders (41:43), as it does with Jesus (Isa.9: 6 – 7)
 He was given a new name 'Zaphenath-paneah' meaning Revealer of Secrets or Savior of the World (41:45)
 He was given a Gentile bride (41:43), as Jesus took Gentiles into his church as his bride (Eph.2:11 – 22)
 He had unlimited resources to meet the need (41:49), as Jesus did in his earthly ministry (Jn.6:1 – 21) and beyond
 He dispenses bread to a perishing world (41:55), as Jesus did and does (Jn.6:22ff.)
 It was said of him, whatever he says to you, you shall do (41:55), and that is certainly true of Jesus
 He was a savior to all peoples, both Jewish and Gentile (41:57), as Jesus is (Isa.49:6; Eph.2:11 – 3:21)
 He was a man of compassion (41:57)

Joseph Reunited with His Family

He presented others with the opportunity to retell their stories (42:1 – 44:34), as Jesus does (e.g. Jesus restored Simon Peter in Jn.21 with echoes of his betrayal by a charcoal fire in Jn.18:15 – 27 and his original call with a superabundance of fish in Lk.5:1 – 11)
 He chose to let God bless life through him, and thus God brought good out of his suffering (45:1 – 11)
 He comforted his brothers (45:1 – 15), as Jesus comforted his disciples (Jn.14:1)
 He cared for the 'little ones' of Israel and Egypt (47:12, 24), as Jesus cared for infants and children (Mt.18:1 – 6; 19:13 – 15; Lk.18:15 – 18).
 He was called by his father a 'fruitful bough' (49:22), as Jesus was called 'the Branch' (Isa.4:2; 11:1; Jer.23:5; Zech.6:12) and called himself 'the true vine' (Jn.15:1)

Joseph as a Type of Messiah

In Jewish rabbinical thought: Messiah ben Joseph/Ephraim (who is distinct from Messiah ben David), who would help rebuild the Temple and die in combat with the enemies of God.⁶ Messiah ben David would then come and finish the fulfillment and then there will be a resurrection of the dead. This was perhaps one way to arrange the biblical hopes for Messiah into two distinct individuals.

'We know that messianic homilies based on Joseph's career (his saving role preceded by suffering), and using Isaiah 53 as the prophetic portion, were preached in certain old synagogues which used the triennial cycle...'⁷ 'The addition of [Isaiah] 53.4 – 5 [to the cycle of synagogue readings] was evidently of a Messianic purport by reason of the theory of a suffering Messiah. The earlier part of [the Haftarah] (52.7ff.) dealt with the redemption of Israel, and in this connection the tribulations of the Messiah were briefly alluded to by the recital of the above 2 verses.'⁸

'As to myself, I am inclined, with Benjamin of Nehawend, to regard it [Isaiah 53] as alluding to the Messiah, and as opening with a description of his condition in exile, from the time of his birth to his accession to the throne: for the prophet begins by speaking of his being seated in a position of great honour, and then goes back to relate all that will happen to him during the captivity. He thus gives us to understand two things: In the first instance, that the Messiah

⁶ See reference to the house of Joseph in Obadiah 1:18; the suffering of a messianic figure in Isaiah 53 and Zechariah 12:10; Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs – Testament of Benjamin; Jerusalem Talmud Sukkah 5:2; Babylonian Talmud Sukkah 52b; Jerusalem Targum for Zechariah 12:10; Targum Pseudo-Jonathan to Exodus 40:9 – 11; Targum on Song of Songs 4:5; the 7th century medieval Jewish apocalyptic writings Apocalypse of Zerubbabel and Otot ha-Masiah identify Nehemiah ben Hushiel as the Messiah ben Joseph; the 8th century Nistarot Rabbi Shimon ben Yohai says that the Messiah ben Joseph will rebuild the Temple but be killed in battle; various midrashic writings mention the Messiah ben Joseph

⁷ Rav Asher Soloff, *The Fifty Third Chapter of Isaiah According to the Jewish Commentators, to the Sixteenth Century* (Ph.D. Thesis, Drew University, 1967), p.146

⁸ Jacob Mann, *The Bible as Read and Preached in the Old Synagogue* (NY: Ktav, 1971, 1940), p.298

will only reach his highest degree of honour after long and severe trials; and secondly, that these trials will be sent upon him as a kind of sign, so that, if he finds himself under the yoke of misfortunes whilst remaining pure in his actions, he may know that he is the desired one....⁹

The Underlying Reason Typology Works: God Spoke to Restore, Humans Received His Word

<i>Genesis:</i> <i>God Retold the Creation Order;</i> <i>Humans Received God's Word into Themselves</i>	<i>Jesus:</i> <i>God Retold and Fulfilled Creational Humanity</i> <i>God's Word Received Humanity to Himself</i>
Adam and Eve trusted in God's coming victory over Satan through the 'seed of the woman'; trusted God to undo the fall through their physical heirs (3:15, 20 – 24)	Jesus trusted in the Father's coming victory over Satan through himself as 'seed of the woman'; trusted the Father to undo the fall through himself through his spiritual heirs (Rom.16:20)
Noah did not retaliate with violence, trusted God to preserve life and make him a new Adam, to plant a new garden (6:9 – 9:19)	Jesus did not retaliate with violence, trusted the Father to make him a new Adam, and is planting a new garden in us and the creation
Abraham, Sarah trusted God's word to bring new life out of their 'dead bodies' (15:1 – 6; 17:1 – 18:15)	Jesus trusted the Father to bring new life out of his physically dead body
Abraham trusted God's word and circumcised himself from attitudes against God's original creation vision for human marriage (12:10 – 20; 15:1 – 6; 16:1 – 16; 17:1 – 27)	Jesus was circumcised from everything that tainted the Father's creation vision for humanity (Col.2:12)
Sarah trusted God's word to physically bear a promised new life in herself (21:1 – 8)	Jesus physically bore the promised new life in himself
Hagar trusted God's character to bear the cost and blessing for bearing an unwanted life (21:9 – 21)	Jesus bore the cost and blessing of bearing unwanted new life (Isa.53:3)
Isaac trusted God to bring his life out of death, to die because of his mom's sin, and to vindicate his father's faithfulness (22:1 – 19)	Jesus trusted the Father to bring his life out of death, to die because of his human ancestors' sins, and to vindicate his Father's faithfulness
Rebekah trusted an invitation by a well to leave home to marry another by another well (Gen.24)	Jesus trusted an invitation to 'leave home' to 'marry' human nature and human persons; one such encounter happened by a well (Jn.4:1 – 30, note the humor in placing the bridegroom comment in 3:29)
Isaac trusted God's promise of fruitfulness and prayed for his wife Rebekah to bear life (25:21)	Jesus trusted the Father's promise of fruitfulness and prayed for his people to bear new life (Jn.17:1 – 24)
Leah praised God despite utter loneliness, resulting in the birth of her son Judah (29:35)	Jesus praised God despite utter loneliness, resulting in him vindicating the kingship in the tribe of Judah and the praise due to the tribe of Judah, and name 'Judah'
Rachel gave up her rights and had some compassion on	Jesus gave up his rights and had full compassion on his

⁹ The Karaite Jew Yefeth ben Ali (10th century) found in S. R. Driver and A. Neubauer, editors, *The Fifty-third Chapter of Isaiah According to the Jewish Interpreters*, 2 volumes (New York: Ktav, 1969), pp. 19 – 20; the English translations used here are taken from volume 2; original texts are in volume 1; cf. Soloff, pp. 107 – 109.

her estranged sister (30:14 – 24)	estranged sisters
Jacob surrendered to God the weakness in his humanity and was marked by the crippling (limp) (32:1 – 32)	Jesus surrendered to the Father the weakness in his humanity and was marked by the crippling (scars)
Esau welcomed his estranged brother, having finally accepted being blessed through Jacob despite being outside the covenant line	Jesus welcomed his estranged brothers, having known he would be 'cast outside the covenant' symbolically through crucifixion (the curse of Dt.21:22 – 23)
Joseph suffered betrayal unjustly, descended yet remained faithful, ascended in power to feed the world, and gave others the opportunity to retell their stories	Jesus suffered betrayal unjustly, descended yet remained faithful, ascended in power to feed the world, and gave others the opportunity to retell their stories (e.g. Jesus restored Simon Peter in Jn.21 with echoes of his betrayal by a charcoal fire in Jn.18:15 – 27 and his original call with a superabundance of fish in Lk.5:1 – 11)
Judah reluctantly welcomed the foreigner by her possession of his life (his child) and identity tokens, and shared his inheritance with her (38:25 – 26)	Jesus eagerly welcomes foreigners by their possession of his life (his Spirit) and identity, and shares his inheritance with them all (Isa.56:1 – 6; Rom.8:9 – 17)
Judah offered himself to his father for the welfare of his brother	Jesus offered himself to his Father for the welfare of all his brethren

Conclusions

1. In order for God to localize His appearance or His voice, He must logically be at least binitarian internally to Himself. This is a short step away from a full Trinitarian understanding of God, and lays the groundwork for it.
2. Genesis begins the archetype (garden), plot arc (restoration by cleansing), and repeated patterns (God's verbal invitation and human response) that will resolve only by the Word of God taking human flesh and healing it of its corruption, so as to offer his new humanity back to us by his Spirit.
3. Given the Triune nature of God, and therefore the intention of God to restore and fulfill humanity in love, *it is not arbitrary but rather completely logical* (1) to see the pre-incarnate Jesus in the divine character of Genesis, and to see (2) typologies of Jesus in the human characters of Genesis. Notice that many women of Genesis received God's word into themselves, and thus have a typological relationship to Jesus. It's not just the men.
4. If you have the chance to teach Genesis, legitimate and healthy applications will come from recognizing the literary-thematic and typological connections between Genesis and the New Testament. Examples:
 - a. Abraham's circumcision represents a cleansing and cutting away of sin that Jesus undertook within himself, and calls us to undertake as well. We have to let God cleanse us and cut something away.
 - b. Sarah's receiving God's word into herself about God bringing life out of death in her represents Jesus' own reception of that truth, and our own through Jesus and by the Spirit.