

Doctrine Committee Project #47

The God Of The Old Testament (Edit: 07/31/17) (Mark Mickelson)

What UCG teaches:

The teaching of the Church of God, dating back to at least 1950 in a published article, is that Jesus Christ is the God of the Old Testament. The current elements of this teaching were outlined and explained by Steve Myers in a sermon given at the Home Office on June 24, 2017. It was posted to the archives and then recommended to the members by Victor Kubik.

Steve addressed seven points in explaining the teaching of the United Church of God on this doctrine:

Point #1: Our Fundamental Belief

Point #2: In the beginning

Point #3: The Creator

Point #4: No one has seen God

Point #5: Which God interacted with human beings in the Old Testament?

Point #6 The Angel of the LORD

Point #7 I AM

The problem with what UCG teaches:

Our teaching that Jesus Christ is the God of the Old Testament removes God the Father as the direct and active agent in His creation and replaces Him with Jesus Christ. It relegates the Father to a remote and distant role and makes Christ the Creator and the Lawgiver and the Father of Israel instead of God.

Also, our teaching that God is a family (instead of God has a family), and that Elohim, being plural, is used like the word Nation and can refer to a single entity with more than one member, is not supported by Hebrew syntax or by any reasonable reading of the text. Our teaching on the record of God in scripture actually hides the intended meaning rather than illuminates it.

Taking the record of God the Father in scripture and replacing Him with Jesus Christ is denying God's name, and worshipping Jesus Christ ahead of, or in place of, the Father, is idolatry. These are very consequential matters.

What UCG should be teaching:

The Almighty, the Most High, and the LORD (YHWH), are all terms that are used for God the Father rather than for Jesus Christ. There are multiple hundreds of examples of this, including numerous quotations from the Old Testament in the New Testament. We need to recognize and teach the consistency and harmony of the body of scripture rather than our interpretation of a selective group of scriptures that then negate the intent and meaning of scripture as a whole.

The God of the fathers of Israel, the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God whose presence was in the Holy of Holies of the Tabernacle and then later the Temples, the God who prophesied of the Messiah and then brought the prophecies to pass, was God the Father, and we need to make that clear.

Note: Following, is a transcript of Steve Myers' sermon with some of the points he made highlighted in red. My comments as to what is biblically accurate, along with supporting scriptures, are in blue.

Steve Myers: *Jesus: God of the Old Testament?*

Question for you as we begin this afternoon: **Is Jesus the God of the Old Testament? What does the United Church of God teach regarding this? More importantly, what does the Bible teach?** Today we're going to take some time to examine a basic belief and teaching of scripture that compromises the doctrinal understanding—or not compromises—but comprises the doctrinal understanding of the United Church of God. To ask this a little bit differently, Who and what was Jesus before His human birth? As we begin this afternoon, let's consider our Fundamental Belief. This will be point number one.

Point #1: Our Fundamental Belief

When the United Church of God began 22 years ago the elders approved our Fundamental Beliefs as a part of our constitution and bylaws. You can find them in our booklet, the *Fundamental Beliefs of the United Church of God*, or you can search the website ucg.org and you can find the Fundamental Beliefs. Here's what it states:

Fundament Belief #1: God the Father, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit

It states, *We believe in one God, the Father, eternally existing, who is a Spirit, a personal Being of supreme intelligence, knowledge, love, justice, power and authority. He, through Jesus Christ, is the Creator of the heavens and the earth and all that is in them. He is the Source of life and the One for whom human life exists. We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ of Nazareth, who is the Word and who has existed eternally. We believe that He is the Messiah, the Christ, the divine Son of the living God, conceived of the Holy Spirit, born in human flesh of the virgin Mary. We believe that it is by Him that God created all things, and that without Him was not anything made that was made. We believe in the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of God and of Christ. The Holy Spirit is the power of God and the Spirit of life eternal.* Then it mentions these passages: 2 Timothy 1:7; Ephesians 4:6; 1 Corinthians 8:6; John 1:1-4; and Colossians 1:16.

Now **in the booklet there is a little explanation** that follows, and I'll quote just a small part,

In the booklet it says, quote, *The Old Testament focuses on the God of Israel, who identifies Himself as "I AM" and "The LORD God...of Abraham, ...of Isaac, and...of Jacob.* That's quoting Exodus 3:14 and 15. And in parenthesis it says, *(The word LORD, [which is all caps L-O-R-D], here is used in place of the Hebrew word spelled YHWH [the Tetragrammaton], which, like "I AM," apparently denotes eternal and self-inherent existence.)*

Note: Scripture is consistent. The One who identified himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the Old Testament is the One who is identified as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the New Testament. The proof is not in what our booklet states, but rather in what scripture states.

Acts 3:13 The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His Servant Jesus

Acts 5:30 The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree.

Acts 7:30-32 And when forty years had passed, an Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire in a bush, in the wilderness of Mount Sinai. When Moses saw it, he marveled at the sight; and as he drew near to observe, the voice of the Lord came to him, saying, I am the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.

Acts 24:14 I worship the God of my fathers

The booklet goes on, *In John 8:58, Christ refers to Himself as 'I AM.'* Thus, the One the Israelites knew as God, who delivered them from Egypt and accompanied them in the wilderness, was later known in the New Testament as Jesus Christ. And it quotes 1 Corinthians 10:4. *The existence of the One whom Christ referred to as 'the Father' was not well understood by many before Christ's coming—though He is sometimes specifically referred to in the Old Testament.*

Note: God the Father is constantly and continuously referred to in both the Old and the New Testaments. Terms such as the word of God, the kingdom of God, the Israel of God, the Church of God, and the Spirit of God, are all in specific reference to Him. Also, the Almighty and the Most High are exclusive references to Him. There cannot be more than one Most High. The One Israel looked to as their Father was the God of the fathers of Israel, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Jesus Christ is God, but the God of the fathers of Israel was never used in reference to Him.

1 Chron 29:10-11 David blessed the LORD before all the assembly; and David said: Blessed are You, LORD God of Israel, our Father, forever and ever. Yours, O LORD, is the greatness, The power and the glory, The victory and the majesty; For all that is in heaven and on earth is Yours; Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, And You are exalted as head over all.

Ps 89:20,24-27 I have found My servant David; With My holy oil I have anointed him...My faithfulness and My mercy shall be with him, And in My name his horn shall be exalted. Also I will set his hand over the sea, And his right hand over the rivers. He shall cry to me, You are my Father, My God, and the rock of my salvation. Also I will make him My firstborn, The highest of the kings of the earth.

Isa 63:15-16 Look down from heaven, And see from Your habitation, holy and glorious. Where are your zeal and your strength, The yearning of Your heart and Your mercies toward me? Are they restrained? Doubtless You are our Father, Though Abraham was ignorant of us, And Israel does not acknowledge us. You, O LORD, are our Father; Our Redeemer from Everlasting is Your name.

Isa 64:8 But now, O LORD, You are our Father; We are the clay, and You our potter; And all we are the work of Your hand.

Mal 1:6 A son honors his father, And a servant his master. If then I am the Father, Where is My honor? And if I am a Master, Where is My reverence? Says the LORD of hosts

See Appendix A – God And Jesus Christ In Scripture

See Appendix B – The LORD Of Hosts

Note: References to “God” in the New Testament (and throughout the Bible for that matter) are overwhelmingly references to God the Father. Jesus is also God, but He is generally shown in relationship to the Father rather than as God Himself.

See Appendix C – John’s Use Of God

See Appendix D – God And Jesus In The New Testament

Now what we find here in Point #1, **Our Fundamental Belief, is the biblical teaching. It is what the United Church of God believes and teaches.** Now there are some few who have contrary ideas to these thoughts. There are some few that have different concepts. And there are some of those ideas that are going around.

But yet the United Church of God has many resources to help understand this subject. We have an in-depth **doctrinal study paper** that's called, "The Nature of God and Christ." So if you're taking notes, the **doctrinal study paper** is called "The Nature of God and Christ." You can find that at ucg.org. If you go to the Members page, that's members.ucg.org, and from the drop-down menu that says "Member Resources" you'll find **Study Papers**. And under that tab you will find **this particular paper** that's called "The Nature of God and Christ." **This particular paper** was approved by the Council of Elders in 2005 and it encapsulates the teaching of the Bible and what we believe in the United Church of God.

Of course we have many **booklets** that also supplement these teachings: the **booklet** *Who is God?*, the **booklet** *Is God a Trinity?*, and the **booklet** *Jesus Christ: The Real Story*. Those **booklets** go into quite a bit of details about this subject. And each one of these, you'll find, is consistent with our *Fundamental Beliefs* **booklet** and say the same thing.

Now, when one says, "**Jesus is the God of the Old Testament,**" we have to step back for just a moment because, **technically speaking, it's not the best wording. It's not the best way to state it. Because, technically, it's not correct.** Why? Well, because God the Father was always God, from eternity—including the time during the Old Testament. So, that leads us to recognize the fact that we have to be careful in what we mean when we say the word "God."

Note: The reason that "Jesus is the God of the Old Testament" is not the best wording is because it is not true. It is from our literature rather than from scripture.

Matt 4:4,6,7,10 It is written...it is written...It is written...it is written

John 10:35 Scripture cannot be broken

Acts 17:11-12 they received the word with all readiness, and searched the scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. Therefore many of them believed, and also not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men.

2 Tim 3:16-17 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

So to be more precise, **when we think "Jesus is the God of the Old Testament," more precisely what we mean is** the being who came in the flesh, as Jesus, was the God who interacted with human beings in the Old Testament. **You see how much more precise that is?** The Being who came in the flesh as Jesus was the God who interacted with human beings in the Old Testament. Because **the One who became the Father was always around;** He eternally existed and we don't want to shortchange the One who became the Father. But the being who came in the flesh, who interacted with human beings in the Old Testament, was the one who became Jesus.

Note: Saying "When we think...more precisely what we mean is", is an attempt to turn the corner on an inaccurate and misleading statement that has been part of our teaching for almost seventy years. It is not just "technically" not correct. It is not correct.

The doctrine that “Jesus is the God of the Old Testament” did not originate with the Church of God. It is a teaching of the Mormons that was given to Joseph Smith beginning in 1823 by the demon, Moroni. The Mormons use specific statements from the Book of Mormon to support their teaching while the Church of God uses an interpretation of a limited, selective group of scriptures.

3 Nephi 15:1-5 And now it came to pass that when Jesus had ended these sayings he cast his eyes round about on the multitude, and said unto them: Behold, ye have heard the things which I taught before I ascended to my Father; therefore, whoso remembereth these sayings of mine and doeth them, him will I raise up at the last day. And it came to pass that when Jesus had said these words he perceived that there were some among them who marveled, and wondered what he would concerning the law of Moses; for they understood not the saying that old things had passed away, and that all things had become new. And he said unto them: Marvel not that I said unto you that old things had passed away, and that all things had become new. Behold, I say unto you that the law is fulfilled that was given unto Moses. Behold, I am he that gave the law, and I am he who covenanted with my people Israel; therefore, the law in me is fulfilled, for I have come to fulfil the law; therefore it hath an end

Mosiah 3:8 And he shall be called Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father of heaven and earth, the Creator of all things from the beginning; and his mother shall be called Mary

Mosiah 15:1-4 And now Abinadi said unto them: I would that ye should understand that God himself shall come down among the children of men, and shall redeem his people. And because he dwelleth in flesh he shall be called the Son of God, and having subjected the flesh to the will of the Father, being the Father and the Son—The Father, because he was conceived by the power of God; and the Son, because of the flesh; thus becoming the Father and Son—And they are one God, yea, the very Eternal Father of heaven and of earth

Point #2: In the beginning

So let's build on why we believe what we do about who and what Jesus was before His human birth. And to do this, **let's methodically consider what the Bible actually says**. Let's begin by going to the earliest account in the Bible. So where would we find the earliest account in God's word? Well it would be over in John 1:1. Not Genesis 1, but John 1:1. Let's go there and read what the apostle John was inspired to record for us.

John chapter 1, verse 1, says, *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* Now you notice John uses an interesting phrase—those first three words, “In the beginning...” Now here John is using a special teaching method in these very first three words. He is giving us a clue. He is giving us a little bit of insight. He is giving us a hint into something that was written before in the Bible. What do you think he is referring to when he uses these three words? Something that those of us who read it will automatically begin to know and recognize. He is referring back to Genesis 1:1, because Genesis 1:1 uses these same exact three words. **Genesis 1:1 says, *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*** “In the beginning...” So John says, “In the beginning...” So what is he telling those of us who read John's words? What's his point? What is he getting at? Well, you see John is saying...remember John?...remember what he says here? In Genesis 1:1. Remember Genesis. It says, “In the beginning God created the heavens and earth.” John, in a sense, is saying, Guess what? **I'm going to tell you about that God. Because I met that God. I touched Him. I held Him. I handled Him. I listened to Him. I know Him. He was my Rabbi. He was my teacher. Let me tell you the rest of the story about that God who created the heavens and the earth.**

Note: Both Genesis 1 and John 1 refer to the same Creator God; and on God being the Creator, the Jews agreed. What the Jews didn't agree with was that Jesus Christ was also God, and that He had been with God in the beginning, and that God had created everything through Him. John was adding Jesus Christ to the Genesis account about God rather than adding God to the Genesis account about Jesus Christ.

John 1:1-2 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.

Acts 17:23-27,29-31 Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you: God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. Nor is He worshipped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things. And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, so that they should seek the Lord...Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising. Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.

2 Cor 4:6 For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

James 1:16-18 Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.

That's the hint that John is getting at when he starts with those words. In fact, if we look down to verse 14 of John chapter 1, he says, *(T)he Word* (this Word who was with God and was God)... *became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.* You see **John is saying, "I'm going to tell you the rest of the story about this God—this God who came to the earth to live among men."** And that's what John does.

His gospel is about the story of that being, the being who created the world, who later became a human being who lived in that world and gave Himself as a sacrifice for all the sins of the people in that world. **What is that being called? The Word. The Word. What was He? Well John tells us. He was both *with God and was God. He was with God and was God.***

Now that can be a little bit of a challenge to understand. How do we understand that? How do we deal with that difficulty? Well it comes down to defining *God*. Defining that word "God." Now if you define "God" as one being, you're in trouble. You're in trouble because when you misunderstand what Scripture actually says about God the Father and the Son, you're going to find yourself playing a theological game of Twister. And that's what led those that came up with the idea of the Trinity far astray from what the Bible really says.

Note: The one God is one God Being. To define the term otherwise is not in accordance with scripture.

John 17:3 And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

1 Cor 8:4-7 we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is no other God but one. For even if there are so-called other gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as there are many gods and many lords), yet for us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live. However there is not in everyone that knowledge

1 Tim 2:5 For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Jesus Christ

James 2:19 You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!

You see, **when you understand that “God” is a kind of being, that changes everything**. And this is critical. This is critical: **the Bible defines “God” as a kind of being**. The Bible defines “God” as a *kind* of being. You look back at **Genesis chapter 1, the word used for “God,”** and used dozens of times throughout the Bible, is *Elohim*. Elohim. That’s E-l-o-h-i-m. **Elohim**. And **it’s a plural word**, so that it includes more than one. Genesis 1:1, or in Genesis 1, it does that. **It includes more than one**. And so with that in mind, you don’t have a problem and Scripture then is consistent. And when we put all of the passages together, we find that **God is a family**. And that family currently consists of the Father and the Son. And we see that consistently throughout the Gospels.

Note: When Elohim is used for God it almost always has a singular verb and modifier. When it is used for something other than God, such as for idols, it is used with a plural verb and modifier. To say that Elohim, when referring to God, includes more than one is simply not true.

The word Adonai, in Hebrew, is almost always plural, yet we would not argue in the same way that it includes more than one. Our explanation of the meaning and use of Elohim is based more on what we believe than it is on the actual meaning and use of the word.

To quote from **our doctrinal study paper, “The Nature of God and Christ,” page 15** it says, *One analogy that help explain the nature of the Godhead is the idea of a family*. This is a quotation. **God can be defined as a family—one God family, although currently consisting of two beings. So our paper is very distinct.**

So when we go back to John 1 we find, *In the beginning was the Word*—the Logos, the word translated from the Greek for *Word* is the Greek “Logos.” And it’s an unusual word. And it’s hard to have a direct equivalent in English. The word “Logos,” it can mean a speech, it could mean a report, or the meaning here, “revelatory agent,” someone who reveals. So you see that’s why sometimes we refer to the Logos as the “Spokesman,” the revelatory agent. **The Word is the being who comes to reveal God. He is the one who comes to reveal the Father. And as we know, Jesus Christ came to reveal the Father.** The apostle John is going to talk about that a little bit later in this chapter. He also talks about it in chapter 5, verse 37. Matthew 11:27 also refers to this. And so the Logos, the Word, the Revelatory Agent, the Spokesman, has come to reveal the Father.

Note: Jesus came to reveal what the Father was like, rather than to reveal that He existed. Jesus came to show, by his own example on behalf of the Father, that God is love.

John 14:7-9 If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him. Phillip said to Him, Lord, show us the father, and it is sufficient for us. Jesus said to him, Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Phillip? He who has seen me has seen the Father

1 John 4:8,16 God is love

Note: The Bible is filled with scriptures that clearly show that God was known to His people.

John 4:22-24 You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.

John 8:39-42 They answered and said to Him, Abraham is our father. Jesus said to them, If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham. But now you seek to kill Me, a Man who has told you the truth which I heard from God. Abraham did not do this. You do the deeds of your father. Then they said to Him, We were not born of fornication; we have one Father—God. Jesus said to them, If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me.

Note: Consider these questions: Whose presence was in the Holy of Holies of the temple? Whose house was it? Who was portrayed as dwelling between the cherubim? Was the blood of the sacrifice on the Day of Atonement placed at the feet of Jesus Christ by the High Priest? Did the people pray and sacrifice to Jesus Christ at the temple in the Old Testament? Did they then pray and sacrifice to Jesus Christ at the temple in the New Testament? Did anything change? Will people pray and sacrifice to Jesus Christ at the temple during the millennium? What did it mean when the curtain in front of the Holy of Holies was torn in two when Christ died?

It was always God the Father whose presence was in the temple and who was worshipped there. Teaching that God the Father was not generally known, even to His own people, is not biblical.

Num 14:14 They have heard that You, LORD, are among these people; that You, LORD, are seen face-to-face and Your cloud stands above them, and You go before them in a pillar of cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night

1 Sam 4:3-11 the ark of the covenant of the LORD...the ark of the covenant of the LORD of hosts, who dwells between the cherubim...the ark of the covenant of God...the ark of the LORD...the ark of God

1 Sam 5:7 The ark of the God of Israel

2 Sam 6:2-9 the ark of God, whose name is called by the Name, the LORD of Hosts, who dwells between the cherubim...the ark...the ark of the LORD

1 Kings 8:9-15,20-21 Nothing was in the ark except the two tablets of stone which Moses put there at Horeb, when the LORD made a covenant with the children of Israel, when they came out of the land of Egypt. And it came to pass, when the priests came out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the LORD, so that the priests could not continue ministering because of the cloud; for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD. Then Solomon spoke: The LORD said He would dwell in the dark cloud. I have surely built You an exalted house, And a place for You to dwell in forever. Then the king turned around and blessed the whole assembly of Israel, while all the assembly of Israel was standing. And he said: Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, who spoke with His mouth to my father David...I have built a temple for the name of the LORD God of Israel. And there I have made a place for the ark, in which is the covenant of the LORD which He made with our fathers, when he brought them out of the land of Egypt.

Note: It was God the Father who spoke to Moses in the tabernacle.

Num 7:89 Now when Moses went into the tabernacle of meeting to speak with Him, he heard the voice of One speaking to him from above the mercy seat that was on the ark of the testimony, from between the two cherubim; thus He spoke to him.

Num 12:6-8 Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I, the LORD, make Myself known to him in a vision; I speak to him in a dream. Not so with My servant Moses; He is faithful in all My house. I speak with him face-to-face, Even plainly, and not in dark sayings; And He sees the form of the LORD

When we look to **verse 2 here in John chapter 1, He was in the beginning with God. This Logos, this Word, this personal being was with God (of course referring to God the Father)**. The Logos was in God's presence, but yet He was distinct from God, and at the same time in fellowship with God. You put all that together and what do you have? It was a relationship between God and the Word—the one who would become Jesus Christ and the Father.

It's interesting that *with* God. John uses the Greek word "pros." P-r-o-s is the word *with*. It's a preposition. It can mean "toward." It can mean "to." It can mean "with." And here it seems to carry the context of coming along side. And it's used with the noun for God. And I think John used it for a very specific reason. If you were to read A.T. Robertson's *Word Pictures of the New Testament* (A.T. Robertson is a Greek scholar), in his commentary on John 1:1 he says this, quote, 'Pros' with the accusative presents a plane of equality and intimacy—face to face with each other." Now imagine that the Word is *with* God. A.T. Robinson would say "on a plane of equality." There was an intimacy. There was a sense of face to face, on the same level. And so here John has gone to great lengths, using this inspired word I believe of "pros," to make it clear that while **the Word was in the presence of God, the Word was also separate from God the Father. And at the same time not inferior to God the Father.**

Note: The Word in the Old Testament was equal to God in existence but He was subordinate to God in authority. He is referred to, in part, as "My Servant" and "My Elect One" (Isaiah 42:1) and "My Shepherd" and "the Man who is My Companion" (Zechariah 13:7). These are clearly subordinate terms.

And **it gets kind of technical here** because some have a tendency to get hung up on the use of a definite article, especially as they look at the literal translations of the Greek. It gets kind of technical here. If you were to look online there is a website called newtestamentgreek.org. These are also things that are found in the appendix of the Doctrinal Study Paper as well, in Appendix A.

Literally in the Greek, John 1, verse 2 says, "He was in beginning with God." Sounds kind of funny, doesn't it? That's why we don't say the literal Greek there. "He was in beginning with God." We sound like a 2-year-old, don't we, when we say that. Well no wonder then. Literally in the Greek there is no definite article there. There is no definite article, *in the beginning*. The "the" isn't there. But we know, when we translate, it needs to be there so that in English it's clear. And it makes sense then in English. And so *He was in the beginning with God*. That makes sense.

Now if you were to look up John 1:1, in the Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry website, it shows a literal Greek translation of John 1:1 would read like this. John 1:1, literally, *In beginning was the Word, and the Word was with the God, and God was the Word*. If we literally take those words from the Greek we have a little bit of a problem in English. Did you catch that? **First there's that issue of *In beginning was the Word, we don't talk like that, but it also says the Word was with "the" God. Now some people try to make a big deal about "the God," as if that has some kind of special connotation.***

Here's the challenge if we take this literally: who is "the God" then? Well if we literally take the Greek, *...the Word was with the God and God was the Word...* Well we know the Father isn't the Word, right?

So to make too much over this definite article...you would have to say that “the God is the Word.” Did you catch that? But that’s not what it’s saying. It’s saying, *In beginning was the Word*. A very simple statement that the Word was right there from eternity. And the Word was with the God. In other words, the Word was with God the Father. And God was the Word. English? This same Word was God—not the Father—but also God. And so **we have to be very careful in making too much out of a definite article. Out of the word “the.”** You could check some of these things out in the *Greek New Testament Insert* by Benjamin Chapman, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament based on Semantic Domains* by J.P. Louw. Some interesting study in those works as well.

There’s another quotation that uses this a little later on that we’re probably all familiar with that would get into trouble if you literally use those definite articles. We probably all remember the story of Doubting Thomas. He wasn’t going to believe that Jesus was resurrected unless he saw His hands, the holes, the wounds. What happens in John chapter 20 when Thomas sees it for himself? Well in **John chapter 20, verse 28**—you don’t need to turn there because you know this—**Thomas answers Jesus Christ and he says to Him, My Lord and my God! “My Lord and My God!” Now do you know what the Greek literally says? Literally in the Greek Thomas says to Jesus, “The Lord of me and the God of me!”** Now is he saying that Jesus is the Father? No, he’s not. That would be silly. If “the” was referring to “the Father,” shouldn’t have Jesus corrected Thomas? Should He say, “Thomas, don’t talk like that.” He should have said, “Thomas, I’m not the God.” But Jesus didn’t correct him because that would be silly. Because the meaning was “The Lord of me” and “My Lord and my God.” That’s what Thomas meant. And Jesus understood that very thing.

Note: The use of “ho” with “Theos” in John 20, in reference to Jesus, is required by Greek grammar and is not the same as “ton” with “Theon” in John 1:1-2, in reference to the Father. Jesus is God, but He is not “the God”. The God, is the Father.

And so when we put this together with John 1:1 we find, *(T)he Word was with God* (the one who became the Father) *and the Word* (Himself) *was God*. The Word was not the God who became the Father, but yet He was still God. Hopefully that becomes a little bit clearer. Let’s move to Point #3.

Point #3: The Creator

Point #3 leads us to the fact of the Creator. Point #3 is the Creator. If you’re still here in John chapter 1, verse 3 points to the Creator. **John chapter 1, verse 3, it says, All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. So John points out everything that God created came into existence through the one who became Jesus Christ.** And He wasn’t just talking about the physical universe, but also the spirit or the angelic realm, the angelic world. He made everything that exists—except for the Father and for Himself. Those are the only things He didn’t make, because the two of them existed eternally. They are un-created beings. They existed before time began. They existed outside of time. They existed before the physical universe.

Note: The fact that God created through Jesus Christ is not in question, though that is only expressed in the New Testament, and neither is there any question as to the eternal existence of Jesus Christ. But in scripture, the term “Creator” is always a reference to God the Father. It is a reference to the originator of the creation. It is a reference to, of whom are all things, rather than, through whom are all things (1 Corinthians 8:4-6).

Of the five uses of the term “Creator” in the NKJ (one additional use is in italics), four are verbs, describing actions, and one (1 Peter 4:19) is a noun. This last instance is the only time the term “ktistes” is used and it is used in the sense of a founder, or a creator (biblehub.com). A founder is the originator rather than any who then follow.

1 Cor 8:6 yet for us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him, and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live.

1 Peter 4:19 Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.

See Appendix E – The Creator God

And so as we consider what John says, let's confirm the fact of who is this being. And as we do this we'll certainly recognize **it was Jesus Christ who was and is Creator**. In fact, there's a little pneumatic device that helps us to remember these things. **John 1 says, ³All things were made through Him...nothing was made that was made**, except through Jesus Christ. John 1:1, or John 1:3 says that.

Colossians 1 also says that. You could write down **Colossians 1:16**. You don't need to turn there. The context is clearly talking about Jesus Christ. It says, **For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth**. So the apostle Paul was inspired to write much the same thought that John wrote. He created the heaven, the universe, the planets, the stars, the galaxy. In fact, not just the physical planet Earth. In Colossians he goes on to say even more. In Colossians he says he created the *visible and [the] invisible*. It says, *...whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers*.

You see, Jesus Christ created not just the physical universe, not just the earth and the sky and the planets and the galaxies, but He also created, we might call it, the invisible universe as well. And what would that be? Well we call it the spirit world. Paul uses the phrase "dominions or principalities or powers." And he uses that in a number of different places in his writings to talk about the angelic world. And so you could check those things out in Colossians chapter 2, verse 10, or Ephesians chapter 1, verse 21. He's talking about arch angels. He is talking about the cherubim, the seraphim and other kinds of spirit beings. And **Colossians 1:16** very specifically says, **All things were created through Him and for Him**.

And so we see Jesus Christ is the one who created all of this. He created all things in the physical universe and in the angelic, or the spirit realm as well. In fact Colossians says, ¹⁷*He is before all things, and in Him all things consist*. Or, in other words, He existed before all these things began. Does that sound vaguely familiar? Well it sounds like John 1:1, "In the beginning..." *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God*. And since He created all of these things, well He obviously had to exist before these things were created. And of course Colossians goes on to tell us that, ¹⁸*He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the first born from the dead* (That can only be talking about Christ.), *that in all things He may have the preeminence*. So here we see it's plainly talking about Jesus Christ. And so we see that in John 1. We see that in Colossians 1.

Note: Again, there is no question as to God having created all things through Jesus Christ. The question is simply, who is being referred to in scripture when the term "Creator" is used.

If you'd like to turn to Hebrews 1. Hebrews 1:1 says much the same thing. Notice what Hebrews chapter 1, verse 1, says. **Hebrews chapter 1, verse 1. It says, God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, verse 2, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son. You see that's important because who has spoken? The Son has spoken. Jesus the Word, the Spokesman. He has spoken to us by His Son**, and it says, *...whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds*.

Note: Hebrews 1:1-2 states that God the Father, at various times and in various ways, spoke to the fathers by the prophets and He is now speaking to us by Jesus Christ. The Father was directly involved with His servants and with His people and not off at a distance. The prophets certainly knew who was working with them and through them.

Also, we need to use Bible terms to explain the Bible. At some point an analogy, or a descriptive phrase such as Jesus is the Spokesman, becomes a doctrinal statement and takes on a life of its own. Jesus is not called the Spokesman in scripture. That is our descriptive term. Describing Jesus as God's Spokesman can leave us imagining that God never actually spoke for Himself.

Ex 33:11 So the LORD spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend

Num 12:6-8 Then He said, Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I, the LORD, make Myself known to him in a vision; I speak to him in a dream. Not so with My servant Moses; He is faithful in all My house. I speak with him face to face, Even plainly, and not in dark sayings; And he sees the form of the LORD.

Neh 9:30 Yet for many years You had patience with them, And testified against them by Your Spirit in Your prophets. Yet they would not listen; Therefore You gave them into the hand of the peoples of the lands.

Ps 33:7,9 By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, And all the host of them by the breath of His mouth...For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.

Zech 7:11-12 But they refused to heed, shrugged their shoulders, and stopped their ears so that they could not hear. Yes, they made their hearts like flint, refusing to hear the law and the words which the LORD of hosts had sent by His Spirit through the former prophets. Thus great wrath came from the LORD of hosts.

Luke 1:46-49,54-55 And Mary said: My soul magnifies the Lord, And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant; For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed. For He who is mighty has done great things for me, And holy is His name...He has helped His servant Israel, In remembrance of His mercy, As He spoke to our fathers, To Abraham and to His seed forever.

Luke 1:68-73 Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited and redeemed His people, And has raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of His servant David, As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, Who have been since the world began, That we should be saved from our enemies And from the hand of all who hate us, To perform the mercy promised to our fathers And to remember His holy covenant, The oath which He swore to our father Abraham

John 9:29 We know that God spoke to Moses; as for this fellow, we do not know where He is from

Heb 1:1-2 God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son

So we're plainly told that the world, the universe, not just world, but **the worlds**, plural, both the physical and the spirit realm, **were made by the Father through the Son, Jesus Christ**. And so when we put all of these things together it becomes very clear. Jesus Christ existed from eternity, in the beginning with God the Father. And as A.T. Robertson said, "In equality and intimacy, face to face with each other." But it seems **at that time they weren't in a Father/Son relationship**. So John refers to them as God and the Word. Both were God. **The Father and Son relationship wouldn't begin until the Word became flesh as the Son of God.**

Note: This is true, but it conflicts with the earlier statement that "God is a family". Our historical teaching is that God (in existence) is a family which means that God has always been a family. In reality, God the Father has a family. Jesus was a begotten Son by birth and a born Son by the resurrection. The angels are sons of God by creation, but not by birth.

Acts 13:33 God has fulfilled this for us their children, in that He raised up Jesus. As it is also written in the second Psalm: You are My son, Today I have begotten You.

Rom 1:3-4 His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.

Heb 1:5 For to which of the angels did He ever say: You are My Son, Today I have begotten You? And again: I will be to Him a Father, And He shall be to Me a Son?

Rev 1:5 Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth.

And so these three sections, John 1, Colossians 1, Hebrews 1—they all tell us. John 1 says, *All things were made through Him*. Colossians 1 says, ¹*By Him all things were created*. Hebrews 1 says, ²*...through whom also (God the Father), made the worlds*. And so, yes, **the Father is the Creator, but Jesus Christ is also the Creator**, the one through whom the actual work of creating was accomplished.

Note: Again, there is no question that God the Father created all things through Jesus Christ. The issue from scripture is regarding who is being referenced when the term Creator is used. It is always a reference to God the Father.

Now, if we go back to John 1, we see something else that's quite remarkable. Go back to John 1 for a moment and in fact we'll see something that's crucial. It's crucial. And this is Point #4.

Point #4: No one has seen God

Point #4, going back to **John 1, verse 18. No one has seen God. That's exactly what John 1:18 says. It says, No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.** So what is John telling us? **Well, it clearly says no one has seen God at any time.** And John just got done explaining he was a personal eye-witness of Jesus Christ. So can he be talking about Jesus? OK that wouldn't make sense. He can't be talking about Jesus or the Word. **Well, who is the God who no one has ever seen at any time?** Well it can only be referring to the Father. It can only be referring to the Father because John is plainly telling us, **"No one has [ever] seen God [the Father] at any time."** And then he also says that Jesus Christ "declared" the Father. Some of the other translations like the NRSV or the NIV translate this as saying, "Jesus Christ has made Him known." Or other translations say, "have revealed Him." Jesus Christ revealed Him.

Note: Stephen saw God the Father.

Acts 7:54-56 But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, and said, Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.

See Appendix F – The Invisible God

Now, if God the Father was the God known during the Old Testament period, if God the Father was the one with Israel, why would Jesus need to make Him known? Why would Jesus need to declare Him if the people back then already knew the one who would be the Father all along? Well that wouldn't make sense. That would not make sense. There is no need to reveal the Father if the Father was already commonly known back over 2,000 years before this, going back to Abraham or even before that, back to Noah, or back to Adam.

Note: The list of specific references to the Father in the Old Testament is so exhaustive that it is hard to imagine it can even be considered that He was unknown. There are eighty to ninety or more references in the New Testament that are quotes from the Old Testament where both God and Christ are shown in relationship to each other and every single one of them refers to the Father as YHWH, while not one of them refers to Christ as YHWH.

Matt 21:9 Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD (Ps 118:26)

Matt 21:42 The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone. This was the LORD'S doing (Ps 118:22-23)

Matt 22:44 The LORD said to my Lord, Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool (Ps 110:1)

Luke 4:18 The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor (Isa 61:1)

Acts 3:22 The LORD you God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from among your brethren (Deut 18:15)

Acts 4:26 the rulers were gathered together Against the LORD and against His Christ (Ps 2:2)

1 Cor 2:16 who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ (Isa 40:13)

See Appendix G – The Father As LORD

Note: Both God the Father and Jesus Christ were known during the Old Testament period. There is the Angel of the LORD and there is the LORD. The Angel, or Messenger, is not the Messenger of Himself.

The Father was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Israel), the God of the fathers of the Jews (Acts 3:13; 5:30; 7:31-32; 24:14). He was known to David (Psalm 110:1) and also to the prophets (Hebrews 1:1). He was the God whose presence was in the Holy of Holies of the tabernacle and then later in the temple. It was also God the Father (the living God) who spoke the commandments to Israel and then made covenant with them (Deuteronomy 6:22-27).

Jesus said that the Jews knew who they worshipped, and it was the Father, and true worshippers would worship the Father as well (John 4:21-24). Stating that the Father was not generally known in the Old Testament is simply not supported by scripture.

Gen 14:18-23 Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High. And he blessed him and said: Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; And blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand. And he gave him a tithe of all. Now the king of Sodom said to Abram, Give me the persons, and take the goods for yourself. But Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have raised my hand to the LORD, God Most High, the Possessor of heaven and earth, that I will take nothing

Acts 2:29-32 Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption. This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses.

Acts 3:22-26 For Moses truly said to the fathers, The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear in all things, whatever He says to you. And it shall be that every soul who will not hear that Prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people. Yes, and all the prophets, from Samuel and those who follow, as many as have spoken, have also foretold these days. You are sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed. To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities.

You see one thing that is so critical is that we have got to keep in mind, who's writing this, and when is it being written? Well, **this is written by the apostle John. He is writing this gospel and he's writing his epistles almost 20 years or so after the rest of the books of the Bible have already been written.** He's writing about 20 years after the rest of the books of the Bible have already been written. So John is probably, most likely, the last remaining apostle, or at least very close to it. And John gives us these deep theological explanations in his writings that we don't see in the other writings of the Bible. The other writers don't deal with these things. And so what does John plainly tell us? **He plainly tells us, ¹⁸No one has seen God (the Father) at any time. At any time.**

Note: Again, Stephen saw God the Father. The point being made by John is that God had never at any time appeared in the flesh and that is true. Only Jesus Christ had done that. God does not appear as One like the Son of Man (Daniel 7:13) and certainly not as the Son of Man. Only Jesus Christ is described that way.

In fact this isn't the only time that John says this. You could write down 1 John 4:12. **1 John 4:12** he makes the exact same statement, **No one has seen God at any time.** Clearly talking about the Father. And so we have two explicit statements, from the last surviving apostle (also the last of the Biblical writers) telling us that no one has seen the Father. Now was John the only one to teach this? No. Anybody else talked about this? Yes. Jesus Christ Himself taught the same thing.

Look over to John 5, verse 37. John chapter 5, verse 37, we see a crucial comment that's made here in John chapter 5, verse 37. Of course if you've got a red-letter Bible you'll see whose words these are. These are the words of Jesus Christ Himself. And **John 5:37** says (this is Christ speaking), *And the Father Himself, who sent Me, has testified of Me. Jesus says, You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form. Could Christ be any clearer than that? You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form. Now some people try to get around this by saying well Jesus was only talking to the people of that time. Ok, you could try to fudge a little bit and try to make that argument, but this doesn't change all the other points in the Bible that say the exact same thing.* That explicitly state that no one has ever seen the Father at any time.

Note: Indeed, the people Jesus was speaking to had never heard God's voice nor seen His form. Jesus made that very clear. But He never said "no one" had ever heard God's voice. Why do we continue to teach that? Why do we continue to force scripture in that way? Why is it a fudge to agree with what Christ said, but not a fudge to change His words to mean something entirely different?

Matt 3:17 a voice came from heaven, saying, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

Matt 17:5-6 a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him! And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid.

2 Peter 1:16-18 For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.

If you turn a page or so over to John chapter 6, verse 46. Look at John chapter 6, verse 46. Here's Jesus once again says, *[No one] has seen the Father, except [the one] who is from God; [only] He has seen the Father.* So **if you were to ask Christ, "Who has seen the Father?" What would the answer be? "No one—except Me."** No one except the one that is from God. Christ was referring to Himself. He is the only one who has seen the Father. **No human being has ever seen the Father. So the very clear, plain teaching of Jesus Christ Himself is that no one has directly seen the Father or heard His voice. That's Jesus' plain teaching. What was John's plain teaching? John said exactly the same thing: no man has seen God the Father at any time. So it becomes very plain, very clear.** Which brings us to Point #5.

Note: Again, Stephen saw God the Father. And also again, Jesus never taught that "no one" had ever heard the Father's voice. Why do we insist on continually repeating this error? We are losing credibility with people who read the Bible to see what it says rather than for what we say it says. Worse, in our teaching, we are distorting the record of scripture.

Point #5: Which God interacted with human beings in the Old Testament?

Point #5: Which God interacted with human beings in the Old Testament? Which God interacted with Human beings in the Old Testament? Because we read John 1 and it said, "In the beginning was the Word and God." The one who would become Jesus Christ and one who would become known as the Father. So which God interacted with human beings in the Old Testament? Is there some dilemma then in the Old Testament? Because, certainly **throughout the Old Testament, we see a number of people who say they saw God. They saw God. So who did they see? What God, or should we say, which God did they see** when they saw God throughout these Old Testament passages?

Note: This entire sermon seems to pivot most heavily on the interpretation of the words "see" or "saw" or "seen" or "appeared" as meaning a visual identification of a Being in human form. This is an interpretation that is being forced on the text and is not required by either the Hebrew or the Greek. It is an attempt to take a single point that is repeated in scripture and interpret it in a way that literally violates hundreds of other scriptures. We should be seeking to understand in a way that recognizes the harmony of scripture rather than in a way that explains away scripture.

Well, let's look at a few of them. **What about the God that appeared to Abraham?** What about the God that appeared to Abraham? Well let's go to **Genesis chapter 12, verse 7.** Genesis chapter 12, verse 7. Here we have God appearing to Abraham. Notice what it says in Genesis chapter 12, verse 7. It says, *Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said...* Now of course "the LORD" here, most likely in your Bible in your translation is the "LORD" with all capital letters. That's the tetragrammaton. That's the YHWH. Yahweh. *The LORD appeared to Abram and says...* **So who is this God? Who is this Yahweh?** Who is this YHWH? Well, this LORD says, *"To your descendants I will give this land." And there he built an altar to the LORD (all caps), who had appeared to him.* Okay, so we have the LORD appearing to Abraham.

See Appendix H – The God Of Abraham

Now a couple of pages later, **Genesis 15, verse 1**, it says, all right, this is a vision. ...*the LORD came to Abrahajm in a vision*. Or Abram in a vision. What does he see? It says, *After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, “Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, [and] your exceedingly great reward.”* They go on to have a conversation in this vision and **it explicitly says it’s a vision**. Now that’s important because in the other passages where the LORD, the YHWH, appears to Abram or to Abraham it’s not in a vision. This time it is in a vision. But it doesn’t say that in the other occurrences. **So what is the implication then? The other occurrences aren’t in a vision. The LORD, the capital L-O-R-D, was literally standing there, sitting there, sometimes eating there with Abraham.**

Note: An implication is not proof of anything. An implication is an interpretation. Again, neither the Hebrew nor the Greek words for “see” or “saw” or “seen” or “appeared” require it to be a visual identification of a Being in human form.

See Appendix I – The Friend Of God

Genesis 18, verse 1. Here God, the LORD, appears again to Abraham. Notice what it says in Genesis 18, right at the very beginning of the chapter. Genesis 18, verse 1. Once again, **[T]he LORD, the YHWH, appeared to him by the terebinth trees of Mamre, as he was sitting in the tent door in the heat of the day**. Then this passage goes on to describe something significant. Well what does it describe? It describes a meal that they had together. Verse 2 it says, **[H]e lifted his eyes...three men were standing by him**; And what does Abraham say? Verse 5, he says, *I will bring a morsel of bread, that you may refresh your hearts*. And So, verse 6, *Abraham hurried to the tent to Sarah and said... “We’re going to be the first McDonald’s on the block. We need some fast food. Whip this together quickly.”* And so he hurried. So we have the first account of fast food in the Bible. Was this a vision? No, this was a real encounter. This was a real, physical encounter with the LORD, with the YHWH. There is no way you can eat lunch with a vision—only with a real person, a real being. And so that being, that **Yahweh, had lunch with Abraham**. And we see that very clearly.

Note: Again, the record of scripture is consistent. This passage is not going to conflict with the multitude of other passages that are in harmony and declare the identity and function of both God and Jesus Christ. That the LORD here is one of the three men is an interpretation. In the account, the LORD appeared to Abraham and then Abraham looked up and saw three men. Since the LORD had already appeared to him, he wouldn’t then have had to look up to see the LORD. This passage cannot be used as a defining example that negates the record of literally hundreds of other passages.

See Appendix J – The LORD And The Three Men

Now from Abraham let’s move to Isaac, because God also appeared to Isaac. Fast forward a little bit to **Genesis chapter 26, verse 2**. Genesis 26, verse 2. **Here we have the capital L-O-R-D, the YHWH, appeared to Isaac** and said, *Do not go down to Egypt; live in the land of which I shall [give] you*. Little bit farther down, look at **verse 24 in Genesis 26**. **The LORD (the YHWH) appeared to him the same night and said, “I am the God of your father Abraham; do not fear, for I am with you. I will bless you and multiply your descendants for My servant Abraham’s sake.” Same Being? Yup, same one.** “I am the One.” He says it very clearly. **So we have Abraham, and Isaac appearing with Yahweh, with the YHWH.**

Note: The identity of the God of Abraham and Isaac is clearly stated in scripture. It is God the Father. There is not a scripture in the Bible that states that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is Jesus Christ. This is no small matter. John 17:3 states “And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent”. To deny that God is who He has revealed Himself to be, and to teach others to do the same, is very consequential.

But what about Jacob? Because we had Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. We’ll go to chapter 28, Genesis chapter 28. We have God appearing to Jacob. Verse 13. **Genesis 28:13.** *[B]ehold, the LORD stood above it and said: “I am the LORD God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants.* And then it continues on with this vision of the ladder, or this stairway. You’re probably familiar with that account. **So who is this YHWH, this capital L-O-R-D? Well it’s the same one that appeared to Abraham, the same one that appeared to Isaac. And in fact, chapter 32, verse 30, we have the famous account of Jacob wrestling with God. Wrestling with God. Well do you wrestle with a vision? No, you wrestle with a being.** You wrestle with a being. So in Genesis chapter 32, verse 30, after the account, *Jacob call[s] the name of the place Peniel. ...Peniel: “For I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.”* You see, that was the LORD that appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. He saw Him face to face—not in a vision—face to face. In fact, a couple chapters later, in chapter 35, verse 9, is where God appears again and changes Jacob’s name to Israel. Changes his name to Israel. You see, **we’re talking about a literal being here.** And in fact it wasn’t just to Abraham, not just to Isaac, not just to Jacob. We could fast forward to Moses.

Note: Again, the identity of the God of Jacob (Israel) is clearly stated in scripture. The phrase, the God of Israel, is used about two hundred times in scripture and it is always a reference to the Father. Jesus Christ is God and Jacob did wrestle with the Malak of YHWH. In any language, the one who is sent is not also the one who is the sender.

Ex 34:23 Three times in the year all your men shall appear before the Lord, the LORD God of Israel

1 Sam 5:1-8 the ark of God...the ark of the LORD...the ark of the God of Israel

1 Kings 8:15,20-21 Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, who spoke with His mouth to my father David...and I have built a temple for the name of the LORD God of Israel. And there I have made a place for the ark, in which is the covenant of the LORD which He made with our fathers, when He brought them out of the land of Egypt

2 Kings 19:15-16 Then Hezekiah prayed before the LORD, and said: O LORD God of Israel, the One who dwells between the cherubim, You are God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth...the living God

1 Chron 29:10 Blessed are You, LORD God of Israel, our Father, forever and ever

2 Chron 30:1 Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah, and also wrote letters to Ephraim and Manasseh, they should come to the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, to keep the Passover to the LORD God of Israel

Isa 45:15 Truly You are God, who hide Yourself, O God of Israel, the Savior!

Ezek 11:22 So the cherubim lifted up their wings, with the wheels beside them, and the glory of the God of Israel was high above them

Note: There are elements of this argument being made against the record of God the Father in scripture and His direct and personal involvement in His creation that do not come from just reading the text. You have to actually be taught that God is not who He says He is, and that He did not personally say “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased”, and that it was not His voice that was heard. If you were to read the story of Jesus’ baptism, or of the transfiguration, to a child, and then ask him who was speaking, he would get the right answer.

Go to the book of Exodus. Exodus chapter 3, look at verse 6. **Exodus chapter 3, verse 6, we have Moses seeing God. Well, we have to ask, “Which God is this?” Which God is this? Well Moses saw God.** Exodus chapter 3, verse 6, that God speaks: *Moreover He said, “I am the God of your father.”* Well what God is that? Well He says, “[T]he God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” *Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God.* You see, very specifically He identifies Himself as the same being, the same God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The same God that interacted with them. In fact, a couple verses down, verse 13, *Moses said to God, “Indeed, when I come to the children of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they say to me, ‘What is His name?’ what shall I say to them?”* Moses is being very precise here. ¹⁴*And God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And He said, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”* So who is this God, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, the God that appeared to Moses and tells Moses **His name is “I AM WHO I AM” or just simply “I AM?”** Who is this God?

Note: Again, scripture is consistent. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in Exodus 3 is the same God as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in Acts 3. There is not a single verse in the Bible that states that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is Jesus Christ.

What this account actually states is that the Angel of the LORD appeared to Moses and then God spoke to Moses. That the God who spoke to Moses was not Jesus is made clear by Jesus Himself in Mark 12:26-27. There Jesus refers to the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob in Exodus 3 as God and then refers to Him as “He”. The Angel of the LORD is not the LORD. He is not the Messenger of Himself.

Additionally, Exodus 3 states that the name of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is I AM WHO I AM or I AM. God told Moses to tell the Egyptians “I AM has sent me to you”. By contrast, Jesus never said that his name was I AM. Jesus did say “before Abraham was, I AM” (John 8:58). As is stated at the beginning of Steve’s sermon, “I AM apparently denotes eternal and self-inherent existence”. In John 8, Jesus was making a statement in regard to his existence, rather than in regard to His name. He was stating that He had always existed, that He was not created. He was stating He was like the God of Exodus 3, rather than He was the God of Exodus 3.

See Appendix K – The Burning Bush

Well it’s the same God a little bit later in Exodus 33 that Moses sees again. And in fact God puts him in the cleft of a rock and passes by and so Moses looks upon His back—the LORD’s back, Yahweh, the capital L-O-R-D’s back. But **he clearly saw Him. And it’s also interesting that this L-O-R-D spoke directly to Moses.** In fact, if you look at Exodus 33, verse 11. **Exodus 33, verse 11, it says clearly the YHWH, the capital L-O-R-D, spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend.** So Moses and God spoke directly to one another, face to face. This God, who would ultimately become Jesus Christ, spoke to one another face to face. We’ll see that come even more clearly. In fact, right now we’ve got a pattern going. We see well He appeared to Abraham, He appeared to Isaac, He appeared to Jacob—it seems to be a one-at-a-time kind of thing. But is that the only examples there are? That just one person at a time God appeared to?

Note: God did indeed speak to Moses. That is what the Bible says. God said He would speak to Moses from a thick cloud (Exodus 19:9; 33:9). If that was Christ, why would He need to speak to Moses from a thick cloud if He was going to sit down and have dinner with him later? Exodus 33 includes two examples of God speaking to Moses. In verse 11, God spoke to Moses face-to-face and then in verse 20 He said “you cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live”. If Moses had actually seen God’s face in verse 11 then he wouldn’t have been around to hear God’s voice in verse 20. We are simply going to have to be willing to look at the entire record of scripture and not just some specific proof texts of our choosing.

To speak to God face-to-face means God was directly present but it does not mean God was visible in the flesh. To see God’s face means to see Him in His glory. These two references are only nine verses apart and neither conflicts with the understanding that the Being who addressed Moses was God the Father. God the Father never appeared in the flesh. Only Christ was the Son of Man or like the Son of Man.

Dan 7:13 I was watching in the night visions, And behold, One like the Son of Man, Coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, And they brought Him near before Him.

Matt 12:40 For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

Matt 26:64 Jesus said to him, It is as you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.

Acts 7:56 Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!

Well there’s a fascinating event that we’re just coming up on in chapter 24. Exodus chapter 24, verse 9. Exodus chapter 24, verse 9. This happens after the 10 Commandments, after they are going to confirm the Covenant. We find an interesting occurrence. Notice what happens here. This is just after the 10 Commandments. The Covenant is going to be confirmed. **Exodus chapter 24, verse 9, it says, Moses went up, also Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel.** So we got a whole group of people here. What did they see? Now look at verse 10: **and they saw the God of Israel. And there was under His feet as it were a paved work of sapphire stone, and it was like the very heavens in its clarity.¹¹ But on the nobles of the children of Israel He did not lay His hand. So they saw God, and they ate and drank.** So here we don’t just have Abraham; we don’t just have Moses; we don’t just have Aaron. We have the seventy elders of Israel and **they not only saw God, but they ate and they drank with Him.** So Moses records this amazing event and of course oftentimes when a covenant was made there was a feast that was followed when a covenant was made.

Note: It does not say that God ate and drank with them. What justifies the text being stretched in this way? God here is appearing either in a vision, or in some limited way. He is not appearing in the flesh and He is not appearing in His full glory. We could not even look on Jesus Christ in His full glory. Just looking directly at the sun would cause serious injury to any of us.

And so what we find here is **this was a real thing.** This wasn’t an imagined event. This wasn’t just a vision. **It wasn’t some kind of a mass hallucination. This was reality.** And over and over again we find this in Scripture. And not only through the time of the Exodus. We could turn to Joshua and the LORD, the YHWH, appears to Joshua. Joshua 6, verse 2. I won’t turn there. We could also turn to Gideon. Gideon sees the capital L-O-R-D. Judges chapter 6, verse 14, as well. And as we consider all of these meetings...yes, two of them are visions (one with Jacob, one with Abraham). But there is no doubt—these were face-to-face encounters with God. **Abraham had a meal with the LORD. The seventy elders ate and drank with the YHWH. Jacob wrestled with God face to face.**

Note: Moses had a face-to-face encounter with the God who told him he could not see His face. Are we even trying to arrive at the truth or are we just defending our historical position? Our understanding of Genesis 17 is an interpretation and to say that God, the LORD, sat down and ate and drank with the seventy elders of Israel is an interpretation plus a little more. Yes, Jacob wrestled with a Man, an Angel or Messenger, who we believe was Jesus Christ and who is God.

Ok. What about John 1:18 that we read? What about John 6:46? What about 1 John 4, verse 12? They all say no one has seen God at any time. Could that YHWH have been the Father? There is no way that could be the Father! It's impossible! It cannot be God the Father. So what God was that? It was not the Father. It could only be the One who became Jesus Christ. It was the Word of God, who was God and later was born as Jesus of Nazareth.

Note: It is not impossible. Again, Stephen saw God the Father.

It was the Father who made the covenant with Abraham (Acts 3:25-26). It was the living God (the Father) who spoke the 10 commandments to Israel (Deuteronomy 5:22-27). It was the Father who swore an oath to David (Acts 2:29-30). It was the Father who spoke to the fathers of Israel by the prophets (Hebrews 1:1). It was the Father whose presence was in the Holy of Holies, both of the tabernacle and the temples, and to whom the people offered sacrifices and prayed (Malachi 1:6-14; 1 Samuel 4:4; John 2:16-17). It is the Father who is referenced as YHWH eighty to ninety or more times in the New Testament, in quotes from the Old Testament, in relationship to Jesus Christ. In those same passages, Jesus Christ is not referred to as YHWH even once.

If you read about this in **our Doctrinal Study Paper**, “The Nature of God and Christ,” page 68 says this, quote, *If John could state in the first century that no one had seen God at any time, then with whom was Abraham speaking, walking and eating in Genesis 18? The Scriptures clearly state that Abraham was doing all [of] these things with YHWH. If there is but one being identified as God and no one has seen Him at any time, there is a dilemma. But, it goes on, The dilemma is cleared up when one comes to understand that the YHWH who appeared to Abraham was the one who became Jesus Christ and He came to reveal the Father.* End quote. **Our doctrinal paper** on page 12 also says, *...there are numerous references in the Old Testament to a being identified as YHWH or El who cannot be God the Father.* Scripture is clear. **Our Doctrinal Paper is clear. That YHWH that appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, to Jacob, to Moses, to the seventy, Nadab and Abihu—that was the one who became Jesus Christ.**

Point #6: The Angel of the LORD

Now it also brings us to another interesting aspect, to Point #6. Point #6. Let's talk for a moment about the “Angel of the LORD.” The Angel of the LORD. There are also times in the Old Testament when a being appears and speaks with people and that being is identified as the Angel of the LORD. **The Angel of the YHWH, the capital L-O-R-D. Now it's interesting in most cases, a few verses later, the Angel of the LORD, the L-O-R-D, is actually called “the LORD,” the YHWH.** And of course you have to remember in Hebrew, the word translated “angel” is melek, m-e-l-e-k, melek. You know what the literal translation for “melek” is? “Messenger.” Messenger. It can be a human messenger or it can be a spirit messenger, a messenger of God. **You see in these cases, both the Angel of the LORD, or the Messenger of God, is also God, is also YHWH.** And so, what does the apostle John call the being who was born human as Jesus Christ? John 1:1 calls Him, the Word, the Spokesman, the Messenger. The Messenger. That obvious link between the Messenger of God, the Angel of God and the Word and the Spokesman—**it's undeniable. It is undeniable.**

Note: Again, in any language, the one who is sent is not also the one who is the sender. The Messenger of YHWH is not YHWH. Jesus Christ did not send Himself.

In fact, Stephen, the deacon Stephen, who later was martyred, makes this very connection in Acts chapter 7. You can just write this down. He connects the Angel who spoke to Moses with the One who spoke the 10 Commandments. **Our Doctrinal Paper deals with this** on page 17. Here's what it says, quote:

Note carefully that Stephen equates the Angel who spoke to Moses with the one who spoke the Ten Commandments from Mount Sinai. Stephen's equating of the Angel ([the] Messenger) who spoke the Ten Commandments to the children of Israel from Mount Sinai is verified by Moses: "And God (Elohim) spoke all these words, saying: 'I am the LORD [All caps] (YHWH) your God (Elohim), who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.'" That's our Doctrinal Paper quoting Exodus 20. The Paper goes on, quote: These verses clearly reveal that the one who thundered the Ten Commandments is the same Angel (the same Angelos, the same Messenger) that Stephen refers to in Acts 7:37-39. And that Messenger is none other than the one who became Jesus Christ. Our Paper says, The point of Stephen's discourse is that the Prophet who was prophesied to come was none other than Jesus Christ.

Note: Stephen states that God (the Father) would (one day) raise up Jesus Christ, and that the Angel (Jesus Christ) spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai. Stephen did not say that the Angel spoke the 10 commandments to Israel as that would have been in direct conflict with Deuteronomy 5:22-27 where it states the LORD who spoke to Israel and whose voice they heard, was the living God. Clearly, "The LORD your God", YHWH, whom Moses said would raise up Jesus Christ, could not also, at the same time, be Jesus Christ, and the One who became the Son of the living God could not also be the living God.

See Appendix L – The Living God

Note: The answer that is currently being offered in an attempt to resolve this conflict, that God and Jesus Christ are pretty much both everything, is simply not in accordance with scripture. There are titles and references which God and Christ have in common, and there are titles and references that are specific and unique. Christ is not the Messenger of Himself and He is not the Son of Himself.

Acts 7:37-39 This is that Moses who said to the children of Israel, The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear. This is he who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the Angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and with our fathers, the one who received the living oracles to give to us, whom our fathers would not obey, but rejected.

That's Acts chapter 7, verses 52 and 53. So what do we make of this? Well, the Angel, or the Messenger of God, who also is the God who appeared to Abraham and to Isaac and to Jacob and to Moses and the others in the Old Testament, is undoubtedly the one who became Christ. Undoubtedly. **Jesus was the YHWH in these cases, the LORD or the God of the Old Testament period.** The one who became Jesus. The one who interacted with Adam and Eve, with Cain and Abel. The one who interacted with Noah and Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and Moses and the Israelites and Joshua and David—it's the same one. Because they neither saw the Father—only the one who would be born as Emmanuel, the Word, God with Us. This God, the Word, was born as **Jesus Christ and came to reveal the Father. John testifies to that. Jesus Christ Himself testifies to that. And the people of Jesus' day testified to that very fact as well,** that that's what He taught. And this is critical, point #7.

Note: Again, Jesus came to reveal what the Father was like, not to reveal that He existed.

In the beginning of the book of Matthew, an angel came to Joseph and told him the LORD, YHWH, would fulfill His prophecy and grant them a Son (Matthew 1:20-23; Isaiah 7:13-14). Then later, when Herod inquired of Jesus' birth to the chief priests and the scribes, they told him the LORD, YHWH, had prophesied that He would raise up from Bethlehem, a shepherd for His (YHWH'S) people Israel and that He (Jesus) would shepherd in the power of the LORD, YHWH, His God (Matthew 2:1-6; Micah 5:2-5).

A similar account at the beginning of the book of Luke records that the angel Gabriel told Mary her Son Jesus would be "the Son of the Highest", "the Son of God" (Luke 1:26-35). Mary then visited Elizabeth and referred to God the Father as "God my Savior" and stated He was helping "His servant Israel, In remembrance of His mercy, As He spoke to our fathers, To Abraham and to His seed forever" (Luke 1:46-55).

The same thread then continues with Zacharias' prophecy regarding the birth of John. He stated "Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited and redeemed His people, And has raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of His servant David, As he spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, Who have been since the world began". He then referred to John as "the prophet of the Highest" (Luke 1:68-76).

Then after the birth of Jesus, an angel appeared to the shepherds in the fields and with him was "a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!" After the shepherds saw Jesus for themselves, they went "glorifying God for all the things that they had heard and seen" (Luke 2:8-20).

Then, when the days of Mary's purification were complete, Joseph and Mary brought Jesus to Jerusalem to present Him to the LORD, YHWH, and Simeon praised God that he had seen the Lord's Christ, and then he took Jesus up into his arms and blessed God for his having seen His salvation before he died (Luke 2:22-32).

To take any of the gospel accounts, or any of the Old or the New Testament, and argue that Israel did not know who God was, or that the only God they knew was actually Jesus Christ, is in open and direct opposition to the text.

Point #7: I AM

Point #7 is "I AM." I AM. And it's becomes very critical. **John chapter 8, verse 57.** John chapter 8:57 we find a critical passage. There is a heated debate that is going on here. A heated debate. A problem that is occurring here between Jesus and some of the Jews of the day. Look at verse 57 of John 8: *[T]he Jews said to Him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?"* Verse 58, *Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM."* **Here Jesus** specifically tells them of His divine identity. He first tells them He existed before Abraham. Then He **tells them who He really was. That He was the God who interacted with people during the Old Testament period.** In fact He says it in such a powerful way we miss it in English. He says, *"Most assuredly."* You know what that word is for "Most Assuredly?" **"Amen." Amen. This is undeniable. This can't be contradicted. This is undoubted.** "I tell you I existed before Abraham and I AM." I AM.

We look back to what the people knew He was referring to...hold your place here. Go back to Exodus chapter 3, verse 13. Exodus chapter 3, verse 13, is where God appears to Moses at the burning bush. God appears to Moses at the burning bush. **Exodus chapter 3, verse 13. Moses speaks to God and says, ..."Indeed, when I come to the children of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they say to me, 'What is His name?' what shall I say to them?"** Well, remember what

He says? ¹⁴And God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And He said, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”

So in **John 8:58, ...**”**Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM,**” the people got it. How do we know they got it? They understood that connection because verse 59 tells us they understood exactly what He was saying. It says, *[T]hey took up stones to throw at Him.*” They wanted to stone Him to death for blasphemy. But it says, *Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple.* Their reaction tells the story. In fact, in our study paper “The Nature of God and Christ,” page 7, it says, quote, *The Jews knew exactly what He was saying. They knew that Jesus was boldly proclaiming that He is eternal and that He is the Son of God. This is why they took up stones to kill Him. In their minds He was guilty of blasphemy.* **There is no question that Jesus Christ is also the “I AM.”** End quote. And this is not the only example of this. This is not the only example.

Note: There is a significant difference between “say to the children of Israel, I AM has sent me to you” and “I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM”. Jesus is indeed I AM in existence, He was not created, but God the Father is the I AM. There is nothing in this account that indicates that Jesus was saying His name was I AM. The Greek text is not capitalized and yet actual names would be.

If we let the Bible interpret the Bible, the I AM of Exodus 3 states that He is the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, and that is God the Father (Acts 3:13). There is not one scripture in the Bible that states that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, is Jesus Christ.

The phrase “I am” is used 240 times in the New Testament in the NKJV. Outside of the context of John 8:58 where Jesus was stating that He existed before Abraham, it is simply used as normal Greek syntax and there is no indication that it carries any additional special meaning.

Jesus says “I AM” in another situation with His disciples. And it happens in a situation that we’re all familiar with—when Peter walked on water. When Peter walked on water. It happens at the Sea of Galilee. Remember there was this big storm, the disciples were out rowing the boat at night, this gigantic storm comes up... Jesus comes walking to them on the water. This account is in Matthew chapter 14. The disciples see Him and what do they say? [Makes a frightened sound.] *“It’s a ghost.”* “It’s a spirit!” Right? *They cried out for fear.* Do you remember what Jesus said to them? He says in **Matthew 14, verse 27.** Jesus speaks and says, *“Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid.”* Well that’s the way the English translate it, but the exact Greek words? “I AM.” Jesus is really saying, “Be of good cheer! **It’s Me, the I AM; don’t be afraid.**” Don’t be afraid. And what does Peter say? Well *“Lord, if it is You, command me to come out of the boat.”* And He does. We know the rest of the story. And I think it is key then the disciples’ reaction to this miracle. Because what happens? Christ gets in the boat, the storm calms, it’s over, it’s done and what do they understand about Jesus and His divine identity? Once they get into the boat, verse 33 says they *worshiped Him* and said, *“Truly You are the Son of God.”* So they understood that Jesus the Word was the I AM.

Note: The original English translation is accurate. Again, there is no capitalization in the Greek. This adjusted translation to include “I AM” is an interpretation and is not accurate. Of the twenty five different translations listed for this verse on biblehub.com, only two reference Jesus as being I AM. One is the Aramaic Bible in Plain English and it renders the verse “Take heart; I AM THE LIVING GOD. Do not be afraid”. Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God and Jesus Christ is certainly not the Son of Himself. There is no reliable support for interpreting Matthew 14:27 as meaning I AM.

And in fact there is a third example. A third example is when Christ is arrested just before the Crucifixion at Gethsemane. John chapter 18, verse 4. John chapter 18, verse 4, recounts the story of His arrest. What happens? The soldiers come to arrest Him. Judas is leading the way, it seems. John 18:4 says, *Jesus therefore, knowing all things that would come upon Him, went forward and said to them, "Whom are you seeking."* ⁵*They answered Him, "Jesus of Nazareth."* What did Jesus say to them? Well in English it says here, **John chapter 18, verse 5, it says, "I am He."** *And [then] Judas, who betrayed Him, also stood with them. And now in verse 6, Now when He said to them, "I am He," they drew back and fell to the ground.* Now in most of our Bibles the word "He" is italicized. That's because it's not there in the Greek. **They are trying to make the English clear, but in fact they make the Hebrew, the Aramaic, unclear because Christ is saying, "I AM." I AM.** How do you know Jesus isn't just saying, "Well, I'm the guy you're looking for.?" Because that's what it seems in English to say there. But we know that's not the case because of what happens. These troops, these hardened military men, draw back and fall over. They fall over. Now that doesn't make any sense if Jesus is saying, "Well I'm the one you're looking for." No, not at all. In fact, **this is showing that there is divine power in Jesus using that very name.** And so what a powerful example that we find in the "I AM."

Note: Every time Jesus said, Here I am, people did not draw back and fall to the ground. This account does show there was divine power in Jesus, but the name He was responding to was not I AM, it was Jesus. When the soldiers asked for Jesus, He simply said, I am He.

This passage in John has twenty five versions listed on biblehub.com and, this time, five of them interpret the passage to include the reference, I AM. Again, one of those versions is the Aramaic Bible in Plain English, and the phrase "I AM THE LIVING GOD" is repeated. Stating that the translation in English makes "the Hebrew, the Aramaic, unclear" is simply not sustained by the text. Aside from the argument over whether there even was an original Hebrew or Aramaic text of the gospel of John, the wording of this verse cannot possibly be accurate. The living God is the Father.

The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in Exodus 3:15 is the same God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in Acts 3:13. God does not change (Malachi 3:6-10) and Jesus Christ does not change (Hebrews 13:8). The God who spoke to Moses in Exodus 3 in the Old Testament is the God whom Jesus confirmed it to be in Mark 12 in the New Testament. It was the Father.

Also, in Exodus 3, the Hebrew for "I AM" is a single word. In Greek, "I am" is "ego eimi", and beyond its use in John 8:58, it is hard to attribute to it any special meaning. When John the Baptist stated "I am not the Christ" (John 1:20) he used "ego eimi" and he certainly wasn't stating he was like God. Another use of "ego eimi", this time by Jesus Christ, is in His discussion with the Samaritan woman at the well. There He responded to the woman's statement regarding the coming of the Messiah with "I who speak to you am He" (John 4:26). The Greek word order is different from the English, but word for word, it would literally be "I am who am speaking to you". "I am", again, is "ego eimi" and carries no additional special meaning.

Both God and Jesus Christ have always existed, but there is still a clear distinction between them. Jesus Christ is "God" but He is not "the God", and in much the same way, Jesus Christ is "I AM" but He is not the "I AM". The "I AM" is the Father.

See Appendix M – The I AM

There are so many passages throughout scripture that prophesy about this very fact. Now we don't have much time, but we could look at Isaiah chapter 40, verse 3. If you want to turn there... I'll just summarize for a moment. Isaiah chapter 40, verse 3, speaks about **the "voice of one crying in the wilderness."** **It's a prophecy. That "voice crying in the wilderness" says, "Prepare the way of the LORD." The YHWH. "Make straight in the desert a highway for our God."** That's Isaiah 40, verse 3. What is that a prophecy about? Who is that a prophecy of? Who would be the "voice crying in the wilderness?" Well that would be John the Baptist. Who was he to prepare the way for? For whom was that way prepared? Well here it plainly tells us. John was to prepare the way for the LORD, the YHWH. And how was this prophecy fulfilled? Well you can connect that to Matthew 3:3. Matthew 3:3 says, *For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying: "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the LORD.'"* So here we find in Matthew 3:3 John preparing the way for the coming of the YHWH. John prepared the way for Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ, the YHWH.

Note: John certainly did help to prepare the way for Jesus Christ (Galatians 4:4-5), but that is not the full answer to what is being addressed in Matthew 3:3. The prophesy in Matthew is a quote from Isaiah 40:3 and refers to the establishment of the kingdom of God. That the prophecy has dual applications is not in question, but the specific application is to the establishment of God's kingdom at the beginning of the millennium.

Isaiah 40:3 states "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the LORD; Make straight in the desert A highway for our God". The "highway" of Isaiah 40 is the "way" of Matthew 3. That this is during the millennium is also evident from the comparable passage in Isaiah 11 that declares "There will be a highway for the remnant of his people Who will be left from Assyria, As it was for Israel In the day that he came up from the land of Egypt" (verse 16). The reference is to Israel and Judah being gathered and joined together with David as their king at the beginning of the millennium (Ezekiel 37:15-28).

A final related passage in Isaiah states "A highway shall be there, and a road, And it shall be called the Highway of Holiness. The unclean shall not pass over it, But it shall be for others. Whoever walks the road, although a fool, Shall not go astray. No lion shall be there, Nor any ravenous beast go up on it; It shall not be found there. But the redeemed shall walk there, And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, And come to Zion with singing, With everlasting joy on their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness, And sorrow and sighing shall flee away" (35:8-10). The highways in Isaiah 11, 35, and 40 and the "way" of Matthew 3, are all the same.

See Appendix N – Make Straight The Way Of The LORD

And so over and over and over again we find throughout Scripture, our Fundamental Belief #1 is confirmed. It's undoubted. In fact one that says it so plainly is found in 1 Corinthians chapter 10, beginning in verse 1. Let's notice 1 Corinthians chapter 10, verse 1. The Bible itself, Holy Scripture, confirms the teachings of the United Church of God. **1 Corinthians chapter 10, verse 1**, Paul was inspired to write, *"Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, [and] all passed through the sea, ²all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, ³all ate the same spiritual food, ⁴and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ."* Paul clearly tells us that the God who interacted with Israel during the Exodus was the being who became Jesus Christ. In fact the fulfillment of **Deuteronomy 32, verse 3**, where it says, *"I proclaim the name of the LORD, the YHWH, Ascribe greatness to our God. ⁴He is the Rock, His work is perfect; For all His ways are justice, A God of truth and without injustice; righteous and upright is He."*

Note: Jesus Christ is God in existence and He was with God the Father throughout eternity, and therefore, certainly, throughout all of the Old Testament. There, the Father was known as God and LORD and Jesus Christ was generally shown in relationship to Him. God referred to Christ as "the Angel of the LORD" (Exodus 3:2), "My Angel" (Exodus 23:23; 32:34), "My Servant" and "My Elect One" (Isaiah 42:1; see also 52:13 and 53:11), and "My Shepherd" and "the Man who is My Companion" (Zechariah 13:7). In Psalm 2 Christ referred to prophetically as "His Anointed" and "My King" and "My Son". In the book of Joshua Christ is called "the Commander of the LORD's army" (5:14-15). The LORD is God the Father. Jeremiah records that He is "the LORD, the God of hosts, the God of Israel" (38:17).

God the Father is the Chief Shepherd (Psalm 23:1-6; Ezekiel 34:30-31; 1 Peter 5:1-4) and He trusts the flock to His Shepherd, Jesus Christ (Zechariah 13:7) the good shepherd (John 10:14-16). Jesus Christ was "that spiritual Rock which followed them" but the Father is not referred to in that way. The Father led Israel. He took Israel "by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt" (Hebrews 8:9; also Judges 6:7-8). The book of Psalms records that the Most High (the Father) led His "people like a flock By the hand of Moses and Aaron" (77:10,20). Then Psalm 78 states "the Most High God" (the Father) "made His own people go forth like sheep, And guided them in the wilderness like a flock; And He led them on safely, so that they did not fear" (verses 52-53,56).

In Deuteronomy 32, the LORD, YHWH, is referred to as Israel's Rock, five times. He is also referred to as the Father who made them and begot them and the One who bought or redeemed them from bondage. He is declared to be the Most High who is over all the nations. He is the God they were to sacrifice to rather than to demons. There is no record of God telling Israel to sacrifice to Jesus Christ. The temple was the Father's house, the house of God, and the sacrifices there were to be offered to Him.

Jesus Christ accompanied Israel out of Egypt and is referred to throughout the Old Testament. He is "that spiritual Rock that followed them", but the Father is the Rock that led.

Ex 13:3 And Moses said to the people: Remember this day in which you went out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the LORD brought you out of this place.

Ex 13:21-22 And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so as to go by day and night. He did not take away the pillar of cloud by day or the pillar of fire by night from before the people.

Ps 89:20,24-27 I have found My servant David; With My holy oil I have anointed him...My faithfulness and My mercy shall be with him, And in My name his horn shall be exalted. Also I will set his hand over the sea, And his right hand over the rivers. He shall cry to me, You are my Father, My God, and the rock of my salvation. Also I will make him My firstborn, The highest of the kings of the earth.

Acts 7:35-36 This Moses whom they rejected, saying, Who made you a ruler and a judge? is the one God sent to be a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the Angel who appeared to him in the bush. He brought them out, after he had shown wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red Sea, and in the wilderness forty years.

Heb 8:8-9 Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the LORD

See Appendix O – The Rock That Followed Them

And so as we put all of these things together, what does it mean to us as Christians? What does it mean to us as the body of Christ? **Is Jesus the God of the Old Testament? That's not the best wording. That's not the best way to state it. It's technically not accurate.** God the Father was always God from eternity, including the Old Testament period. And so, more precisely, the being who became...or the being who came in the flesh as Jesus, was the God who interacted with human beings in the Old Testament. And it is a wonderful blessing to understand that. This is what the Bible teaches. It's our fundamental belief. We realize the Bible defines "God" as a type of being, a kind of being. And God, right now, is comprised of Jesus Christ, the Word, the Son of God and the Father. And as **our Doctrinal Study Paper says, quote, God can be defined as a family, one God family** although currently consisting of two beings.

Note: The statement that Jesus is the God of the Old Testament is both technically, and actually, not true. Also, stating that God is a family is not true. God has a family and the one God is the Father. The one God is not the family of God except in our literature.

And so when we recognize this fact, and when we recognize that everything God created came into existence through the one who became Jesus Christ, **we see very clearly then the Father hasn't been seen. The Father had to be revealed. And so Jesus Christ came and declared the Father and made Him known.** And so when we look to see which God interacted with human beings in the Old Testament, the God of our fathers, Abraham, Isaac, Moses, Joshua, David...the YHWH who appeared was the one who became Jesus Christ. He was the Angel of the LORD, the Messenger, who thundered the 10 Commandments. He is the I AM. **No question about that. In fact on page 14 of the Doctrinal Paper it says, quote, It is clear that the name YHWH can be used to identify both God the Father and the one who later becomes Jesus Christ (the Word). The context determines which one is being referred to as YHWH. Scripture clearly reveals the preexistence of Christ before His human birth and that He is often called YHWH in the Old Testament. End of quote.**

Note: When we say that the context determines who is being referred to as YHWH, the reality is that we are making that determination. There is not a single scripture in the New Testament where both God the Father and Jesus Christ are portrayed together in a quote from the Old Testament and Jesus is referred to as YHWH. Still, our determination that Christ was YHWH and God was hardly known, continues.

Now with that said, **none of this takes anything away from God the Father. None of it.** God the Father is also the LORD. Is also YHWH. The Father is the Supreme Ruler over the entire universe, over all things. The Son Himself, Jesus Christ, the Word, is subject to the Father. And Scripture says so that God the Father may be "all in all" [1 Cor. 15:28]. And **none of this detracts from God the Father.** God the Father is the undisputed head of the family for all eternity.

Note: This entire teaching detracts significantly from God the Father. Denying the record of God in scripture is denying His name and worshipping Jesus Christ ahead of, or in place of, the Father, is idolatry.

Ex 20:1-3 And God spoke all these words, saying: I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me.

Ex 20:7 You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.

And so what an amazing blessing to understand the relationship between the Word and God, between Jesus Christ and God the Father. As our paper states on page 41, quote, *As clearly shown... God and the Son are coeternal with the Son preexisting in eternity as the Word before His incarnation... God and the Son are of the same essence, the Spirit of God... God the Father, the Son and Spirit-filled sons of God are united through that one Spirit... Thus, the Godhead is not a closed Trinity, nor an absolute unity of only one God, but a dynamic family unity that allows for Spirit-born believers to become the very children of God.* End quote.

Thank God for our wonderful calling. Thank God for opening our minds to the phenomenal truth of His word. And thank God for the blessing of the opportunity of understanding who and what Jesus Christ was before His human birth.

End: Sermon Transcript

Concluding remarks about UCG teaching:

The record of God and Jesus Christ in scripture, is clear. Throughout the Bible, “God” is overwhelmingly a reference to the Father. Jesus Christ is also God, but only in very specific instances is He referred to in that way. The Bible is a record of the Supreme Being, God the Father, working out His plan of salvation through Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 8:6). That is portrayed by His love for humanity, where God is the Savior who offered the sacrifice for sin, and Jesus Christ is the Savior who was the sacrifice for sin. God and Christ work together in perfect unity, and we are to do the same.

We need to teach from the record of scripture rather than from the record of our booklets. We know that we wrote the booklets, but we still hold them up as proof of what God has said.

We need to recognize and teach that God the Father is directly and intimately involved in His creation. He has on occasion spoken, and even appeared, though not in the flesh, to some of His servants.

We need to stop teaching as if the Bible is primarily a story about Jesus Christ. That is what the Protestants teach and it is not biblical. We need to stop replacing God with Jesus Christ in the text.

We need to accept that when a large body of scriptures agree, and a few scriptures do not appear to agree, then our responsibility is to seek to understand the few, rather than to use the few to explain away or even negate all the rest.

Most fundamentally, to state that “Jesus is the God of the Old Testament” or to infer that the Father did not directly interact with human beings in the Old Testament, is simply not true. We need to faithfully teach the full record and roles of both God the Father and Jesus Christ as it has been given to us in scripture.