

Who was the God of the Old Testament?

A controversy about the role of the pre-incarnate Jesus in the Old Testament has been stirring in the churches of God for the last couple of years. The doctrine that Jesus the Christ was actually the God of the Old Testament, known as YHVH or YHVH Elohim, has been a standard theological belief of the churches of God for close to a century. Close to century before that, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (commonly known as the Mormons), adopted the belief that Jesus was the God of the Old Testament. Who the God of the Old Testament is not just another doctrinal controversy designed to divide Christians. This doctrine affects the way that scripture will be understood by Christians and deeply affects the kind of relationship and the depth of the relationship that God wants to have with us, his physical children. This is especially true when non-Trinitarian Christians examine the first of the Ten Commandments and the portion of Deuteronomy 6 known as the Shema with the errant understanding that the pre-incarnate Jesus was YHVH, the God of the Old Testament.

God and the Creation

Part of the confusion about the role of the pre-incarnate Jesus in the Old Testament appears to revolve around his role in the creation. If you examine scripture, Jesus the Christ is one of a multitude of spiritual beings. This includes the Father, the Son, the 24 elders of Revelations, the Elohim council that is presided over by YHVH in Psalms 82:1, multiple angels and others. Many scriptures, but in particular the first chapter of Job, the book of Revelations and Psalms 82 and 88, reveal that God usually works in councils or groups to accomplish His goals. Because God is all powerful and can accomplish anything He wishes, He must have His children doing some of His work because He likes it that way. The example of how Jesus carried out the Father's will in the gospels exemplifies this pattern. Therefore it should not be surprising that in Genesis 1:26 we read that God made man in their image, showing more than one being working together to create mankind.

After the creation of man, God states in Genesis 1:31 that the physical creation was good. Scripture does not state everything was perfect, but rather, just the way that God wanted it. The idea that God did not want the physical creation to be perfect as Lucifer was created perfect cannot be overstated (Ezek. 28:15). However, a very old heresy has Elohim, the Hebrew word for *god(s)*, working against each other rather than with each other during the creation of Genesis 1. In this gnostic creation story, which we will examine in detail later, the being who states that all of the physical creation is good is actually an errant Elohim who has acted against the will of the supreme god. This gnostic creation story is detailed in the Egyptian Nag Hammadi, a set of

religious codices dated at about the same time as the Dead Sea Scrolls. The apostle John was obviously battling these gnostic ideas in his gospel. In particular, John 1:1-3 details how Jesus was the instrument of the physical creation outlined in Genesis 1 to battle the gnostic idea that the physical Earth was created by mistake. *(All scriptures are from the King James unless stated otherwise).*

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. (John 1:1-3)

Colossians 1:16 also shows that Jesus was an agent of creation, again to battle the gnostic idea that creation of the physical was a mistake. *“For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him.”* The scriptural intent of showing the pre-incarnate Jesus as the agent of creation was to battle Gnosticism, not to show him as the creator, a role the New Testament designates to the Father, as the scriptures below affirm.

But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him. (1 Cor. 8:6)

Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created. (Rev. 4:11)

And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is. (Acts 4:24)

God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things. And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation. (Acts 17:24-26)

For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (2Cor. 4:6)

Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear. (Heb. 11:3)

How do you harmonize the Father being the creator of all things with Jesus being describing as creating all things in John 1? The creation was the Father's plan. The Father set up how it was to be carried out and did some of the actual work of creation (*2 Cor. 4:6*). But John shows that the Father designated the pre-incarnate Jesus to carry out very important portions of the creation. When we read *all* or *every* in the Bible, we often carry it to extremes that the writer never meant. Even if someone built every aspect of a house by himself, it does not mean he smelted the nails or cut the lumber or even chemically created the paint he used. And the physical creation of Genesis 1 was built by a team, perhaps a team of just two, but the Father was the creator and Jesus played a primary part in that creation according to John 1.

Mormon doctrine makes the pre-incarnate Jesus into the creator rather than the Father by not understanding that John 1 was intended to fight Gnosticism. They support this doctrine by citing New Testament scriptures about no one being able to see or hear the Father. Since the creator was seen and heard, these Mormon leaders wrote that the God of Old Testament, YHWH, must be the pre-incarnate Jesus since it supposedly couldn't be the Father. Having Jesus as the creator and the God of the Old Testament aligns with gnostic freemason theology, a theology with a pantheon of gods. And it was a theology the early Mormon leaders understood since a number of them were high ranking freemasons. It appears that when the churches of God borrowed the "family of God" theology to explain the nature of the godhead from Mormon doctrine because it fit the scriptural description far better than the Trinity, they also borrowed the belief that the pre-incarnate Jesus was the God of the Old Testament.

By contrast, in mainstream Christianity, the Father is perceived to be the wrathful, law-enforcing God of the Old Testament. In mainstream Christianity, Jesus the Christ is perceived to be the loving, grace-filled, forgiving God of the New Testament who intercedes with the Father. The mainstream Christian church really does not care about how God, whether it be Father or Son, directly interacted with mankind in Old Testament times. Not just because most Christians don't really care that much about the Old Testament, but also because their churches follow the Trinitarian belief of the nature of God expressed as part of the 4th century Nicaean creed. For over a millennium and a half even Christians who accepted Constantine's political compromise about the nature of God and supported the Trinitarian view of God have often defined the Trinity as something akin to a riddle, wrapped inside a mystery, inside of an enigma. Therefore the natural mystery and confusion of the Trinity which normally obscures who God is and how we are to interact with Him only intensifies when Old Testament figures interact with God. This leads to a giant cloud of confusion that most mainstream Christians just don't care to pierce. However, the doctrine of the Trinity has been rejected by both the churches of God, the Jehovah's Witness and the Mormons as unscriptural. For those churches, the nature of who and

what God was in the Old Testament directly reflects on the truth of Holy Scripture and the kind of relationship God wants with mankind.

No One has Ever Seen the Father?

The belief that Jesus is the God of the Old Testament has generally been substantiated by a misunderstanding of three scriptures from John's gospel and one verse from Habakkuk, although the basis of this teaching goes back to the gnostic idea that all physical is bad and only spirit can be good. Although other scriptures have been used, the main four verses are listed below.

*"No man hath seen (**horao**) God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." (John 1:18)*

*"Not that any man hath seen (**horao**) the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father." (John 6:46)*

*"And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard (**akoua**) his voice at any time, nor seen (**horao**) his shape." (John 5:37)*

Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look (on iniquity: wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he? (Hab. 1:13)

John 5:37 not only portrays the Father as never having been seen, but also as never having His voice heard. The Greek word for hearing the Father's voice is **akoua** and usually means to physically hear. However, another common usage of **akoua** is to convey the idea of being understood or not. This usage of **akoua** is equivalent to the English phrase you listen, but you do not hear.

Those who believe that the pre-incarnate Jesus was the being who spoke the Ten Commandments point to this verse for support. Since **akoua** can mean to physically hear or to actually understand what is being said, we need to examine other scriptures to clarify its usage in John 5:37. Matthew writes; "And lo a voice from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Matt. 3:17) There can be no doubt that the Father's voice had been heard by a multitude of people during Jesus' baptism at least a year before his teaching of John 5. Therefore John 5:37 has to be teaching that no one has truly understood what the Father had spoken and not that no one has heard the Father's voice. John 5:37 cannot be used to support a

hypothesis that the Father could not have spoken the Ten Commandments. And this has direct bearing on how the Greek word *horao* should be translated in John 1:18, 5:37, 6:46 and 14:7-9.

Without understanding the context of John 1:18, 5:37 and 6:46, these verses appear to suggest that no one has physically seen God the Father just as John 5:37 seems to initially suggest no one had heard the Father's voice. Yet there are over 5,000 references to YHVH, the God of the Old Testament. A large number of these verses have that god directly interacting with humankind where He was visible. So the hypothesis advanced by the Mormons and adapted by the churches of God appears to be that since the God of the Old Testament was seen, then that god could not be the Father. But do these three verses in John actually mean that no one has physically seen the Father? It is true that about two thirds of the approximately 75 times John uses the Greek word *horao*, he is using it to mean to physically see with your eyes. A few of these verses are listed below.

And he looked up, and said, I see (horao) men as trees, walking. (Mark 8:24)

And when he came out, he could not speak unto them: and they perceived that he had seen (horao) a vision in the temple: for he beckoned unto them, and remained speechless. (Luke 1:22)

And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth (horao) Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. (Luke 16:23)

Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen (horao) Abraham? (John 8:37)

Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen (horao) the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her. (John 20:18)

The other third of the time John uses *horao*, it does not mean to physically see and the most common other usage of *horao* has the meaning to perceive or understand. (Strong's G3708, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong's=G3708&t=KJV>) The idea that "to see" can mean physically seeing something with your eyes and can also mean to understand something, depending on how it is used, is also displayed in English with the phrase, "He saw the light," or, "I see what you mean." However, those who teach that the Father has never been physically seen by man ignore how *horao* is used in John 14:7-9 while concentrating on John 1:18, 5:37 and 6:46. John 1:18, 5:37, John 6:46 were written at the same time that John wrote chapter 14 of his gospel. The subject of all four verses is seeing God the Father. They all used the same Greek word, *horao*, when referring to the process of seeing. It is almost criminal eisegesis

not to use John 14 in understanding how John used the Greek word *horao* in the context of “seeing” god.

*“If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him (*horao*). Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen (*horao*) me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?” (John 14:7-9)*

Jesus tells the apostles if you have seen (*horao*) him, you have seen (*horao*) the Father. Many, many disciples physically saw Jesus. Therefore logic dictates that if *horao* should be translated as physically seeing something in these four verses, then those many disciples physically saw God the Father since they saw Jesus. In this incorrect scenario, John 14:7-9 either directly contradicts John 1:18, 5:37 and 6:46 or supersedes them. However, if Jesus’ usage of the Greek word *horao* in John 14:7-9 was to teach the disciples that they could now truly know God the Father because they know Him, then *horao* should also be translated as understand or perceive in John 1:18, 5:37 and 6:46. Matthew 11:27 agrees that no one has truly understood the Father. *“All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.”* Therefore the best translation of *horao* in John 1:18, 5:37, 6:46 and 14:7-9 is to truly understand. And physically seeing the God of the Old Testament does not disqualify Him being the Father according to scripture.

If *horao* actually means to understand in John 1:18, 5:37, 6:46 and 14:7-9, then the harmonization of these verses is straightforward. John 1:18, 5:37, 6:46 and Matthew 11:27 Jesus was teaching that no one truly understood or truly perceived the magnitude of the Father except his only begotten Son and not that the Father had never been physically seen. And John 14:7-9 is Jesus showing the solution to the problem that no one truly knows the Father.

Applying the logic of John 14:7-9 to the apostles, then even they did not truly know the Father at the time of the Last Supper because they did not truly know Jesus. Even on the evening before Jesus’ crucifixion, the apostles still thought that Jesus would claim the throne of Israel at that time. After telling his apostles in John 14:7-9 that if they understood him then they would also understand the Father, he further expounds the point that their understanding, their seeing of the mind, of the Father would increase in the future. *“But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.” (John 17:26)* The problem of mankind not really understanding God was solved by sending both his Son, so we could *horao* the Father, and

by sending the comforter to help with our seeing of the mind. The scriptures below support that *horao* often means something other than to physically see.

*And their eyes were opened; and Jesus straitly charged them, saying, See (*horao*) that no man know it. (Matt. 9:30)*

*Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed (*horao*) and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees. (Matt. 16:6)*

*And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see (*horao*) that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. (Matt. 24:6)*

*For I perceive (*horao*) that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity. (Acts 8:23)*

Therefore scripture does not teach that mankind has never physically seen the Father. And Habakkuk 1:13 also cannot be teaching that God cannot look at evil because He is face to face with Satan in Job 1.

Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them. And the LORD said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. (Job 1:6-7)

God also looked upon sin in Genesis.

And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them. But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD...And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth. (Gen. 6:5-8, 12)

Other translations of Habakkuk 1:13 agree with Job 1 and Genesis 6 that God could see evil.

Your eyes are too pure to approve evil, And you can not look on wickedness with favor. Why do you look with favor on those who deal treacherously? Why are you

silent when the wicked swallow up those more righteous than they? (Hab. 1:13 NASB)

You are too just to tolerate evil; you are unable to condone wrongdoing. So why do you put up with such treacherous people? Why do you say nothing when the wicked devour those more righteous than they are? (Hab. 1:13 NET)

There is no scriptural injunction against God the Father manifesting Himself in various visible forms so His children can see Him and interact with Him. There is no barrier to the Father seeing sin. He just cannot see it favorably according to scripture. Thus, the main scriptural support that the God of the Old Testament cannot be the Father is based on an eisegesis of how to translate the Greek word *horao*. This eisegesis, which was almost certainly created because of the gnostic view that the physical creation was bad, leads to the incorrect conclusion that Father could not have direct interactions with His children in the Old Testament.

Jesus and the Father are One

Trinitarians and Binitarians question whether we can understand the relationship between the Father and the Son because Jesus states he and the Father are one in two verses in John. This oneness is supposedly a mystical union. However, the oneness revealed in scripture refers to how those who follow the Father are supposed to work together as one doing the Father's will. After explaining how he and the Father were in complete accord as to who was being called as his disciples and how those disciples would not be taken out of their hands, Jesus states, "I and my Father are one." (John 10:30) The Jews claimed this as blasphemy. The charges are outlined here.

Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God? If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him. (John 10:37-39)

The blasphemy was that Jesus claimed to be the son of the eternal God and that he and the Father worked hand in hand in Jesus' healings, teachings and selection of disciples, among other things. Jesus' claim that the Father and Son are one in each other is expounded upon by Jesus during the Last Supper. Jesus is again teaching about how the apostles, who were chosen by the Father, are to become one with the Father and Son just as the Father and Son are one.

And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that

they may be one, as we are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled...I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world...Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. (John 17:11-12,15-16, 20-23)

Those who claim a mystical oneness between the Father and Son ignore Jesus' prayer and Jesus' claim that his disciples down through time would have the same oneness that the Father and Son shared. And beyond being one with the Father and Son, these disciples would be one with each other in the same way Jesus was one with the Father. That oneness has to be of one accord and mind and purpose and not of body. That oneness is not some mystical union that cannot be understood.

God expresses how we are to be one with Him throughout the scripture. God states, *"For I am the LORD your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I am holy: neither shall ye defile yourselves with any manner of creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. For I am the LORD that bringeth you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy."* (Lev 11:44-45) This is repeated in Leviticus 19:2, 20:7, 21:6, 8, Deuteronomy 7:6 and 14:2. Peter shows how we are to worship and be one with the Father (1Pet. 2:9-10). Scripture reveals if we truly follow the Father, we will be His sons (Rev. 21:7). To be one with the Father, we need to be holy. We are also told to put on Jesus to be one with him.

For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. (Gal. 3:27)

But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof. (Rom. 13:14)

The idea of Jesus and the Father being one gave rise to the Ante-Nicene fathers' arguments for the Trinity, an argument that was expounded upon by Augustine throughout the 300's AD. Of

course, these Christian luminaries ignored that the disciples are supposed to have that same kind of oneness between each other and with the Father and son that Jesus claimed to have with the Father. It appears that oneness extends to all of creation that is in harmony with the Father and His will. We will be one with God by putting on Jesus the Christ and having the indwelling of the Father's spirit so we can serve the Father. The idea of a billions-in-one and one-in-billions that scripture actually describes does not have the ring of a mystical one-in-three and three-in-one. If you base your arguments on scripture and not tradition, it is easy to conclude that there is nothing mystical about the oneness the Father and the Son share because their disciples share that same oneness by being holy and serving the Father.

Other Scriptures used to Support that Jesus was the God of the Old Testament

The Burning Bush

Although the story of the burning bush in Exodus 3 has been used to support the idea that Jesus is the God of the Old Testament, it does just the opposite. Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible. Moses' recollection of God calling him into covenant is more memorable than most callings.

And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I. And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God. (Ex. 3:2-6)

Moses isn't a stenographer hurriedly writing down this miraculous occurrence. Decades after he talked to God face to face (*Ex. 33:11*), Moses writes that he interacted with both the angel of YHVH and YHVH at his calling. He wrote that first the angel of YHVH appeared in a flame of fire when Moses was some distance from the burning bush. When Moses arrives at the burning bush, YHVH talks to him. The spurious argument is made that the angel of YHVH and YHVH are the same being, usually with the unscriptural backdrop of the Father not being able to speak

to physical human beings. We have shown that understanding of John 5:37 absolutely being in error.

Proponents of the pre-incarnate Jesus being the God of the Old Testament argue that Exodus 3 depicts Jesus being called both the angel of YHVH and YHVH in the Old Testament. If just one being were present, Moses would have written that YHVH appeared to him in a flame and then spoke to him from the bush. Thus they violate the very simple biblical hermeneutic of reading what the text actually says and not what you want it to say. Moses wrote about two beings, YHVH and the angel of YHVH, being present at his calling at the burning bush.

1 Corinthians 10:4

1 Corinthians 10 contains Paul's warning to the church not to make the same mistakes that Israel made when they were called into covenant with God. He also writes that Jesus had a role in both of those covenants in the book of Corinthians.

And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; And did all eat the same spiritual meat; And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. (1 Cor. 10:2-4)

Those who preach that Jesus was the God of the Old Covenant use these verses to "prove" that since the pre-incarnate Jesus was with Israel during the Exodus, then the Father was not. This is known as a false dichotomy fallacy. Just as both the angel of YHVH and YHVH were at the burning bush, they were both there at the Exodus. To make this passage at the Red Sea a little clearer I have replaced the English word LORD with the Hebrew word YHVH from which it is translated.

*And **YHVH** went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night: He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people... And **YHVH** hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued after the children of Israel: and the children of Israel went out with an high hand... And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of **YHVH** which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. **YHVH** shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace. And **YHVH** said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward... And the Egyptians shall know that I am **YHVH**, when I have gotten me honour upon Pharaoh, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen. And the **angel of God**, which*

went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them...And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and YHVH caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. (Ex. 13:31-32, 14:8, 13-15, 18-19, 21)

Decades after leaving Egypt, Moses wrote the miraculous record of God permanently freeing Israel from Egypt so they could serve Him. YHVH, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob escorted Israel out of Egypt with a pillar of cloud and a pillar of fire. Moses emphasized that it was YHVH that hardened Pharaoh's heart and that it was YHVH that would deliver Israel from Egypt's hands forever. Why does Moses then write that the angel of Elohim went from leading Israel to standing a rear guard? Those who have the preconceived idea that the pre-incarnate Jesus was YHVH argue that Moses was simply using two different names for the same person. But that is not what the text shows. Moses called one being the eternal one and the other being a servant of God.

What Moses wrote in Exodus 14 is that YHVH opened the Red Sea and led Israel across it while the angel of God, a separate being who was with YHVH in the pillars, stood the rear guard. Verses like Exodus 14:19 lead the second temple period Jews to believe and write about two gods, the supreme God, YHVH, and His angel, the "inferior" God. Exodus 14 depicts two beings working with Israel and not that there was one being that Moses confusedly called God and God's servant. Combining 1 Corinthians 10 with Exodus 14 reveals that Jesus was with Israel during the Exodus, but so was the Father, YHVH.

Joshua 5—The Captain of the hosts of YHVH

Just before Israel claimed the Promised Land under Joshua, they had to be circumcised and then they kept the Passover. *"And YHVH said unto Joshua, This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you. Wherefore the name of the place is called Gilgal unto this day."* (Josh 5:9) So we have a being known as YHVH rolling off the reproach of Israel. Then, during the preparation for the battle of Jericho, the first battle for the Promised Land, Joshua comes across a military man.

And said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the LORD am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my lord unto his servant? And the captain of the LORD'S host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from

off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so. (Josh 5:13-15)

There should be no argument this is not a separate being from YHVH because he is introduced as a separate being, but those who believe the pre-incarnate Jesus was the God of the Old Testament argue that the captain of YHVH's host must also be YHVH because Joshua is noted as worshipping him. YHVH taught Israel, "For thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God." (Ex. 34:14) Either the captain of YHVH's army and YHVH are the same being, which is not how Joshua 5 describes them, but is the official doctrine of the churches of God. Or Joshua 5 depicts YHVH and the captain of YHVH's hosts as two separate beings and the interaction between Joshua and the captain is not the forbidden worship described in Exodus 34:14.

Joshua bowed down (*shachah*) to the captain of YHVH's host, which is translated as worshipped in the King James. Keil & Delitzsch agree with a number of commentators about the most logical explanation for Joshua supposedly worshiping someone other than YHVH in the King James translation.

With the words "now I am come," the prince of the angels is about to enter upon an explanation of the object of his coming; but he is interrupted in his address by Joshua, who falls down before him, and says, "What saith my lord to his servant?" so that now he first of all commands Joshua to take off his shoes, as the place on which he stands is holy. It by no means follows that because Joshua fell down upon the ground and שִׁתַּחֲוֹי (Eng. Ver. "did worship"), he must have recognised him at once as the angel of the Lord who was equal with God; for the word הִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה, which is connected with the falling down, does not always mean divine worship, but very frequently means nothing more than the deep Oriental reverence paid by a dependant to his superior or king (e.g., 2Sa 9:6; 2Sa 14:33), and Joshua did not address the person who appeared to him by the name of God, אֲדֹנָי, but simply as אֲדֹנָי, "My lord." (<https://www.stepbible.org/?q=version=KD|reference=Jos.5>)

Other translations confirm that Joshua reverentially bowed, which most likely left him prostrate. But he was not worshipping the captain of YHVH's army as he would worship YHVH. He was simply paying him the honor the captain was due in Middle Eastern tradition. Other translations state,

He answered, "Truly I am the commander of the LORD's army. Now I have arrived!" Joshua bowed down with his face to the ground and asked, "What does my master want to say to his servant?" (Josh 5:14 NET)

He said, "No; rather I indeed come now as captain of the host of the LORD." And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and bowed down, and said to him, "What has my lord to say to his servant?" (Josh. 5:14 NASB)

Neither," he replied, "but as commander of the army of the LORD I have now come." Then Joshua fell facedown to the ground in reverence, and asked him, "What message does my Lord have for his servant?" (Josh 5:14 NIV)

Interestingly, the only other three passages in the Bible where the same four Hebrew words are used (*naphal*: prostrating oneself; *shachah*: bowing; with *paniyim*: one's face; *'erets*: to the ground) in reference to what a person or persons did are all references of one human showing reverence to another human:

Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger? (Ruth 2:10)

And when Abigail saw David, she hastened, and lighted off the ass, and fell before David on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, (1 Sam. 25:23)

And Joab fell to the ground on his face, and bowed himself, and thanked the king: and Joab said, To day thy servant knoweth that I have found grace in thy sight, my lord, O king, in that the king hath fulfilled the request of his servant. (2 Sam. 14:22)

Scripture depicts YHVH rolling Egypt's reproach off of Israel as well as a separate being, the being in charge of Yehovah's army, interacting with Joshua after that. Joshua is paying great reverence to the captain but he is not worshipping him in the manner forbidden in Exodus 34. Joshua 5 depicts two beings, YHVH and the captain of YHVH's army interacting with Israel. It does not depict one being interacting with Israel under two different names.

[1 Timothy 1:17-Jesus as Immortal and due all Honor?](#)

1 Timothy 1:17 supposedly supports the idea that the pre-incarnate Jesus was the God of the Old Testament because Jesus is supposedly referred to as God. The verse states:

Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen. (1Tim 1:17)

Unfortunately, a preconceived idea has again obfuscated Paul's very clear teaching that the Father was God and His son is Lord and not God. Throughout all of Paul's epistles, he follows the pattern of 1 Timothy where he refers to the Father as God and Jesus as Lord.

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope; Unto Timothy, my own son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord. (1Tim 1:1-2)

According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust. And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry (1Tim 1:11-12)

For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus (1Tim 2:5)

Even a cursory study of Paul's epistles leaves no doubt that Paul's pattern is to refer to the Father as God and Jesus as Lord. After thanking both the Father and the Son for all they have done in 1 Timothy 1:11-12, Paul goes on to describe what Jesus had personally done for him in verses 13 through 16. But in verse 17 Paul goes back to referring to the Father. This should be clear when Paul gives praise to the only wise God in verse 17.

If you have a preconceived notion that Jesus is the God of the Old Testament, you might take 1 Timothy 1:17 out of context for support, but this would be a clear example of eisegesis.

Both the New and Old Testaments show the Father and Son working together, with the Son serving the Father and carrying out his will. The stoning of Stephen in Acts 7:55-56 again shows the Father and Son working together to console Stephen. Revelation 4 and 5 show the Father, the Son, the 24 elders and a number of angelic beings working together to further the Father's plan. However, those who claim that the pre-incarnate Jesus was the God of the Old Testament deny that pattern in the Old Testament because the Father is simply not there in their theology.

[Melchisedec](#)

This paper is centered on the role of the pre-incarnate Jesus in the Old Testament. The churches of God not only believe that the pre-incarnate Jesus was YHVH, the God of the Old Testament, but that the pre-incarnate Jesus also played the role of Melchisedec in Genesis 14. Bill Bradford gave the keynote address at the general Council of Elders meeting of the United Church of God

in 2019 entitled “*The Compact*.” In this sermon, Mr. Bradford laid out the church’s very distinct view of the binitarian nature of the godhead.¹ The churches of God believe that there have always been two eternal, co-equal beings that have existed since before time began. At some point one chose to be the Son and the other all-powerful God chose to take on the role of the supreme Father. This compact between these all powerful god-beings supposedly made them one, thus the two are one although they are and always have been two distinct beings in this theological construct. How an all-powerful God can become an inferior god by choice is never explained. The keystone for this extra-biblical binitarian compact lies in the churches of God interpretation of Hebrews 7 in relation to the man Melchisedec.

The book of Hebrews, unsurprisingly, was written to Hebrews who had accepted Jesus as the Messiah. These Christians were very familiar with the Old Covenant, which had stood as the law of Israel for a millennia and a half. The author of the book of Hebrews, most likely Paul from a series of compiled sermons, is comparing and contrasting the changes in the New Covenant with the Old Covenant. Change is difficult under the best of circumstances, but having to change some of the foundational principles of your religious beliefs, which had been largely unchanged since Moses the lawgiver had carried them down from the mountain, was proving hard to do. There had been some historical changes in the past, like having the leadership of the nation of Israel transferred from the judges to the kings. So change was not unknown, just very rare. In Hebrews, Paul lays out the logical arguments for how and why these New Covenant changes were instituted now that Messiah had come.

In the Torah, God ordained that the high priest had to be from the line of Aaron of the tribe of Levi. “*And this is the law of the meat offering: the sons of Aaron shall offer it before the LORD, before the altar.*” (Lev. 6:14) Jesus was of the line of Judah and a descendant of David, thus he was ineligible to be the high priest under the Old Covenant. However, Paul makes the case for Jesus being the high priest under the New Covenant in Hebrews 5 through 10 by concentrating on what had been a fairly obscure incident from Genesis 14 when Abraham pays tithes to Melchisedec, a “priest of the most high God.” (Gen. 14:18) Paul quotes Psalms 110 in Hebrews 5. “*As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.*” (Heb. 5:6)

Paul writes of Melchisedec:

“For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; To whom also

¹ The complete sermon can be found at <https://www.ucg.org/sermons/the-compact-keynote-address-at-the-2019-general-conference-of-elders>.

Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace; Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually. Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils. And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham: But he whose descent is not counted from them received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises.” (Hebrews 7:1-6)

Obviously the subject of the early verses of Hebrews 7 is who is worthy to receive tithes. Paul is contrasting the priesthood of Melchisedec in the New Covenant with the priesthood of Aaron from the Old Covenant. Paul presents the Levitical priesthood as being temporary and actually functioning as part of the priesthood of Melchisedec while it was extant, but its days are through. Without having to understanding the intricacies of Greek, it should be obvious that Paul presents individual ancestry as essential to Aaronic priesthood in the Old Covenant. However, it did not matter who your parents were under the priesthood of Melchisedec in the New Covenant. Paul emphasized, in Greek parlance, that we have no idea what the ancestry of Melchisedec was or what became of him after he received tithes from Abraham. Being without father and mother means that we don't know who his father and mother were, unlike the Aaronic high priests. It does not mean that he did not have a father or mother, as any Greek scholar or competent commentary would confirm.

*Without father, &c.--explained by "without genealogy" (so the Greek is for "without descent"); compare Hbr 7:6, that is, his genealogy is not known, whereas a Levitical priest could not dispense with the proof of his descent. **having neither beginning of days nor end of life**--namely, history not having recorded his beginning nor end, as it has the beginning and end of Aaron. The Greek idiom expressed by "without father," &c., one whose parentage was humble or unknown. "Days" mean his time of discharging his function. So the eternity spoken of in Psa 110:4 is that of the priestly office chiefly. (Jamieson, Fausset and Brown on Hebrews 7:3 from blueletterbible.org).*

However, the churches of God have taken Hebrews 7:3 and transformed Melchisedec into the pre-incarnate Jesus. And in the classic circular logic, once they have proven that Melchisedec was the pre-incarnate Jesus because he had “no father or mother,” they “prove” Jesus was eternal because he had “no beginning of days.” So not only is the pre-incarnate Jesus YHVH, the God of

the Old Testament who was owed tithes, but he also supposedly plays the role of a high priest to himself who gathers tithes for himself while he is disguised. Mathematically, this is expressed as pre-incarnate Jesus=YHVH=Melchisedec.

Paul rebuts the entire premise that Melchisedec was YHVH by writing that he was a man in verse 4. Melchisedec is presented as a man throughout the book of Hebrews. Not only was Melchisedec a man, but Abraham also knew YHVH very well, and yet did not discern that Melchisedec was his friend YHVH. (*James 2:23*) Why would the pre-incarnate Jesus, who was YHVH in the Old Testament according to churches of God, disguise himself as someone that Abraham did not know just so that Abraham could pay tithes to the disguised Jesus rather than just paying the tithes directly to Jesus in the form of YHVH? This makes absolutely no sense. However, it is apparently essential to dispense such with logical questions if you are going to validate a compact between two eternal gods that is never mentioned in scripture.

Secondarily, the whole point of Hebrews 5 through 10 is to show that under the New Covenant the priesthood had changed from the order of Aaron and Levi, where ancestry was essential, to someone whose lineage did not matter. If Melchisedec was the pre-incarnate Jesus in disguise, then his lineage matters very much.

Why would you take a statement from Paul about there being no ancestral requirement to be the high priest under the New Covenant and transform it into the lineage being essential? And make no mistake, stating that Melchisedec was the pre-incarnate Jesus who supposedly had no father or mother and was without beginning or end is essential in Church of God theology. This transformation is essential for their confirmation that the pre-incarnate Jesus was a God just like the Father. The Father is referred to as being eternal throughout scripture, but this is the only place where scripture can be twisted to show that the pre-incarnate Jesus was also eternal and uncreated. And the circular logic used to “prove” that the pre-incarnate Jesus chose to be the son, thus making the other part of the binity into the Father, completely unravels if you cannot “prove” that the pre-incarnate Jesus was both co-eternal and equal to the Father.

The churches of God have turned YHVH, the eternal one, into the pre-incarnate Jesus because of their gnostic prejudices against the physical creation. They have also turned the man Melchisedec into the pre-incarnate Jesus because it is the only way for them to “prove” that Jesus is also eternal and uncreated. They also have the angel of the YHVH being the pre-incarnate Jesus, and on this one they are correct. One out of three isn't bad. It is amazing that such a flawed argument can be presented before the general council of elders, the whole spectrum of teachers from the United Church of God, and not have such flawed logic and biblical eisegesis challenged.

After “proving” there was no real difference between the beings who chose to “become” the Father and the Son, there was a point of emphasis in Mr. Bradford’s sermon that Jesus had nothing to fear from the Father if he became the son, and thus the inferior god. This is a classic case of circular logic presented without any scriptural support because there is none. Could the decision have gone the other way and have the beings who are currently the Father and Son transfer their roles? Surely the answer has to be yes, since there is nothing, absolutely nothing, listed in scripture where two gods agree on a compact to become a binity. Not only can the churches of God not accept that the Father directly interacts with His physical children, but they cannot accept that Father was the supreme eternal God as scripture depicts.

Gnosticism, Freemasons, Mormons and God in the Old Testament

Why is it important in Mormon and church of God theology that the pre-incarnate Jesus be the God of the Old Testament? Why is it important to them that God the Father has never had any direct interaction with mankind? This idea almost certainly originated from the gnostic teaching that the physical is bad and they simply used the verses in John about not seeing the Father to substantiate pre-existent prejudices. It is true that Mormon theology on the nature of God was in flux for about the first 50 years of the church’s existence, but the quotes below demonstrate the Mormon belief in a pantheon of gods and a fairly standard Mormon view of the Father’s and Jesus’ roles in Old Testament times.

“Between 1838 and 1844, Joseph Smith introduced the concept of an infinite lineal hierarchy of Gods. The book of Abraham describes the creation as being performed by “the Gods” (4:1), and the King Follett Discourse further describes these Gods as a council presided over by a “head God” clearly a patriarchal superior to God the Father (Larson 1978, 202-03; Hale 1978,212-18; Kirkland 1984, 38). Elohim was used variously as the name of God the Father, the name of a “Head God” who directed the Father in the creation of the world, and as a plural representing the Council of the Gods. The name Jehovah was also still associated with the Father, not with Jesus. The Holy Ghost was now generally referred to by Joseph Smith as being a personage.” (https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue_V19N01_79.pdf?source=post_page)

“Within Mormonism, Jesus is identified with the Yahweh of the Old Testament.” (<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/9-things-you-should-know-about-mormonism>)

“Generally, most Christians outside the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints hold to the common doctrine that God the Father is the God of the Old Testament. Antagonists to the Church espouse this while attacking the Church using certain scriptures, such as Isaiah 43:10.”

(<https://www.fairmormon.org/archive/publications/jesus-lord-of-the-old-testament>)

The purpose of this article is not to take away anyone’s faith if they believe that God, the Father, is the God of the Old Testament. However, when one examines verses of the King James Bible, one can certainly understand that there is valid, sufficient scriptural support for the interpretation that Jesus Christ is Jehovah of the Old Testament, and what this can potentially entail is tremendous. I have noticed that while reading the scriptures in this light, especially where it is written, “thus saith the Lord,” I gain a terrific understanding of the divinity and wonders of God.

(<https://www.fairmormon.org/archive/publications/jesus-lord-of-the-old-testament>)

https://www.jstor.org/stable/43200787?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents

Kirkland’s *Elohim and Jehovah in Mormonism and the Bible* from dialoguejournal.com, a Mormon theological journal, describes not just Jesus’ role, but the role of the pantheon of gods in Mormonism. While stressing that the Mormon theology of the godhead was in flux, this article states that Joseph Smith, one of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints greatest leaders, taught about a linear hierarchy of gods. A similar, and most likely the same, linear hierarchy of gods is also described in the Nag Hammadi, a set of codices found buried in Egypt in 1945. Dan Brown’s *The Da Vinci Code* helped popularize not just the Nag Hammadi and its theology, but the fact that freemasonry appears to have inculcated that theology.

It is commonly believed by most theologians that many of the Mormon Church’s teachings were “borrowed” from freemason ceremonies and theological understanding because many of its early leaders were high ranking freemasons. A quick google search of freemasons and Mormonism will yield over 65,000 hits on the topic. Although much of masonic ritual and belief was shrouded in the mysteries of a secret society, these secrets have been leaked over time. The fact that the pantheon of gods embraced by the Mormon Church closely matches the linear hierarchy of gods described in the Nag Hammadi is not surprising given how both are linked to freemasonry.

The Nag Hammadi and Gnosticism

Attempting to summarize Gnostic theology would be akin to trying to summarizing Protestant theology. Such a summary, although possible, would require an extensive opus. However, various schools of gnostic thought do share the common thread that the physical is bad and the only thing that matters is the spiritual, which is good. In a variety of codices (manuscripts) included in the Nag Hammadi, the creation of the Earth and man is described as an errant and deviant event. It is definitely not good in the eyes of the supreme god. In this gnostic version of the creation story, there is a central, supreme god, who creates another spiritual god who creates another spiritual god and this pattern of a linear array of spiritual gods being created continues until a tragic mistake is made. In this gnostic creation scenario, a spiritual being, known as the Demiurge, creates the physical.

“The creator god, the one who claimed in evolving orthodox dogma to have made man, and to own him, the god who would have man contingent upon him, born ex nihilo by his will, was a lying demon and not God at all. Gnostics called him by many deprecatory names: "Saklas", the fool; "Ialdebaoth", the blind god; and "Demiurge", the architect or lesser creative force.”

<http://gnosis.org/naghamm/nhlintro.html>

In gnostic theology, you have the Demiurge looking out at his creation, including a physical man and woman with an indwelling spirit and saying it is good. Under this gnostic scenario, the supreme god at the center of creation realizes that although the Demiurge has made a massive mistake in creating the physical, physical mankind has also been created with a spirit that can be redeemed. This supreme god at the center or start of a linear hierarchy of gods, like the one described by Joseph Smith, decides to have mercy on these physical human beings because of their spirit. He decides to send a representative carrying his true message of salvation directly to mankind. And the messenger sent to the garden by this true supreme god is the serpent. Thus the bad guy in Holy Scripture becomes the good guy in gnostic scripture.

The Demiurge becomes furious when he realizes that the supreme god is interfering, and he intervenes to make sure the serpent, the messenger from the supreme god, cannot continue to communicate with the Demiurge's creation. He casts mankind and the serpent out of the garden. The demiurge later takes the nation of Israel as his own and orders them to honor him above all other gods in Exodus 20:2-3, which makes him the “mean god” of the Old Testament. However, the supreme god has not given up on saving the spirit in physical human beings, although he cannot stand the physical and what it represents. So he later sends another representative, a spirit in the form of a dove upon the man Jesus, and continues his quest to save

the spirit of men from the purgatory of the physical because all physical is bad. Thus, Gnosticism syncretizes parts of Holy Scripture to advance an ungodly message that all physical is bad. This perverted Christianity was popular in the first two centuries of the Christian church. It appears that the teaching that the pre-incarnate Jesus was the God of the Old Testament is rooted in the theology that the physical is so bad that the supreme God can have no direct contact with it.

There is a direct parallel between the supreme God sending the serpent as his representative in the gnostic creation tale and the Father sending his Son as his representative in Old Testament times in Mormon and church of God theology. The gnostic creation tale makes it clear that a representative, the serpent, is required because the physical is so bad the supreme God cannot interact with it. Both Mormon and church of God theology also require a representative, the pre-incarnate Jesus, and they simply imply that the Father can have nothing to do with the physical because it is bad. However, Genesis 1:26 disagrees with this gnostic teaching by teaching us the physical creation is good. And the book of Ecclesiastes details why the physical creation of man is good. It is just the way the Creator wanted it.

The Name YHVH

Was it the pre-incarnate Jesus and not the Father who gave his name as the eternal one, YHVH, to Moses in Exodus 3? *“Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God...And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.”* (Ex. 3:6, 13-14) I AM THAT I AM is translated from the Hebrew Tetragrammaton, YHVH, the name of God. A name so holy most Jews won't speak it and replace it with the phrase Hashem, which means “the name.” Mormon and church of God theology would have the pre-incarnate Jesus, since only Jesus can supposedly interact with mankind, introducing himself to Moses and the captive Israelites as the eternal one. The Father is never revealed or introduced to the nation of Israel in this scenario because the YHVH that speaks is supposedly the pre-incarnate Jesus.

Some have tried to say that YHVH is a family name of the Father and Jesus. The argument has even been presented that the pre-incarnate Jesus adopted the name YHVH, but the only support for this argument is circular and not scriptural. This blurring of the differences between Father and Son is equivalent to what the Trinity does: “Oh, YHVH is the Father here, but is the pre-incarnate Jesus there,” the argument would be made. Thus, these teachers get to pick and choose what the scripture states rather than taking it in context.

The context of Exodus 3:13-14 has God revealing His individual name to Moses, not his family name. This would be equivalent of asking the name of the U.S. president you are to follow and being told the name is FDR or JFK or LBJ. No one would ever confuse the initials of these individual presidents with their family name. The name of God that had not given to the patriarchs was given to Moses to identify God to the captive nation of Israel. Moses extensively used the name of YHVH in his writings about the time of the patriarchs and even about the events of creation, even though that name was not used at those times. So Moses must have thought the name was pretty important. And throughout Israel's history, YHVH was always understood to be the supreme God.

Who Interacted with Mankind in the Old Testament?

A fellow Christian who believes that Jesus is the God of the Old Testament suggested that you could use a Venn diagram to show how God interacts with mankind. A Venn diagram is a very useful tool in showing how sets are related by displaying overlapping subsets. In the diagram below the yellow set represents the godkind, known as Elohim in Hebrew. The other set represents mankind, who were created in Elohim's image, but as physical beings. This fellow Christian proposed that the overlap looks very much like Jesus the Christ to him.

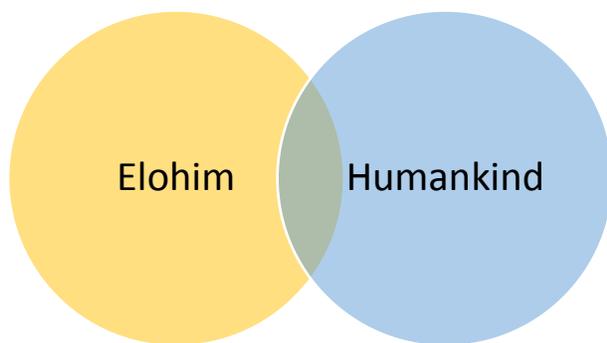


FIGURE 1- VENN DIAGRAM OF ELOHIM AND GODKIND

His hypothesis has the intersection of the two sets, in dark area where the two circles meet, representing how Jesus the Christ interacted with the called-out humans of Old Testament times. But what this Venn diagram also visually displays is the Mormon and churches of God teaching that the Father, the supreme God of all things, does not interact with humankind, even those who are called into covenant by Him.

Many Christians believe that they are separated from God because of the sin committed by Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and that "original sin" has stained all of mankind. Although original sin is beyond the scope of this paper, the Bible does state that our sin can

separate us from God if we don't repent. *"But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear."* (Is. 59:2) However, the events of Genesis 2, before mankind sins, prove that sin cannot be what separated the Father from physical mankind if the pre-incarnate Jesus was the God of the Old Testament, YHVH.

Mankind and God before "the Fall"

The first chapter of Genesis depicts the Elohim creating the earth. In Genesis 1:26, multiple Elohim are working together to create mankind in their image. *"And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth."* (Gen. 1:26) And in Genesis 1:31, the Elohim declare that everything that they created was good. The second chapter of Genesis, before "the fall" of man in the garden, before there was any sin that could have separated man from God, depicts YHVH actively working with mankind. If YHVH is the pre-incarnate Jesus, then the Father refused to directly interact with sinless, but physical mankind.

As an interesting side note, if the Lord God (YHVH Elohim) of Exodus 3 and throughout the Old Testament is the pre-incarnate Jesus, then scripture never reveals the name of the Father. For that matter, the Father is never revealed until the New Testament. The King James phrase LORD God has been replaced with the Hebrew phrase, YHVH Elohim, in the verses below to help clarify the relationship between God and man in the Garden of Eden before "the fall." Of course, church of God theology logically replaces YHVH with the pre-incarnate Jesus in the verses below.

*These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the **YHVH Elohim** made the earth and the heavens, And every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew: for the **YHVH Elohim** had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was not a man to till the ground. (Gen 2:4-5)*

*And the **YHVH Elohim** formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. And the **YHVH Elohim** planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground made the **YHVH Elohim** to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. (Gen 2:7-9)*

And the YHVH Elohim took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And the YHVH Elohim commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: (Gen. 2:15-6)

And the YHVH Elohim said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him. And out of the ground the YHVH Elohim formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. (Gen. 2:18-19)

And the YHVH Elohim caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the YHVH Elohim had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. (Gen. 2:21-22)

Sinless mankind was just as God designed him and her to be. YHVH freely interacted with mankind face to face in the Garden of Eden. Mankind may not have truly understood God when they interacted with Him, but they certainly physically saw and heard Him. Called out Christians today also don't truly know or comprehend everything about the Father of the universe, but we are supposed to be able to know His will and His being as a child knows their parents. Paul stated, *"For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known."* (1Cor. 13:12) The biblical account of Genesis 2 again repeats the pattern of the Father being unwilling to have any direct interaction with mankind if YHVH is the pre-incarnate Jesus, leaving them fatherless and in the care of an older brother from the time of creation.

Why would the Father want no direct contact with mankind when He was more than willing to interact face to face with Satan? We know that Satan is the father of lies (*"Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it."* (John 8:44)), yet Job 1 shows that God had no issue in dealing with a sinful, spiritual Satan face to face when He was dealing with other sons of God. In church of God theology, the answer again appears to be that the Father can deal with sinful spirits, but not with His physical children, even the sinless ones in the Garden of Eden nor the faithful ones in covenant with Him.

Why would the Father never want to directly interact with some of his children, the physical ones? The errant gnostic knowledge of the Nag Hammadi summarizes why their supreme god

would not directly interact with physical mankind. We are physical and the physical is bad. So bad it is irredeemable. Therefore until we cast off this corruptible body and put on the incorruptible spirit, the father wants no direct contact with us. And the church of God parallel to this gnostic idea requires an intercessor, a representative who can put up with the “stench of the physical.” This idea is not scriptural because God the Father loves us (*John 3:16*), thus there is something terribly wrong with a theology that forces the Father to have no direct interaction with His children.

The suggestion has been made that the Father’s plan has always been to have no direct contact with His human children and His plan should not to be questioned. However the pertinent question that should be asked instead is, “Was it God’s plan that the Father never have direct contact with His physical children”? The contention of this paper is that the creator God, the Father of all things, loves His physical children just as He loves His spiritual creations. If YHVH in the Old Testament is the Father, that love and interaction is easy to see. If YHVH in the Old Testament is the pre-incarnate Jesus, then it leaves the question open as to what kind of love a father has if he wants no interaction with his kids.

Thou shall have no Other Gods before YHVH Elohim

The most damaging and dangerous aspect of the theological belief that Jesus was YHVH, the God of the Old Testament, is that if this belief is taken at face value, the only logical interpretation of certain scriptures leaves the pre-incarnate Jesus echoing the sentiments and acts of Satan by trying to replace the Father with himself. This is not what scripture reveals or teaches and the Mormons and the churches of God would state that is not what they teach. However, the errant theology of the pre-incarnate Jesus being the God of the Old Testament leaves no other viable alternative for understanding scripture, except to wave their hands and say that is not what we teach. Below are the first and fourth of the Ten Commandments, as well as Exodus 34:14, with the English words for God and LORD replaced by the Hebrew from which they were translated.

And Elohim spake all these words, saying, I am YHVH thy Elohim, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other Elohim before me. (Ex. 20:1-3)

But the seventh day is the sabbath of YHVH thy Elohim: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days YHVH made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested

the seventh day: wherefore YHVH blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it. (Ex. 20:10-11)

For thou shalt worship no other god: for YHVH, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God. (Ex. 34:14)

Substituting the phrase pre-incarnate Jesus for YHVH, which is what Mormon and church of God theology logically does in these scriptures, leads to Jesus telling the nation of Israel to have no other gods before him, just as the gnostic Demiurge did. Exodus 20:1-3 would read:

And god spake all these words, saying, I am the pre-incarnate Jesus your god, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me. (Ex. 20:1-3)

But the seventh day is the sabbath of the pre-incarnate Jesus thy god: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the pre-incarnate Jesus made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the pre-incarnate Jesus blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it. (Ex. 20:10-11)

For thou shalt worship no other god: for the pre-incarnate Jesus, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God. (Exodus 34:14)

The god that brought Israel out of Egypt is the same god who created human kind and spoke the Ten Commandments and rested on the Sabbath to make it holy. And that creator God taught that there were to be no other gods above him.

Would the pre-incarnate Jesus have taught the nation of Israel not only to place him above the Father, but also to love him more than the Father? If YHVH is the pre-incarnate Jesus that is exactly what he was doing of Deuteronomy 6:4-5, known as the Shema. It is important to remember that the book of Deuteronomy is a Suzerain covenant, a legally binding contract between a Suzerain, a king, and his vassals. Therefore the portion of Deuteronomy 6 known as the Shema is not just a theological statement, but a legally binding contract on Israel throughout its generations.

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. (Deut. 6:4-5)

*Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name.
(Deut. 6:13)*

If we substitute the phrase pre-incarnate Jesus for YHVH, as Mormon and church of God doctrine does, we get;

*Hear, O Israel: **The pre-incarnate Jesus our Elohim** is **YHVH**: And thou shalt love **the pre-incarnate Jesus thy Elohim** with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. (Deut. 6:4-5)*

*Thou shalt fear **the pre-incarnate Jesus thy Elohim**, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name. (Deut. 6:13)*

And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. (Luke 4:8)

YHVH teaches Israel to serve Him in Deuteronomy 6:13. In Luke 4:8, Jesus tells Satan that only God the Father is to be served. If YHVH is actually the pre-incarnate Jesus, this creates a conflict in scripture. However there is no conflict if YHVH is the Father. John 10:35 states that scripture cannot conflict with itself. Thus a harmonization of Luke 4:8 with Deuteronomy 6:13 only supports the Father being YHVH and not the pre-incarnate Jesus.

This conflict also exists in the Shema if YHVH is the pre-existent Jesus, but again there is no conflict if the YHVH is the Father. This theological impasse is traversed by modern day Trinitarian Protestants who have adopted the attitude of loving Jesus as the one God with all their heart, soul and might while ignoring the Father portion of the Trinity because He supposedly was the mean, wrathful god of the Old Testament, but they are mystically still one. That is not how Deuteronomy 6, or the Shema in particular, was ever understood by Israel nor how it should be understood today. If YHVH Elohim is the pre-incarnate Jesus, as Mormons and many of the churches of God teach, then you have Jesus teaching Israel to love him, serve him and hold him above the Father, who is never even introduced to mankind until New Testament times. And even a cursory study of the gospel accounts shows that is not what Jesus taught.

Jesus teaches that the Father was the God who was to be loved in the Shema, thus avoiding the conflict of the pre-incarnate Jesus teaching Israel to love him above the Father, but also mandating that the Father was YHVH. Jesus was asked which was the greatest commandment

near the end of His ministry in Matthew. He said it consisted of two parts, Leviticus 19:18 and Deuteronomy 6:4-5, the Shema.

Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord (kyrios) thy God (theos) with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. (Matt. 22:37-38)

Jesus cannot be referring to himself. So when Jesus uses the phrase *kyrios sou theos*, the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew YHVH Elohim, in his re-statement of the Shema in Matthew 22, he is stating the greatest commandment is to love the Father thy God with everything you have. Unsurprisingly, that means that Exodus 20:2-3, Deuteronomy 6:13 and Deuteronomy 6:4-5 are describing how mankind should interact with and serve the Father. That requires that the god who spoke the Ten Commandments and who freed Israel from Egypt and was the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to be the Father and not the pre-incarnate Jesus.

Who was Israel Supposed to Love?

Scripture reveals that there are a multitude of heavenly beings, like the angel of YHVH, the 24 elders of Revelation and even Satan, but the Shema teaches that the Father, YHVH, is the supreme spirit being, the God of creation. We are to serve and love Him. This is what Judaism taught throughout the second temple period and how they understood the Shema at the time of Jesus. The Mormon and churches of God errant doctrine that the pre-incarnate Jesus is actually YHVH, the God of the Old Testament, is in direct contradiction with Jesus' teaching about what the greatest commandment is.

How did the teaching that the pre-incarnate Jesus enter the theology of the churches of God? One of the leading teachers of the church of God movement, Herbert Armstrong, has been noted as plagiarizing one of his major doctrinal distinctives, British Israelism, almost word for word from J.H. Allen's *Judah's Scepter and Joseph's Birthright* ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J. H. Allen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._H._Allen)). Many have also stated that Armstrong's rejection of the Trinitarian representation of the godhead in favor of a family of god teaching was also plagiarized from the Mormon teaching on the nature of god. It appears that while plagiarizing the relationship of godkind with humankind as a family, a far more scriptural explanation than the Trinity, Armstrong also "borrowed" the Mormon concept that the pre-incarnate Jesus was the God of the Old Testament, YHVH.

The early Mormon teachers taught a number of doctrines that do not align with scripture. Along with teaching that Jesus was the God of the Old Testament, they also taught that the apostle John

never died, but still roams the earth today. They even wrote that the apostle John would never die in the book of Mormon. (<https://christianity.stackexchange.com/questions/11528/what-is-the-basis-of-the-lds-mormon-belief-that-the-apostle-john-never-died>). John himself dispelled the rumor that he would live until Jesus' return in his gospel.

Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me. Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? (John 21:21-23)

It would appear that Mormon leaders like Brigham Young and Joseph Smith misunderstood John 1:18, 5:37, and 6:46 at least as much as they misunderstood John 21:21-23. It was a scriptural fact that the God of the Old Testament had been seen. These teachers believed John 1:18, 5:37, and 6:46 stated that no man had ever physically seen or heard the Father and built a theology upon this mistranslation and their own gnostic inclination against the physical creation. They did their own version of a transubstantiation. However, instead of the bread becoming the actually body of Jesus, the God of the Old Testament becomes Jesus. Apparently, Armstrong incorporated the Mormon theological error that Jesus was the God of the Old Testament into his theology hook, line and sinker, hopefully without understanding the gnostic thought behind this belief. But this gnostic understanding obviously clouds the nature of the Father and inhibits the kind of relationship He desires with us and did have with many figures of the Old Testament.

The Father did not Orphan Mankind to the Care of their Older Brother

Humankind is called the children of God throughout scripture. If the pre-incarnate Jesus was the God of the Old Testament and becomes the intercessor to the Father in the New Covenant, then the children of God have never really met or directly interacted with their Father. For all intents and purposes we were orphaned from the start, placed under the care of an older brother.

Up until about 200 A.D., during the second temple period, Jewish teachers taught that both the YHVH and angel of YHVH, who was the leader (captain) of the hosts of YHVH, interacted with Israel and they had a lot of scriptural support. This angel of YHVH is almost certainly the Son of man in Daniel 7, who is the pre-incarnate Jesus. In the gospels, Jesus teaches that the Father is supreme and he is following the Father's will as the Son of man from Daniel 7. The epistles

concur about the relationship between the Father and Son by labeling the Father as God and Jesus as Lord. This relationship is shown in Daniel 7.

I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire... I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.... Until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom. (Dan. 7:9, 13-14,22)

Daniel 7 has the Son of man going to the supreme God, the ancient of days. Judaism would have identified that ancient of days as the eternal one, YHVH. Yet Mormon and church of god theology teaches that YHVH is the pre-incarnate Jesus. Scripture details how the Son of man would be granted the power of the ancient of days when He came on the clouds. Jesus never claimed to be the ancient of days, YHVH, even if the churches of God have tried to shoehorn him into that role. The gospels have Jesus continuously pointing the disciples to the Father as the supreme God, the ancient of days in Daniel 7. However, both Jesus and his apostles declared him to be the Son of man. Jesus even declared this at his trial before the high priest Caiaphas.

Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy. (Matt. 26:64-65)

Jesus claimed to be the Son of man in Matthew 26, which the Sanhedrin would have understood to be the “secondary” god, often called the angel of YHVH or the captain of YHVH’s hosts. Caiaphas understood Jesus’ claim and accused him of heresy for claiming to be YHVH’s right hand man, the Son of man from Daniel 7. Are we going to doubt Jesus because of an errant understanding of the Greek word *horao*? Although *horao* often means to physically see, John also uses *horao* to mean understanding. Jesus was teaching us in John 1:18, 5:37 and 6:46 that no one except Jesus truly knew the Father. This is verified by Matthew 11:27. In John 14:7-9, Jesus is teaching that he was sent and the Holy Spirit would be given to God’s called out ones so we could understand who and what the Father is.

Christians should not continue to accept the Mormon theological belief that Jesus was YHVH Elohim, the God of the Old Testament and not the Son of man that he identifies himself as. Although the Mormons can explain away Exodus 20:2-3 with their pantheon of gods, the churches of God are left with a teaching whose only logical conclusion is that the pre-incarnate Jesus claimed to be superior to all gods, which must include the Father, in Exodus 20:2-3. Of course the churches of God do not teach that, but if their theology was at all internally consistent and logical that would be their only alternative. In like manner, the only logically consistent way to understand the Shema in the theology of the churches of God would be to have Jesus teaching Israel to love him and serve him above the Father.

The Trinity was designed to keep us from loving the Father as He wants by shrouding Him in mystery, but even Trinitarians understand the Father had a direct relationship with mankind in the Old Testament. That is just not possible if the pre-incarnate Jesus was actually the God of the Old Testament.

The question asked by the old Bo diddly song is, "So who do you love?" Jesus taught we are to love the Father and serve him above all. Inserting the pre-incarnate Jesus into the role of God of the Old Testament may appease some gnostic feeling about the physical being bad, but it irreparably damages the kind of relationship we are supposed to have with our Father. It makes Him both unknown to us and unknowable by us by obfuscating the true meaning of John 14:7-17 and nullifying the meaning of Exodus 20:2-3 and Deuteronomy 6:4-5.