

CHRISTIAN RESEARCH

JOURNAL

Why Not Believe in
Karma & Reincarnation?



An Ethic of
Instagram

Mythicisim and
the Public Jesus
of History

How Do You Know
That the Bible
Is God's Word?



The Rise of the Comic Book Antihero



\$6.95 USA - \$8.95 Canada



7 25274 92376 2

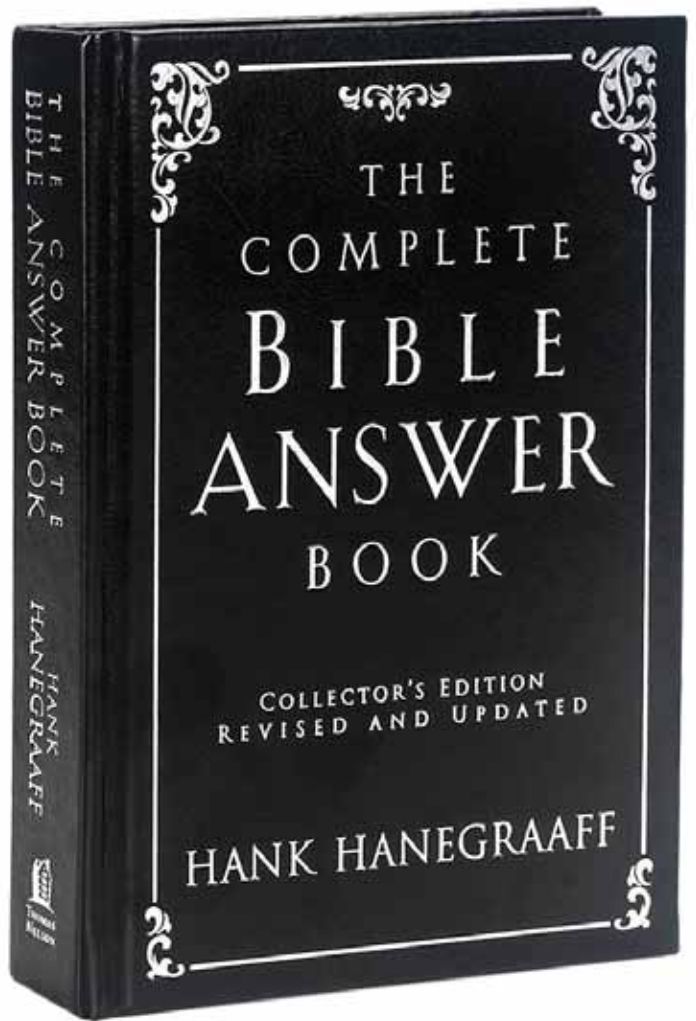
Vol. 39 / No. 05 / 2016

Revised and Updated from Hank Hanegraaff *The Complete Bible Answer Book*

This revised, taller, and wider updated edition contains more than 210 entries, including **twenty-six** “Hankronyms” that make it easy not only to *remember* but also *recall*.

Questions you’ll encounter in this volume run the gamut from the common to the complex, including:

- What are the ABCs of redefining marriage?
- What is a near-death experience?
- What is replacement theology?
- Did the cock crow once or twice after Peter denied Christ?



INTERIOR COMPARISON



(new version)



(old version)

Available at Equip.org or by calling 1-888-700-CRI (700-0274).



10 **Suicide Squad, Deadpool, and the Rise of the Comic Book Antihero**

by John McAteer

Cultural Apologetics: Something is changing in our cultural portrayal of superheroes. In highly successful films such as *Deadpool*, *Batman vs. Superman*, and *Suicide Squad* and popular TV shows such as *Lucifer* and *The Preacher*, morally compromised superheroes are willing to lie, steal, torture, and even murder bad guys. How should we respond to the rise of the antihero?

18 **Mythicisism and the Public Jesus of History**

by Craig A. Evans

Historical Apologetics: Although the vast majority of historians and other scholars affirm the historical existence of Jesus of Nazareth, the view that such an individual never existed—mythicisism—is gaining popularity in the public arena. Settling the issue is a matter of historical evidence, and, beyond question, the existence of Jesus is the best explanation of this evidence.

26 **Logical and Biblical Defeaters of Reincarnation and Karma**

by Douglas Groothuis

Interfaith Apologetics: While appealing on the surface, reincarnation and karma are riddled with inconsistencies. For example, the religions undergirding them deny the existence of a personal God, yet the karmic system of justice makes no sense if not executed by such a God. Denying the possibility of grace, karma and reincarnation ultimately become a burden no one can bear.

34 **Rejoicing over Owls: Thoreau and the Gift of Being**

by Stephen Mitchell

Cultural Apologetics: At Walden Pond, Henry David Thoreau spent two years in solitude rigorously considering his own life so as to discover what is essential to the life of a man. He celebrated creation and embraced the gift of being with joyful gratitude. But is attuning oneself to the patterns of nature sufficient for living an essential human life?

40 **An Ethic of Instagram**

by Amber M. Stamper

Ethical Discernment: Since the launch of the social media photo-sharing app Instagram in October 2010, the trendy service has grown exponentially across a broad spectrum of users. What precisely are the appeal factors, and what is the most ethical approach to Instagram for conscientious users?

48 **The Internal Testimony of the Holy Spirit: How Do You Know That the Bible Is God's Word?**

by James N. Anderson

Doctrinal Discernment and Biblical Apologetics: The Protestant Reformers held that in order to have an assured knowledge that the Bible is God's Word, there must be an internal testimony of the Holy Spirit in the believer's heart. This view has its attractions, but it also raises theological and philosophical concerns, which in this article James N. Anderson answers quite lucidly.

DEPARTMENTS

04 **From the Editor**

06 **Effective Evangelism**

Confessions of an Evangelist: Stereotypes Don't Always Have to Be True

08 **Practical Hermeneutics**

Is It Possible for Humans to See God?

55 **Reviews**

Perry Marshall's *Evolution 2.0*...Douglas Groothuis's *Philosophy in Seven Sentences*

58 **Viewpoint**

Should We Continue to Use the Term *Sexual Purity*?

60 **Postmodern Realities**

Patriotism or National Idolatry? Rightly Ordering Love of Country

62 **Ask Hank**

Have You Seen Our Online Film Reviews?

An online complement to the CHRISTIAN RESEARCH JOURNAL? It is most definitely our goal to make an online version of this magazine available to subscribers. In addition to an online version of the complete print issue, we envision added features that will complement the articles and additional articles that will allow us to respond more quickly to current events. Before this vision can be implemented fully, certain things will need to fall into place for Christian Research Institute. In the meantime, we already have taken two significant steps in this direction.

As a bimonthly magazine, it is always a challenge to identify a film worthy of a review; assign an author to write the review; get him or her into an early screening of the film; allow time for the review to be written, edited, and fit into the production process of the next issue; and then publish the review while the film is still in the theaters (hopefully, while it is still creating buzz). And so, throughout this year, we have been posting online-only film reviews to CRI's website.

Four films have been reviewed so far: *The Young Messiah*, *Last Days in the Desert*, *Finding Dory*, and the *Ben Hur* remake that is currently in theaters. A fifth review, of the comic book antihero films *Suicide Squad* and *Deadpool*, seemed so important that I decided we should make room for it in the pages of this issue of the JOURNAL instead.

Fortunately, our ace film reviewer John McAteer has been available to write these reviews. (*Finding Dory* was reviewed by another one of our highly qualified film and TV critics, Robert Velarde, author of *The Wisdom of Pixar*, among other relevant books.) The quality of the online reviews is in no way inferior to the reviews you have read in these pages. Forthcoming films to be reviewed online include *Dr. Strange* (about the Marvel Comics "Master of the Mystic Arts") and *Hacksaw Ridge* (a World War II film, directed by Mel Gibson, based on the real-life story of Desmond Doss, a Seventh-day Adventist conscientious objector who served as a medic in the brutal Battle of Okinawa). If you receive regular e-mails from CRI, then you have received notice of these reviews. If not, then all you need to do is sign up for Hank Hanegraaff's Daily e-Truth at <http://www.equip.org/e-Truth/>. To view the reviews mentioned above, simply go to www.equip.org, click on Reviews, and type the film titles into the search engine.

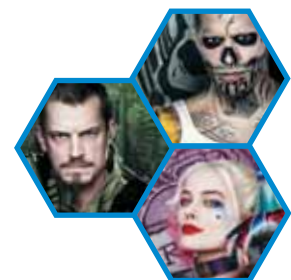
As Melanie Cogdill has announced previously in this column, we also are featuring online audio interviews with authors of our articles on our recently launched Postmodern Realities podcast. These interviews provide a strong complement to the print articles. They allow for more spontaneous and personal reflections on the topics by the authors while providing an opportunity for them to answer questions that commonly are raised. As of this writing, seventeen episodes have been uploaded already to the CRI website, going back to late 2015. Go to <http://www.equip.org/crj-pmr-podcast/> to access past interviews and to subscribe to the podcast on iTunes.

These online complements to the JOURNAL are yours to access at no added cost. We hope you will take advantage of them and let us know what you think!

—Elliot Miller



Benedict Cumberbatch as Dr. Strange



CHRISTIAN RESEARCH JOURNAL

Publisher Christian Research Institute

President Hank Hanegraaff

Executive Vice President/COO Paul Young

Executive Vice President/CAO Larry F. Johnston

Editor-in-Chief Elliot Miller

Managing Editor Melanie Cogdill

Art Director Dwayne Cogdill –

www.saintdwayne.com

Consulting Editor Stephen Ross

Copy Editors Lee A. Dean, Amy Leonhardt

Contributing Writers

Michael W. Austin, Francis J. Beckwith, Paul Copan,
Joe Dallas, Ellen Mary Dykas, Matthew Flannagan,
Douglas Groothuis, Gary Habermas,
James Patrick Holding, Eric Johnson, Clay Jones,
Scott Klusendorf, Paul L. Maier, Daniel Mann,
John McAteer, Sean McDowell, Bill McKeever,
Angus J. L. Menuge, Stephen Mitchell,
Sharon Fish Mooney, Paul A. Nelson, Holly Ordway,
Adam C. Pelsler, Bob Perry, Richard Poupard,
Carole Ryan, Mark Sayers, Dan Story,
Melissa Cain Travis, Robert Velarde, David Wood

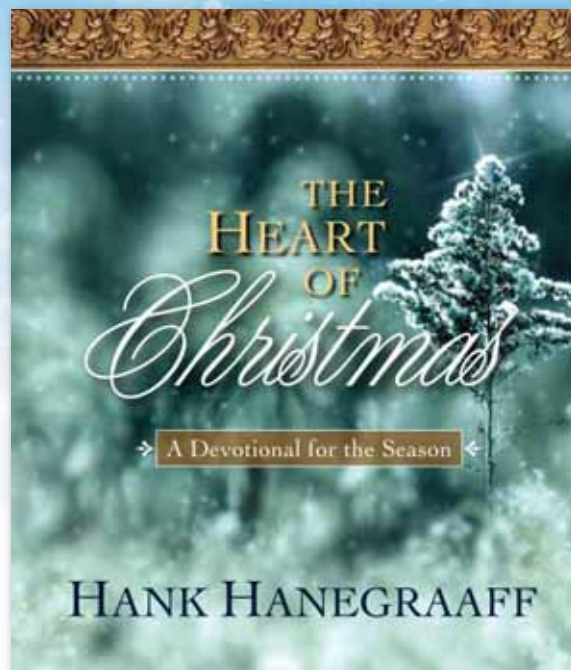
As an organ of the Christian Research Institute (CRI), the CHRISTIAN RESEARCH JOURNAL's primary commitment is to "contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). In keeping with this commitment, the JOURNAL's mission is both evangelistic and pastoral: evangelistic in that it is dedicated to furthering the proclamation and defense of the historic gospel of Jesus Christ; pastoral in that it is dedicated to helping His followers identify and distinguish between essential Christian doctrine and doctrine that is peripheral, aberrant, or heretical.

CRI's areas of research specialization include (1) non-Christian religions, sects, and cults; (2) the world of the occult (including practices, phenomena, and movements); and (3) issues of contemporary theological and apologetic concern (e.g., aberrant Christian teachings and practices; philosophical and historical speculations that challenge biblical reliability; relativistic ethics that compete with biblical ethics for influence on culture and public policy; and sensational conspiracy theories). In its approach to all of these themes, the JOURNAL strives to be at once scholarly and readable, uncompromising and charitable; offering analyses and critiques that are biblically, rationally, and factually sound.

For CUSTOMER SERVICE or to subscribe: Write to CHRISTIAN RESEARCH JOURNAL, P.O. Box 8500, Charlotte, NC 28271-8500; or call (U.S. and Canada) 888-7000-CRI; or contact us online www.equip.org.

Freelance writers: Please e-mail queries or manuscripts to submissions@equip.org. CHRISTIAN RESEARCH JOURNAL does not take responsibility for return or publication of unsolicited manuscripts. Manuscripts are evaluated on a quarterly basis. If your correspondence does not include your e-mail address, we will not reply to your unsolicited manuscript submission. Please allow at least four months for a reply. Postmaster: Send changes of address to Christian Research Institute, P.O. Box 8500, Charlotte, NC, 28271-8500 USA.

...because Life and Truth matter™



THE HEART OF CHRISTMAS

A Devotional for the Season
by Hank Hanegraaff

As you prepare your home for Christmas,
prepare your heart as well.

Let the Christ of Christmas prepare your heart for the celebration of His birth through a devotional journey beginning December 1st and climaxing Christmas day. Each of the 25 devotions includes a Scripture reading, carol, and questions for meditation and discussion.

Hank uses the acronym C-H-R-I-S-T-M-A-S to focus on who Christ is and why He came.

For a very special discounted offer on 6 and 12 packs please call us at 1-888-7000-CRI.

www.equip.org or call 888-7000-CRI

Confessions of an Evangelist: Stereotypes Don't Always Have To Be True

You're downtown walking the streets with your friends, laughing and having a good time, and then you hear it. Your ears strain to take in the faint sound of what seems to be someone screaming. As you get closer, you see a bullhorn pressed to the preacher's lips in one hand and a beat-up Bible in the other. His voice is at full volume now, people around look uncomfortable, and you think, "Here we go again with another legalistic street preacher. What am I going to hell for this time?"

When I first became a Christian, I was the one rolling my eyes and expressing how those "crazy street preachers give Christians a bad rap." Yet ten years later, and after a good gut-wrenching turn through the humility press, I am now one of those annoying "legalists." I can tell you, I've been to hell and back (metaphorically) in my experiences of sharing the gospel with strangers on the streets, but it's a great slice of heaven I get to experience in this life.

Training Grounds. My husband, Steve, and I met in Texas at a ministry that trained us in evangelism.¹ The training involved listening to a few lectures before we were dropped off at the local outdoor swap mart, loaded with gospel tracts, and told to engage people in conversation. This was one of my first tastes of sharing the gospel with strangers. I got mostly weird looks, but at the end of the day, one guy high-fived me and thanked me for talking to him.

Six months later, Steve and I were married and living in his homeland of New Zealand. One Friday night soon after we moved there, we went out to explore the streets of Auckland

— the country's biggest city. We stopped at a Korean prayer station where a man came up and asked if he could pray for us. Afterward, with a big smile on his face, he told us he believed Steve was going to be a preacher. We weren't sure about that, but it got the wheels spinning in our brains that we need to be out sharing the gospel. So Friday evenings became evangelism night in downtown Auckland.

Fear of Man. Being submerged in an atheistic, pluralistic culture with people from all over the world was definitely a fun training playground. As we took the fearful yet thrilling plunge into street evangelism on our first night out with gospel tracts in hand, little did we know what awaited us the rest of our years in Auckland. From encounters with the homeless, drug addicts, drunks, philosophers, professors, and any religion/cult you could think of, there was never a dull moment. We had our share of being threatened, slapped, targeted with liquid or flammable substances, and called every imaginable name — the most unique was "deconstructionists" by Hare Krishnas. But Steve orchestrated the scariest situation.

Muslims from all over came to New Zealand to learn English, and oftentimes we were the first Christians with whom they had a chance to speak. They typically don't go to clubs or bars, so the coffee shop we stood in front of every week was a popular hangout for them. One night, Steve came up to me and said, "If I start getting beat up, call the cops." Next thing I knew, he walked into the middle of a huge group of Muslims and said, "Does anyone here know Muhammad?" We ended up inside the



From encounters with the homeless, drug addicts, drunks, philosophers, professors, and any religion/cult you could think of, there was never a dull moment.

coffee shop with an *imam* (Muslim religious leader) and two of his friends. After buying us a drink of our choice, the five-hour conversation began. They told us about Islam, and in exchange we shared about Christianity and the one, true God of the Bible. When the shop closed, they invited us to their apartment nearby where we talked for three more hours. In the end, their conclusion was that we should kill ourselves. Since there was nothing we could do to merit God's grace in saving us, what was the point of life if we couldn't earn His favor, especially as a Christian?

Another time, after seeing a play downtown, Steve got in a conversation with a guy who invited him to speak to his church's youth group. A few weeks later, we met him at someone's house. After thirty minutes of pleasantries, we noticed no youth had shown up. Instead, our hosts popped in a video and encouraged us to convert to Seventh-day Adventism. After the shock of being deceived wore off, we went back two more times to engage them in Bible study concerning where the scriptural errors of this group lie.

Unexpected Fruit. Through these experiences, we grew in Christ like we never thought possible. For the most part, people rejected the gospel to our face, no matter how much we pleaded with them to repent and trust Christ. *Results* became understood to mean not that the whole city would fall on its knees but rather through the preaching of His Word, God would soften hardened hearts for His glory. So our job was to be messengers, and He would take care of how that panned out in each individual.

Then came the preaching. Neither one of us was keen on it; in fact, we were perfectly content handing out tracts and getting in conversations with people. However, Steve suddenly found himself in the middle of it. Someone walked by and said something snarky, and then left instead of staying and defending his views. In response, Steve hopped on a bench and loudly shared the gospel with the man as he walked away. Since Steve had bolted through the door into open-air preaching and was now comfortable with the idea, we guessed this meant we had better get an amp with a mic and set up a second mic to give people a chance to engage with us.

Engage they did! If you've never seen atheists eagerly fight over a mic to try and stump the preacher, you haven't been fully entertained. We loved that they loved to engage — at least they cared enough about God to stop and talk about Him.

One night a guy who shared that he was homosexual went up to the mic and tried as hard as he could to brand Steve with the "God hates fags" characterization. Try as he might, he couldn't. The final straw was when a guy we were friends with came up to Steve in the middle of that conversation and gave him a big hug to say hi. Steve had shared the gospel with him many times before. So he mentioned to the angry guy on the mic that

he was a homosexual, and Steve indeed did not hate him. The other guy knew it was over and stormed off.

I can go on about how we met a group of Americans who came to New Zealand to evangelize during the Rugby World Cup. The Lord used them to get us to a seminary in South Carolina, and eventually out at the local abortion clinic here in Greenville, but that's another story. Hey, maybe that Korean guy at the prayer station was right about Steve becoming a preacher.

Go and Tell. Yes, the stories we have are crazy, and our experiences have brought me from tears of frustration and sadness to shouts of joy. But as for you, reader, and for every other Christian, the message is from Christ: "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation" (Mark 16:15 ESV). Go into the highways and byways, and seek out the unbelievers. Don't wait for them to come to you, see how moral you are, and ask why. After all, can't the atheist seem just as moral on the outside? By all means live righteously, but the difference comes in sharing the gospel with them using words.

Whether it's at your workplace, among family and friends, or on the streets, go and tell. It will be one of the hardest endeavours to take up in obedience, as the world, the Devil, and the flesh fight hard to keep you from doing it. Why? It's the sharing and preaching of God's Word that He uses to save sinners through the work of the Holy Spirit.

But won't God call every one of His sheep to Himself whether I obey Him or not? I'll meet that with a resounding "yeah/nah," which is famous in New Zealand. "Yeah" in that God doesn't need my help in this work, but "nah" in the sense that He commands me and every other Christian to "honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame" (1 Pet. 3:15–16).

And finally to remember, "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you" (John 15:18–19, ESV). — *Laura Cliff*

Laura Cliff studies apologetics with her evangelism buddy/husband at Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary. Underneath it all, she is grateful to be a sinner saved by God's grace.

1 Minister Ray Comfort's style of evangelism.

Is It Possible for Humans to See God?

Is it possible for humans to see God? At first glance, the Bible seems to give conflicting answers to this question. Skeptics and Muslims draw attention to the apparent contradiction to call into question the divine inspiration and authority of the Bible.

On the one hand, the Old Testament informs us that God appeared in the past to certain individuals. God appeared to Abraham (Gen. 12:7; 17:1; 18:1), Isaac (Gen. 26:2, 24), Jacob (Gen. 35:1, 9; 48:3), and Moses (Exod. 3:16; 4:5). God Himself said to Moses, “I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty” (Exod. 6:3).¹ Hagar said she saw God (Gen. 16:13). After Jacob wrestled with God, he said, “I have seen God face to face, and yet my life has been delivered” (Gen. 32:30). Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel are said to have seen God on Mount Sinai (Exod. 24:9–11). Isaiah saw a vision of God, although it nearly ruined him (Isa. 6:5).

The Invisible God. On the other hand, the New Testament teaches that God is invisible and cannot be seen by mortals. The apostle Paul ascribes the attribute of invisibility to God when he uses the phrase “the invisible God” (Col. 1:15). He also speaks of “the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God” (1 Tim. 1:17). He goes further and says God “dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see” (1 Tim. 6:16). The apostle John solemnly affirms that “no one has ever seen God” (John 1:18; cf. 5:37; 6:46; 1 John 4:12).

The Old Testament says God was seen by humans in the past. The New Testament says no one has ever seen God or can see God. We therefore might be tempted to draw the conclusion that the Old Testament and the New Testament are simply at odds with each other.

But the Old Testament also contains teaching about God that would require us to add some serious qualifications to the bald statement that God was seen by humans in the past. The very first verse of the Old Testament draws an absolute distinction between God the Creator and the creation that He made: “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1). In starting off with this majestic statement, the Bible establishes the most fundamental truth about God—He is not a creature but the Creator. God’s not being a creature has profound implications. If He is not part of the created order, then He is a most pure spiritual being utterly uncreated and nonphysical. Ergo, He must be invisible, that is, not able to be seen with created eyes.

Moses made this clear later in his instructions to the



Jacob wrestling with the Angel of the Lord

Israelites. He warned them against making any visible depictions of God, such as the carved images and idols that the surrounding nations made of their gods. Why? Because God has no physical form. Moses reminded the Israelites that when God appeared on Mount Sinai to enter into a national covenant with them, “Then the LORD spoke to you out of the midst of the fire. You heard the sound of words, but saw no form” (Deut. 4:12). He goes on to say, “Since you saw no form on the day that the LORD spoke to you at Horeb out of the midst of the fire, beware lest you act corruptly by making a carved image for yourselves, in the form of any figure” (Deut. 4:15–16). This prohibition against making a carved image of God and bowing down and worshiping it is enshrined in the second commandment (Exod. 20:4–6; Deut. 5:8–10) and is given added solemnity with a fierce curse attached: “For I the LORD your God am a jealous God.” Since God, being the Creator and not a creature, has no physical form, God doesn’t want to be misrepresented as if He were a creature with a physical body. This is a central and oft-repeated (and oft-broken!) commandment of the law given to Israel.

The Uncreated God. When God appeared to Moses, He revealed His identity as “I AM WHO I AM” (Exod. 3:14). Theologians through the ages have taken this key statement of the divine identity to mean that God is pure, absolute, and perfect being. No creature can define its own being this way. Only God can say that He Himself determines who He is. In another passage in

John is not saying that no one has ever seen a theophany but that no one has ever seen God as He is in His essence.

the Prophets, He says, “I the LORD do not change” (Mal. 3:6). This means God is immutable. All created things, by contrast, are subject to change. These two verses are different ways of getting at the same truth—God is a nonphysical being who utterly transcends the created realm. If God’s being is self-determined and immutable, then God’s being or essence is not created and physical, and therefore no creature can see God, at least not in the ordinary meaning of “see.”

Early Judaism, following the teaching of the Torah, held the same exalted conception of God as a purely spiritual being. The Jews believed that God created all the visible things from the invisible things, “being himself invisible” (2 Enoch 48:5). Philo thought that God’s essence was invisible and perceivable only by a spiritual or intellectual vision of the soul (*Special Laws* 1.41–46; *Cherubim* 97; *Names* 1–10). The Jews regularly engaged in strident polemic against the idolatry of the pagans, arguing that “there is one God, sole ruler, ineffable, who lives in heaven, self-begotten, invisible” (*Sibylline Oracles* 3:11–12). Josephus believed God to be so spiritual that “we can neither see nor think of anything like him” (*Against Apion* 2.191). So it’s not just a Christian idea to say that God is essentially spiritual, nonphysical, and invisible.

God Revealing Himself. What, then, are we to make of the verses quoted at the outset, which say that God appeared to humans or that humans saw God? If one examines the context of many of those statements, it is not actually God Himself in His spiritual, invisible essence that appeared or was seen, but a physical self-manifestation of God. Sometimes the text explicitly states that God appeared in the form of an angel, usually called “the angel of the LORD.” On other occasions, it is some other physical medium that God used to reveal His presence, such as the glory-cloud that led the people of Israel in the wilderness (Exod. 13:21–22) or the Shekinah glory that filled the tabernacle and the temple (Exod. 40:34–38; 1 Kings 8:10–11). In rare cases, certain prophets were granted access to heaven where they saw visions of God (1 Kings 22:19; Isa. 6:1; Ezek. 1:1; Dan. 7:9). The key point is that it was not actually God Himself in His essence that people saw but God appearing to humans through created media. That is why they are called theophanies, from the Greek words *theos* (God) and *phainesthai* (to appear, to be manifest).

Even the theophanies, however, were too overwhelming for sinful humans to endure in their full force. When Moses asked God to show Him His glory, God replied that he would be allowed to see God’s back, “but you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live” (Exod. 33:20). Isaiah was terrified when he saw his vision of God and cried out, “Woe is me! For I am lost...for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!” (Isa. 6:5). When the angel of the Lord appeared to Samson’s parents, they said, “We shall surely die, for we have seen God” (Judges 13:22). All

humans after Adam are unclean and sinful. To behold a perfectly holy God would only bring about our instant death. There is not only a metaphysical gulf separating us from seeing God but also a moral gulf.

But that gulf has been bridged in Jesus Christ. The ultimate self-revelation of God is the Incarnation. As the apostle John put it so majestically in the prologue to his Gospel: “The Word became flesh and tabernacled among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father...No one has ever seen God; the only begotten God, who is in the Father’s bosom, he has made him known” (John 1:14, 18, translation mine). John is not saying that no one has ever seen a theophany but that no one has ever seen God as He is in His essence. But the incarnate Son, who is begotten of God’s essence, has made Him known. Jesus said, “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9).

Thus there is a sense in which humans can see God and a sense in which we cannot. We cannot see God’s invisible spiritual essence, but some people were able to see Him when He revealed Himself by appearing to them in various physical forms adapted to created eyes. In the times before the coming of Jesus the Messiah, God revealed Himself in the form of the angel of the Lord or in various created media like the glory-cloud. But now in these last days, God has revealed Himself definitively in the incarnation of His Son.

A surface reading of the Bible presents what appears to be a contradiction between the Old Testament and the New. On further reflection, however, even the Old Testament testifies to God’s spiritual, invisible nature. And when it speaks of God being seen, it is only insofar as He appeared or manifested Himself to humans through physical phenomena not to be identified with God’s essential being. The New Testament emphasizes that no one has ever seen God. This is not to deny the theophanies and visions of the Old Testament. It is to put them in their proper place as partial and inferior revelations in comparison with what is now the ultimate self-revelation of God in the person of His incarnate Son, “the image of the invisible God” (Col. 1:15).

—Charles Lee Irons

Charles Lee Irons, PhD, is an adjunct professor at California Graduate School of Theology. He maintains a website of biblical and theological studies at www.upper-register.com.

¹ All Scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version (ESV) except where otherwise noted.