

PART 3

Typical Jewish Objections to the Gospel

How Can Man Become God?

In our series, “Overcoming Jewish Objections to the Gospel,” we come to another major obstacle for Jewish people--the deity of Messiah.

Let me begin by saying that we believe that Jesus as a man did not become God but that Jesus, as God, became a man.

When we speak of God, we are referring to the creator and ruler of the world, the holy, infinite, eternal God. The most important affirmation of faith that Jewish people make comes from the words of Deuteronomy 6:4, “Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is One.”

While it is true that the Jewish Scriptures (Old Testament) do not clearly speak of the deity of Messiah with unequivocal clarity, they do shed light on the subject. The orthodox rabbis hold to the hope of a coming Messiah. This hoped-for Messiah is clearly to be a person with supernatural attributes that speak of more than a mere man.

The Jewish Scriptures speak of Messiah as a king from David’s line (2 Sam 7: 12-13) and also as a person who would appear with the clouds of heaven. In Daniel 7, we read of a mysterious person “like a son of man” who is seen in the presence of the “Ancient of Days.” This individual is given universal and everlasting dominion.

These two types of messianic descriptions in the Old Testament are not sharply distinguished from one another. When one examines closely the expected king of David’s line, we find that he is to be far more than an ordinary, earthly king. He has distinctly supernatural attributes. We also see the supernatural figure of the seventh chapter of Daniel who is appointed king and all the nations come and worship him.

These divine and human attributes of the Messiah appear clearly in the ninth chapter of Isaiah as well. There the coming deliverer is spoken of as “one who shall sit upon the throne of David.” However, his kingdom is to be everlasting and he himself is actually called “...Mighty God, Everlasting Father,

Prince of Peace.” In this passage we have the deity of the coming messiah presented in the Jewish Scriptures.

In Psalm 2:7 and 12 the nations are called to do homage to God’s Son. Concerning this Psalm, Rashi admits, “Our rabbis expound it as relating to King Messiah.” Many rabbis today would probably refer the Psalm to David rather than the Messiah. But the words of the Psalm and a comparison of history would exclude David as a possibility. In this passage as well as the Daniel passage, God tells the person He is speaking to that He is turning over the dominion and the authority of the whole world to him. David must be excluded since history teaches us that David never had that kind of dominion or authority.

We could spend a great deal of time speaking about how God became a man in Yeshua. But I will end with a brief discussion about the Angel of the Lord that sheds a great deal of light on this matter. In Genesis 16, we learn about a unique angel who first appears to Hagar, the mother of Ishmael, when she ran away from Sarah. Sarah had asked Abraham to cast her and her son out of their household because both were taunting her son, Isaac, and the Lord honored her request. The first appearance of this special and unique angel occurred while Hagar was in the wilderness, alone and fearful. It was in the midst of her great distress that “the angel of the LORD found her” and revealed Himself to her (16:7). He appears many more times in the Jewish Scriptures and this “angel of the Lord” is one of the best arguments demonstrating God’s appearing as a man prior to his birth in a manger in Bethlehem. Who is this “angel of Yahweh”? What makes him different from other angels who appear in the Old Testament?

H. C. Leupold, in his *Exposition of Genesis*, summarizes who this angel is. (pp. 500–501)

- ♦ “The angel of the LORD” was a divine personage and “He is to be regarded as a kind of pre-incarnation of the Messiah.” The identity

of "the angel of the LORD" with Yahweh is fully established in v. 13. "Then she called the name of the Lord who spoke to her, 'You are a God who sees'; for she said, 'Have I even remained alive here after seeing Him?'" The angel of the LORD is not a created being, but the divine being Himself. He is "in a class by Himself and recognized as a superior being by the writers of the Old Testament."

- ◆ *The angel of the LORD definitely identifies Himself with Yahweh on various occasions. In verse ten, "Moreover, the angel of the Lord said to her, 'I will greatly multiply your descendants so that they will be too many to count.'" This is no ordinary messenger of God. He doesn't say, "God will." He says, "I will greatly multiply your descendents." Examine Genesis 18:19–21 and note who is speaking and who is making the promises to Abraham. "The angel of the LORD" in chapter seventeen is "God" in chapter eighteen. The angel of the LORD is God Himself.*
- ◆ *The angel of the LORD reveals Himself to people and they understand Him to be a divine person (16:13)*
- ◆ *The writers of the Old Testament call Him Yahweh (LORD). In a time of crisis the angel of*

the LORD visited Gideon to give encouragement (Judges 6:11-24). It climaxes with worship in verse 20–21, "The angel of God said to him, 'Take the meat and the unleavened bread and lay them on this rock, and pour out the broth.' And he did so. Then the angel of the Lord put out the end of the staff that was in his hand and touched the meat and the unleavened bread; and fire sprang up from the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened bread. Then the angel of the Lord vanished from his sight." Note carefully what happens next. "When Gideon saw that he was the angel of the Lord, he said, 'Alas, O Lord God! For now I have seen the angel of the Lord face to face. The Lord said to him, 'Peace to you, do not fear; you shall not die.' Then Gideon built an altar there to the Lord and named it The Lord is Peace. To this day it is still in Ophrah of the Abiezrites" (vv. 2–24)

- ◆ *The angel of the LORD appeared to Manoah and his wife promising them a son (Judges 13:2–23). The passage reaches its climax in verses 19–22. Manoah said to his wife, "We shall surely die, for we have seen God" (v. 22). The angel of the LORD is God.*

-Roy Schwarcz

