

Beacon Bible Study - Praying the Bible - 5th October

Study 2 – Theophanies in the Bible

A. Introducing theophanies

- A theophany is a 'God-sighting' (from 'theo' meaning God and 'phaino' meaning 'to show or appear').
- There are some specific God sightings in the bible, where God appeared to human beings.

Theophanies are relatively rare in the Bible, perhaps because it is very dangerous to be visited by the presence of God – we know from Exodus 33:20 that it is normally fatal to experience a theophany. In a sense the story of Jesus on Earth is one long theophany (John 14:9) but the term is generally reserved for dramatic, short-lived, super-natural experiences of God.

- These visions of God give insights into God's presence, character, surroundings and actions. They help us to see God as he reveals himself.

As part of God's word we believe these theophanies give real glimpses into God 'up close and personal'. Reading them help us to see, imagine, sense and feel what God is like as we pray to him.

- Praying these God sightings is important because
 - a) it give us language about Him and His presence
 - b) it helps us be aware of the spiritual dimension of heaven as we pray
- We pray the theophany passages by reading them out loud and then extemporizing in prayer about what strikes/ fascinates/ engages our spirit. We can insert our name in place of the bible character in the passage to make it more personal

B. Examples of theophanies:

1. Ezekiel's vision of God's glory and the cherubim (Ezekiel 1v3-28)
2. Moses' vision of God at Mount Sinai (Exodus 19v16-20, v24-25, 20v1-21)
3. Moses's vision of God coming down in a cloud (Exodus 33v15-19, 34v5-8, v29)
4. Jacob's night vision of wrestling with God (Genesis 32v24-30)
5. Isaiah's vision of God in the temple (Isaiah 6v1-8)
6. Daniel's vision of the heavenly court room (Daniel 7v9-10, v13-14, v18, v21-22, v24-27)
7. John the Baptist's vision of heaven open at Jesus' baptism (Luke 3v21-22)
8. John's vision of the glorified Jesus (Revelation 1v9-18)
9. John's vision of the heavenly throne room (Revelation 4v1-11)
10. John's vision of the Heavenly Warrior Faithful and True (Revelation 19v11-16)

(This series is based on Wes & Stacy Campbell's teaching on 'Praying the Bible')