

How Did Moses Speak with God Face to Face?

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Most anyone who has ever studied the Bible to any degree at all is probably aware of the fact that Moses is an individual who has a very major and even unique role in the Bible. Not only is he the individual that God used to write the first five books of the Bible, he's also the individual that God used as His physical instrument to lead the Israelites out of Egypt.

He performed lots of miracles through Moses to not only get Pharaoh's attention, but to show the Israelites that Moses was representing the true God. And he's not just some crazy guy making wild claims. In fact, Moses is the physical instrument that leads the Israelites out of Egypt, up to the Red Sea. And of course, God's power parted the Red Sea, but they see Moses as the physical instrument there who's making all this happen.

He leads the people through the Red Sea and then all the way to Mount Sinai, where they then are able to make a covenant with God. And then after they make this formal covenant, Moses is the individual who goes up to Mount Sinai and receives the Ten Commandment tablets directly from God and brings them back down to the people.

So, you can see, obviously, Moses plays a very major role in the Bible. But there's another unique thing stated in the Bible about Moses. In fact, the Bible tells us a couple of times that this particular issue sets him apart from other individuals that God used in the role of a Prophet. And what I'm referring to is it refers to the fact that God spoke with Moses "face to face", and that this was unique in His relationship with Moses as compared to other individuals God used as a Prophet.

However, when you look at that particular fact, oftentimes this can be a head scratcher for people who study the Bible because they'll look at these statements and the fact it clearly or repeatedly says that God spoke with Moses "face to face". But then they turn around and read the New Testament, and they see a handful of times where the New Testament specifically states that no one has seen God. And no one in this physical life can see God and live to tell the story. Well, this seems to present a pretty major contradiction for us.

What we're going to do today is to dig into this subject a little more deeply to understand how we should understand this statement, and how do we solve this apparent contradiction. So, if you'd like a title for this sermon, it's:

How Did Moses Speak with God Face to Face?

Because as I mentioned in the introduction, there's a number of things about Moses' role that are very unique. And obviously, he plays a very major role in the narrative of the Bible, and he was even involved in writing the first five books of the Bible. But again,

as I mentioned, there's a couple of statements that say that the fact that God spoke with Moses "face to face", this is something unique that sets him apart from other individuals that God used in the role of a Prophet.

And to see this, let's turn over to Numbers 12. We're going to jump into the middle of the context here. What's happening in this chapter is Miriam and Aaron, Moses' brother and his sister, were both criticizing Moses due to a marriage that he had entered into with an Ethiopian woman. Well, God's not happy about their criticism, and we're going to jump into the context here where God's basically calling them aside to chastise them because He's not happy with their behavior. But let's notice how He describes His relationship with Moses. Because He says here that this is a unique relationship that He has with Moses. We'll start here in verse 4 of chapter 12.

Num 12:4 *"Suddenly the LORD said to Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, "Come out, you three, to the tabernacle of meeting!" So the three came out. 5) Then the LORD came down in the pillar of cloud and stood in the door of the tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam. And they both went forward. 6) Then He said, "Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I, the LORD, make Myself known to him in a vision; I speak to him in a dream. 7) Not so with My servant Moses; He is faithful in all My house. 8) I speak with him face to face, Even plainly, and not in dark sayings; And he sees the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid To speak against My servant Moses?" (NKJV)*

And notice He states here that He speaks with him "face to face". And He says this is different than how He works with all the others that He has used in the role of a Prophet. Now we're going to come back to these verses later in this sermon and dig into this a little more deeply. Because if we notice the contrasts that are made here in these verses, it gives us some real insight as to what exactly is meant by this phrase "face to face". We're going to see that that's the key to understanding what appears like major contradictions here. But at this point just notice that again God is directly saying this is something unique that sets Moses apart from others. In fact, it's something unique that separates him from all the other individuals that God has used in the role of a Prophet.

Well, this is stated again at the end of the book of Deuteronomy. So, if you turn over to Deuteronomy 34, we'll notice a very similar statement. And again what's happening here in the context -- because we're going to jump into kind of the middle of the chapter here -- but this is kind of wrapping up at the very end of Moses' life, where Moses dies and basically, the baton of the leadership of Israel gets passed from Moses on to Joshua. And that's basically what's happening in this chapter. But as we read through this, we'll see once again it describes this unique relationship that God had with Moses that set him apart from other individuals that were ever in the role of a Prophet. Let's pick up here in verse 8.

Deu 34:8 *"And the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days. So the days of weeping and mourning for Moses ended. 9) Now Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on*

him; so the children of Israel heeded him, and did as the LORD had commanded Moses. 10) But since then there has not arisen in Israel a prophet like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, 11) in all the signs and wonders which the LORD sent him to do in the land of Egypt, before Pharaoh, before all his servants, and in all his land, 12) and by all that mighty power and all the great terror which Moses performed in the sight of all Israel.” (NKJV)

And it mentions here again -- as I mentioned in the introduction -- lots of miracles that God performed through Moses to get not only the attention of the Israelites but of Pharaoh and of the Egyptians as well. Making it very clear that the true God was working through him. But again, we see this statement of this relationship of speaking with God “face to face”. This is something unique to Moses that sets him apart from all the other Prophets.

But again, as I mentioned in the introduction, this is oftentimes a head-scratcher. Because people see this, He spoke with Moses “face to face”, but yet there's also numerous statements in the New Testament written hundreds of years after these accounts took place that say no one has ever seen God. So, let's take a look at that. Then we'll dig into how do we solve what appears like a contradiction here. So just to notice some of these statements, turn over to John 1. We're going to pick up here in verse 18.

John 1:18 *“No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.” (NKJV)*

Notice obviously when it's referring to “God”, it's obviously referring to the Father. Because it's contrasting Him with Christ. So obviously both are being spoken about. But the individual referred to as “God”, that's obviously the Father. And it's saying that no one has seen Him. And this isn't the only time that this is stated in the New Testament. There are multiple statements like this. And to notice some others, let's turn over to John 6. We'll pick up in verse 45.

John 6:45 *“It is written in the prophets, ‘And they shall all be taught by God.’ Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me. 46) Not that anyone has seen the Father, except He who is from God; He has seen the Father.” (NKJV)*

So obviously Christ is saying, "No other physical human being has seen the Father, but I have. I've been in heaven. I've seen the Father, but other physical human beings have not really seen the Father." Now, this is mentioned again in 1 John. If you turn over to 1 John -- this is the first of John's three epistles. And if we turn to 1 John 4, we'll see again a very similar statement. This is in 1 John 4 in verse 12.

1 John 4:12 *“No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us.” (NKJV)*

So, you can see that it's made very clear with multiple statements that no physical human being has seen God. Well, then how do we solve this issue? Because it says Moses talked to God "face to face", but yet we have these statements that say no one has seen God. Now, we'll dig into this in a little more detail as we get a little further into this sermon. But just to kind of give you a preview of where we're going, the key here is understanding what the Bible means and when it refers to "face to face".

Because when we use the term "face to face" in our modern day vernacular in English, what we're specifically referring to is two individuals that are directly meeting in front of each other who are able to look into the whites of each other's eyes. We're not just referring to them having a direct conversation with each other. We can do that over the phone. With modern technology today -- if you've got a good cell phone connection -- a person can be on the other side of the world. And if you've got a good connection, you can have an interactive real-time two-way conversation. But we don't describe that as "face to face".

When we say "face to face" in English, we mean we're basically looking into the whites of each other's eyes. And we'll see later as we go through this sermon that understanding what the Bible is really saying there is the key to understanding this. But let's first of all just look at some of the ways that people sometimes try to solve this -- what appears to be a major contradiction.

Now, a doctrine that I was taught growing up in the Church of God that was kind of an earnest attempt to try to solve this contradiction -- but as we're going to see here was a misguided attempt to do that -- was a doctrine that was oftentimes referred to as the "God of the Old Testament". Now, what this doctrine referred to -- it was the idea that when you read any account in the Old Testament and you see a God being interacting with a human being -- particularly like with Moses where it says He talked "face to face". The assumption was it can't be God the Father. It has to be just Jesus Christ it's referring to. And we backed that up by flipping to the scriptures I just read and say, "Well, see, no one has ever seen God the Father. So, Moses couldn't have been talking to Him. It has to be Jesus Christ."

Well, there's a problem when you start trying to make that doctrine work with all of scripture. Because what you'll find is to make that doctrine work, what you have to assume is that the Father, He doesn't have a name unique to Himself. And He doesn't really have titles unique to Himself. Now, we look at Jesus Christ and say, "Well, obviously, He has a name that specifically differentiates Him from the Father and others. He has a number of titles that specifically describe His role unique to the role that He fulfills different from the Father."

But then you have to look at the Father and go, "Well, no, His name is kind of a community name. It refers to either one of Them and you just kind of slot in whoever you want to see." And then you have to take most all of His titles and do the same thing with them. The reason being is if you're consistent with His name or you're consistent with the titles then this idea that if a human being is interacting with a God being in the

Old Testament, that's always Christ, well, that quickly falls apart. Because you start following these titles and you see numerous times where they're clearly referring to the Father. Especially in the New Testament where these titles are being contrasted with Christ and it's very clear that they're uniquely referring to the Father. But then you'll see these titles in the Old Testament interacting with human beings and talking to them. And then the whole idea falls apart.

So, just to see a good example of this, turn over to Exodus 3. This is the burning bush account when God first appears to Moses and tells him He's got a job for him to do. To go lead the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt and take them to Mount Sinai to make a covenant with God. And the purpose is to lead them into the Promised Land. Well, let's read through this account and notice when God refers to His name and notice particularly the titles that are ascribed to Him. Because we're going to see here in a minute, you can turn over to the book of Acts and follow these same titles and they're very clearly uniquely referring to the Father. So, to be consistent we have to conclude that who Moses is talking to here is the Father. Let's notice here in verse 13.

Ex 3:13 *“Then Moses said to God, “Indeed, when I come to the children of Israel and say to them, “The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they say to me, ‘What is His name?’ what shall I say to them?””* (NKJV)

And notice He just said the “God of your fathers”. Now, we're going to see that that is a title that's consistently used here, and then we're going to see in the book of Acts in just a minute who that title is attributed to. But then pick up in verse 14.

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

Notice He didn't say "I am" is His name. I've covered this in other sermons and there's a study paper on my website called “The Name of the LORD” that will go into this in more detail. But in verse 14, He's giving him basically the meaning of His name. But notice, if we read down a little bit further in verse 15, He's going to state what His name is.

“15) Moreover God said to Moses, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel: ‘The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. This is My name forever, and this is My memorial to all generations.’ ” (NKJV)

Now, again, if you read this in English, in most translations, you're going to see the word “LORD” in all caps. If you notice when I typically read it in sermons, I'll pronounce it as “Yehovah”, because that's the Hebrew word there. And that separates “LORD” in all caps from “Lord” which is typically Adonai in Hebrew. It's just the way they've done it in English really confuses the subject. But notice He says, "This is My name." Now, if you do a study on this subject, and again, there's a study paper on the website that will go into that in a lot more detail than I'm going to have time to cover today. But you'll notice whenever the Bible refers to "My name is" or "His name is" it's always going to have in

English “LORD” in all caps or “Yehovah”. Either just that word or that word with “God of your fathers”, “the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob”, etc. added on. Basically, Yehovah with additional words or titles added onto it.

But also take note of the fact that never in the Bible do you ever see it where it's talking about “LORD” in all caps or “Yehovah”, where it says, “Our name is”, or “Their name is”. It's never plural pronouns. It's always “My name is” or “His name is” because it's the name of one individual. That's why it's always singular. It's a unique name.

But also again, notice those titles the “God of our fathers” and the “God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob”, because that's going to be significant here in a minute. But just pick up in verse 16 to follow this through.

“16) Go and gather the elders of Israel together, and say to them, “The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, appeared to me, saying, ‘I have surely visited you and seen what is done to you in Egypt; 17) and I have said I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, to a land flowing with milk and honey.” ” (NKJV)

And then also He's talking about how I'm going to take you out of Egypt. Now you'll notice in the Mount Sinai exchange where God is giving the Ten Commandments there in chapter 20. He identifies Himself as “Yehovah, the God who brought you out of Egypt.” That's how He identifies Himself. And that's repeatedly referred to throughout the Bible. The God who brought you out of Egypt.

But now, as I mentioned previously, notice these titles, the “God of our fathers” and the “God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob”. Now let's turn over to Acts 3. And we'll see very clearly who these titles are attributed to. And we're going to see a number of examples here where we just can't get confused because it's going to be verses where it's contrasting these titles with Christ. So, we can't get confused. It's going to be painfully obvious we're referring to the Father. This is in Acts 3, and we'll pick up in verse 13.

Acts 3:13 *“The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His Servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go. 14) But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, 15) and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses.” (NKJV)*

Now notice here that Christ is the servant of the “God of our fathers” and the “God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob”. And the “God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob” and the “God of our fathers” is the one who raised Christ from the dead. Obviously, these titles apply to the Father. And it's contrasting Him with Christ so we just can't get confused. There's no mental gymnastics we can do to try to make this generic and say it's

referring to both of Them. No, Christ didn't raise Himself from the dead. He was dead, and the Father raised Him from the dead. Now, jump over to verse 25 of Acts 3.

Acts 3:25 *“You are sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, “And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’ 26) To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities.” (NKJV)*

See, once again we have the “God of our fathers” and the “God of Abraham”. This is referring to the Father because it's contrasting Him with Christ, and we just can't get confused. So now turn over to Acts 5, and we'll see this again. It's Acts 5, and we're going to pick up in verse 30.

Acts 5:30 *“The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. 31) Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. 32) And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him.” (NKJV)*

So once again, we have the “God of our fathers” being contrasted with Christ. So, there's no way to mistake the “God of our fathers”. That that's God the Father. Well, that's the God being that identified Himself when He's speaking in Exodus 3 to Moses. What did He call Himself? "I'm the God of your fathers. The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." And notice when He gave His name, He said, "It's My name". He didn't say, "This is Our name". This is a community name I share with several individuals. No, this is My name. It's a unique name for one individual. So, you can see, obviously the God being that Moses is interacting with, who he talked with “face to face”, that's the Father.

But now how do we solve what appears to be a major contradiction? Because we read multiple verses in the New Testament that say no one has seen the Father at any time. And here we have Moses talking to Him “face to face”. Well, how do we solve that? Well, the key is understanding that when the Bible uses the term “face to face” -- remember the Bible was not written in English. And it was written thousands of years ago. These accounts with Moses, this was written in Hebrew.

The English translation of what Moses wrote in Hebrew comes out as “face to face” in English. But in our modern day English we attach a meaning to that that was not the meaning Moses was trying to say. Because I used the example previously that we can have a telephone conversation today. We can have a real-time interactive conversation with even multiple people if we do a conference call. But no one would call that “face to face”, because we're not in the same room with each other. And more importantly, we're not looking into the whites of each other's eyes.

Typically, when we say, "I had a face to face meeting with someone," we mean we're looking right at each other. We're looking in the whites of each other's eyes. Because

we typically don't use the phrase "face to face" in our modern day English, unless that's the meaning we're trying to convey. But now let's look at a couple of examples that Moses wrote himself, where it's obvious if we compare the context, that can't be what he meant, because it wouldn't make any sense.

So, let's turn over to Deuteronomy 5, and we'll see what's happening in this chapter is Moses is basically recounting the Mount Sinai Covenant experience. It's originally recorded in Exodus 20. He's kind of retelling that story. But let's notice here that he talks about God speaking with the Israelites "face to face". That's the term he's going to use here in verse 4. But let's pick up in Deuteronomy 5 in verse 1.

Deu 5:1 *"And Moses called all Israel, and said to them: "Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your hearing today, that you may learn them and be careful to observe them. 2) The LORD our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. 3) The LORD did not make this covenant with our fathers, but with us, those who are here today, all of us who are alive. 4) The LORD talked with you face to face on the mountain from the midst of the fire." (NKJV)*

Now, again, think of this in terms of how we typically use the phrase "face to face" today. As I've mentioned several times already, when we use that phrase, what we're typically conveying is we were standing directly in front of each other. And we weren't just in each other's proximity. We were looking right into the whites of each other's eyes. We could see each other's facial expressions. We saw the color of their eyes, and we were looking right at them.

But now let's notice in chapter 4 that Moses makes it very clear they were definitely not looking into the whites of God's eyes. In fact, they saw no form of His appearance whatsoever. But yet it's described as "face to face". Let's pick up here in verse 15.

Deu 4:15 *"Take careful heed to yourselves, for you saw no form when the LORD spoke to you at Horeb out of the midst of the fire," (NKJV)*

Obviously, by saying "face to face", he didn't mean they were looking into the whites of each other's eyes. Because they saw no visual representation of what God looked like at all. And if we just read the following verses, we'll see a very specific reason why He did this. Now, pick up in verse 16.

"16) lest you act corruptly and make for yourselves a carved image in the form of any figure: the likeness of male or female, 17) the likeness of any animal that is on the earth or the likeness of any winged bird that flies in the air, 18) the likeness of anything that creeps on the ground or the likeness of any fish that is in the water beneath the earth. 19) And take heed, lest you lift your eyes to heaven, and when you see the sun, the moon, and the stars, all the host of heaven, you feel driven to worship them and serve them, which the LORD your God has given to all the peoples under the whole heaven as a heritage." (NKJV)

You see, God made a specific point of making sure they saw no visual image whatsoever. Because He knew from their idolatrous background -- because their whole experience prior to this, their whole lives had been spent in Egypt in a very idol worshiping environment. You can see that just from the famous golden calf account in Exodus 32. Moses is up on the mountain longer than they're expecting, and what do you know, not long at all, and they're making a golden image to go and worship. Well, that was their experience. You make a likeness of something you see as a god, and you bow down and worship it.

Well, God realized if they saw anything that they associated as the physical form of God, that's what they would do. So, He made absolutely sure that they didn't see any visual representation of God whatsoever. But yet it's described as "face to face". So, from this example alone, we can see that when the Bible uses the phrase "face to face", it's not conveying the meaning that that means to us today in our modern English.

Let's see another example of this. Turn over to Exodus 33. This is specific to Moses' relationship. And it really helps clarify for us that when God referred to Him speaking to Moses "face to face", Moses wasn't seeing His face either. He wasn't looking into the whites of His eyes. Now, pick up here in Exodus 33, in verse 11.

Ex 33:11 *"So the LORD spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. And he would return to the camp, but his servant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, did not depart from the tabernacle."* (NKJV)

And notice here, it just told us -- as we've read a couple of times previously -- that God spoke to Moses "face to face". But let's notice, if we just notice the latter part of this chapter, clearly, he was not seeing the face of God. He was not looking into the whites of God's eyes. And that's very obvious if we just pick up now in verse 17.

Ex 33:17 *"So the LORD said to Moses, "I will also do this thing that you have spoken; for you have found grace in My sight, and I know you by name." 18) And he said, "Please, show me Your glory.""* (NKJV)

And notice Moses is asking to actually see Him. And notice the response He gives.

"19) Then He said, "I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." 20) But He said, "You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live." 21) And the LORD said, "Here is a place by Me, and you shall stand on the rock. 22) So it shall be, while My glory passes by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock, and will cover you with My hand while I pass by. 23) Then I will take away My hand, and you shall see My back; but My face shall not be seen." (NKJV)

So, see, obviously when he says he talked to God -- Moses talked to God "face to face" -- he's not referring to literally seeing His face. Seeing the whites of His eyes. Because

He made it very clear, “you can't see My face and live”. And see, the key here is understanding that when the Bible uses this phrase “face to face”, it doesn't carry the same meaning that we typically attach to that phrase.

Now, just to dig into the Hebrew here -- not only in the account here in Exodus 33, but also in the account we read previously in Deuteronomy 5, when it says “face to face”, the word for “face” is transliterated into English as “paneḥ”. It's Strong's # 6440. And the definition I'm going to give you comes from The Complete Word Study Dictionary of the Old Testament by Warren Baker and Eugene Carpenter. They define it as:

“A masculine plural noun meaning a face. Although the literal meaning of face is possible..., most of the time this word occurs in a figurative, idiomatic phrase.”

Obviously, from the context of the two examples we just looked at, it has to be referring to a figurative idiomatic sense. As we're going to see, it refers more to direct communication when we put all the details together. It's not referring to literally seeing a face. Because Moses was directly told, “You can't see My face and live.” And we know from the Deuteronomy account with all the Israelites, they didn't see any visual representation whatsoever. So, they clearly were not seeing a face. They didn't see anything that they could associate as a visual image, because God knew they'd make an idol if they did.

And to further clarify exactly what this is getting at, turn back over to Numbers 12. We looked at this earlier, but now we're going to dig into more detail. Because I mentioned before, if we look at the contrasts in the context of the statement that's made here as God's basically scolding Miriam and Aaron and telling them about His unique relationship with Moses -- let's focus not just on the phrase “face to face”, but let's notice here what it's compared to. Because we've already seen, obviously, “face to face” doesn't carry the same meaning that we attribute to that phrase in our modern-day English. But if we look at the contrasts here, it gives us a little more clear idea of what exactly God is referring to here. And this time, we'll pick up in verse 6.

Num 12:6 *“Then He said, “Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I, the LORD, make Myself known to him in a vision; I speak to him in a dream. 7) Not so with My servant Moses; He is faithful in all My house. 8) I speak with him face to face, Even plainly, and not in dark sayings; And he sees the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid To speak against My servant Moses?”* (NKJV)

Now, notice here it uses this term “face to face”, but what's the contrast here? Because that helps us clarify the real meaning of what He's getting at. It's contrasted with the fact that God says if He works with other Prophets, He communicates with them. But it's more through dreams and through visions and through dark sayings. In other words, He doesn't have direct conversations with them.

It's kind of similar in terms of how we communicate with God today. Because just think of how we as Christians today in our relationship with God, how we communicate with Him. We don't sit down and have a two-way interactive conversation with Him. We pray to Him, and we have faith and believe that when we pray and talk to him, He hears us. Well, you experience through your life that God is answering your prayers, and you see that through events He works out in your life.

You know, times where He inspires your thoughts or causes things to happen in conversation with other people. Things happen that are just too obvious that you know there's got to be a connection with the things that you prayed about. I'm sure we've all had those experiences. But it's always this indirect communication. We don't have the experience where God comes and sits down next to us, and we just have a chat and have a two-way conversation. That's not how that works.

Well, if you read through most of the accounts where God's working with Prophets in the Bible, it's the same thing. They're having dreams. They're having visions. He's communicating with them, and He's giving them His will and instructing them what they should do and the messages they should deliver. But they're not sitting down having a two-way conversation like He does with Moses. Because that's really what this is getting at. It's a two-way conversation in real time.

I mean, this is kind of analogous to us having a telephone conversation with someone. In other words, we're not looking into the whites of their eyes. We're not able to see them and see their facial expression in detail like if we're standing right next to each other in the same room and all the lights are on, and you can see them clearly. That's not what it's getting at. If we're having a phone conversation with someone, we can have a real-time direct communication with someone. And they hear you and you hear them, and it's an interactive conversation. But you're not seeing each other directly. See, this is the concept of what he's getting at. That's why he's comparing it with -- it's contrasted with dreams and visions and dark sayings.

And just to also clarify the term "face to face" here. Now, the word for "face" here is different than what we read previously in Exodus 33 and in Deuteronomy 5. But we'll see we're still getting at the same idea here. The Hebrew word here for "face" is "peh". It's Strong's # 6310. And again, I'm going to give you the definition from Baker & Carpenter, and they define it as:

"A masculine singular noun meaning mouth. Besides the literal meaning, this term is used as the instrument of speech and figuratively for speech itself."

See, it's referring to speech itself. Because again, the concept it's really getting at is not looking into the whites of each other's eyes like what we mean today in English when we say "face to face". No, He's saying, "I have direct, interactive two-way conversations with Moses. Whereas with other Prophets, they pray to Me and I speak to them in visions and dreams." That's the difference here.

And see, this is also further clarified in Exodus 33. Let's turn back over to that account. And let's just look at a verse here we looked at previously. But there's a phrase here that really kind of sums up exactly the concept that we're getting at here. It's verse 11.

Ex 33:11 *“So the LORD spoke to Moses face to face,...”* (NKJV)

But now notice the second half of the sentence.

“...as a man speaks to his friend...” (NKJV)

You see, you don't have a conversation with your friend through dreams and visions and dark sayings. No, you have a direct two-way conversation. See, that's what He's getting at here. And that's what it means when Moses had a relationship with God where he spoke with Him “face to face”. It was unique in terms of all of God's interactions with the other Prophets. But it doesn't violate the numerous New Testament statements that no one has ever seen God.

But let's also clarify one other issue. Let's turn back over to Numbers 12. Because there's another statement here that's oftentimes used as a counter argument when I explain this concept. Because it specifically mentions here that Moses sees the “form of the LORD”. But we also have to put that in context and understand what it's talking about as well. And let's just again pick up in verse 8 this time. This is in Numbers 12.

Num 12:8 *“I speak with him face to face, Even plainly, and not in dark sayings; And he sees the form of the LORD....”* (NKJV)

So, people say, "Well, see, He says he sees Him here. Well, obviously, this has to be Christ, and it can't be the Father." Well, we've already seen here lots of problems with that. And we've already seen that “face to face” doesn't mean what we tend to think it to mean in our modern English. I mean, Exodus 33 makes that pretty clear.

So, what is He referring to here as “he sees the form of the LORD”? Let's first of all look at the Hebrew word here that's translated into English as “form”, and what that means. This word is transliterated into English as “temunah”. It's Strong's # 8544. And again, the definition I'm going to read to you comes from Baker & Carpenter.

“A feminine noun meaning a likeness or a form.... The main idea of this word is one of likeness or similarity. It is normally used to describe God's ban on creating images of anything that would attempt to resemble (or be like) Him.... This word can also describe the form or likeness of a visible image....”

Now, we looked at this previously but turn back over to Deuteronomy 4. Because I'm going to show you why it's saying that Moses was unique. He sees the “form of the LORD” and why that's a unique statement. Now, we read this before but just notice here in verse 15.

Deu 4:15 *“Take careful heed to yourselves, for you saw no form when the LORD spoke to you at Horeb out of the midst of the fire,”* (NKJV)

Now, the word “form” there, that's the same Hebrew word. So, realize, first of all, before we dig in a little further into the examples of what this word can mean. Notice when it says, "Moses, he's unique, he sees the form of the LORD," the context here is contrasting Moses with the rest of the Israelites. They heard a voice coming from the mountain. They saw a fire coming from the top of the mountain. They can obviously see dramatic miracles taking place and this made it obvious the true God is here. They knew something supernatural was happening.

But as we saw previously, if you read the next several verses, it's very obvious, they saw no visual representation whatsoever. And again, specifically because God knew they would make an image out of it and they would worship it as an idol if they did. That's the contrast of why it's unique to say that Moses sees the “form of the LORD”.

But let's also understand that this also doesn't violate the New Testament verses that say no one has ever seen God. Because we saw in the Exodus 33 account where God says, "You can't see My face. You can't really see My glory, but I'll let you see my hind parts. I'll let you get a glimpse of the back, but I'm not going to let you really see Me." Because seeing the “form of the LORD” -- Moses actually got to see some kind of visual representation of God whereas the other Israelites didn't. This doesn't mean that he saw God's face in detail.

And just to give you an example that this Hebrew word can refer to a vague form that you can't totally make out the details, turn over to Job 4. We'll see an example here where this same Hebrew word here is used and the context makes it very obvious it's referring to seeing a form that you don't have a clear picture of. You can't see all the finer details. It doesn't have to mean seeing the whites of someone's eyes when you're looking at them.

Now, we're breaking it into a context here where one of Job's friends -- or as I like to put it, the individuals that the Bible refers to as his friends. I did a sermon series on the book of Job a number of years ago. It's called “A Fresh Look at the Book of Job”. It's on my website and on my YouTube channel if you want to look at that. But I went into detail explaining that in the Hebrew the meaning of the word “friends” there, it's more like his acquaintances. It's not referring to guys that treated him well.

And the reason I mention that is Eliphaz is one of the three individuals here that are just condemning and beating up Job here. Well, there's an account here that we're going to break into the context of where Eliphaz is basically describing an encounter with what is obviously a demon. He's characterizing this like he had this inspired interaction with an angel. But if you read through the full account here -- we're not going to read every detail of it. It's going to describe that this spirit being that he's seeing and interacting with later in this chapter starts basically giving him a message which is a combination of truth and error. Because there's falsehoods that are included in it. Well, a righteous

angel wouldn't do that. Obviously, that's a tactic of Satan to mix truth with error to deceive, and that's what's happening here.

But what I want you to see is how Eliphaz is describing what he saw in this encounter when he refers to seeing a "form". Because the word "form" here is going to be the same Hebrew word that we referred to previously. Now, pick up here in verse 12 of chapter 4.

Job 4:12 *"Now a word was secretly brought to me, And my ear received a whisper of it. 13) In disquieting thoughts from the visions of the night, When deep sleep falls on men, 14) Fear came upon me, and trembling, Which made all my bones shake. 15) Then a spirit passed before my face; The hair on my body stood up."* (NKJV)

And notice, first of all, it's a very eerie description here.

"16) It stood still, But I could not discern its appearance. A form was before my eyes;..." (NKJV)

And again, that's the same Hebrew word for "form" there.

"...There was silence; Then I heard a voice saying:" (NKJV)

And I won't go through the next several verses. But as I mentioned previously, if you read through that, what you'll see is this spirit being is mixing truth with error to deceive him. Well, a righteous angel wouldn't do that. Obviously, this is a demon. That's why it has such an eerie description here.

But notice how he's talking about, "I saw this form", but he couldn't make out the details. What I want you to see here is this particular Hebrew word, when it says he saw "the form of the LORD", what it's referring to here is God allowed Moses to see some kind of visual representation of Him. Whereas He didn't allow the Israelites to see anything that was a visual representation. That doesn't mean that Moses saw God and saw Him in detail and saw His face. Because again, we read directly in Exodus 33 where God told him, "You can't see my face and live."

Because we have to remember that there's even accounts in the New Testament of individuals saying they "see" God the Father. But they're not referring to seeing Him in detail in a way that's going to violate the numerous scriptures we read before. They were referring more to a visual representation that they see in a vision or image that God inspires them to see.

And just to see an example of this, turn over to Acts 7. We're going to break into the account here of the stoning of Stephen. You're probably familiar with the account. Stephen was a deacon here in the New Testament, and he gives a very powerful sermon to an audience there in Israel. And they're not happy with what they hear him

say. In fact, they murder him as a result. They're so angry with what he had to say that they stone him. But notice the comments he makes in the last few moments of his life. It starts in verse 54.

Acts 7:54 *“When they heard these things they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed at him with their teeth. 55) But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, 56) and said, “Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!” (NKJV)*

And notice what Stephen is saying is, "I can see the Father, and I can see Christ." Now, obviously, if we compare this with the numerous other statements that John made in his gospel account and even in his first epistle, he makes it very clear no one has seen God in His true detail. Obviously, this is a visionary image that Stephen is inspired to see. And he's inspired to understand that God and Christ are encouraging him by allowing him to see a visual image of Them in the final moments of his life as he's being murdered.

But again, this isn't the same thing as seeing God's face in detail because. That's something that only spirit beings can do. And that's something that we can look forward to being able to see if we make it into the resurrection and are part of the Kingdom of God. That is something we'll be able to see at that point.

And we can see that over in Revelation 22. We'll pick up here in verse 1. Now, this is part of a description of New Jerusalem. Now, I won't go into New Jerusalem in detail. There's a sermon and a study paper on my website -- and the sermon is on my YouTube channel as well -- that goes into New Jerusalem in detail.

Basically, as I explain in both of those, New Jerusalem is more of a spiritual picture or a symbolic representation of the resurrected Firstfruits dwelling together in the spirit realm with God the Father and Jesus Christ. And then working with the rest of mankind as they're given their chance at salvation. That encapsulates all the details that you'll see in Revelation 21 and 22. But again, it's not a literal city. We're referring to a symbolic representation of a spiritual concept here. But again, this very much is spirit beings dwelling together. But let's notice here in verse 22.

Rev 22:1 *“And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. 2) In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. 3) And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. 4) They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. 5) There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever.” (NKJV)*

So, you can see here, this is clearly a description of the future. And saying that if we make it into the resurrection, and we are be born into God's family, then we'll actually be able to see the face of God.

But as I wanted you to see in this sermon, oftentimes it can be a head-scratcher for people reading these statements of Moses, when he talked to God "face to face". And then sometimes we can engage in mental gymnastics and decide, "Well, it must be Christ that he's dealing with here." And then we extend that and go, "Okay, well then every time that a human being interacts with a God being in the Bible, well then it has to always be Jesus Christ, and it can't be God the Father."

Well, then you basically just kind of push God the Father pretty much out of the narrative of the Bible, and He's not really interactive with His creation at all. And not only that, but now He can't have a name unique to Himself. He can't have any title unique to Himself, because the only way to make the doctrine work is to genericize everything that's attributed to the Father, because that enables you to insert Christ whenever there is an interaction with a human.

Now, if you want to study this in more detail, on my website there's an entire section of study papers that address this. It's under the section "Who is the God of the Bible?" Not only is there a study paper there called "Hearing and Seeing God", which goes into this whole subject of seeing and hearing God in a lot more detail than I've had time to address in this sermon, but there's also a series of study papers that go through and kind of dissect and show you all the different titles that refer to God the Father. And these titles are unique to Him. If we just stay consistent with interpreting these titles throughout the Bible, you see God the Father is very interactive with His creation. He's not someone who's always kind of in the background while Christ does all the hands-on work. Again, if you want to study that in detail, that's all available on my website.

If you have any questions as you go through that material, everyone is always welcome to contact me directly. Probably the easiest way to get ahold of me is my email address. It's real easy to remember. It's just my name. It's James.Smyda@gmail.com. If you ever forget it, if you just look on my website under the "About" section -- there's a page there that's labeled "About" that tells you a little bit about me. At the bottom of that page, there's a link there with my email address. So, you can always contact me there.

With that, I'll wrap up with this subject today. But as I mentioned from the very beginning of this sermon, when we look at the subject of Moses speaking with God "face to face", the key to understanding this whole subject is simply understanding that the Bible was not written in English. It's written in Hebrew and what we have preserved in the New Testament is primarily from Greek manuscripts. In both cases, this is not written in English. So, we have to be aware that when we read how it's translated in English, that doesn't always convey the exact same meaning that we attach to English phrases today. And if we understand that, then we can really understand what it means that God spoke to Moses "face to face".