

# Angel of the LORD

## WHO IS THE ANGEL OF THE LORD?

Although not all scholars agree, the following brief Scriptural survey would support the premise that the **Angel of the LORD** is (1) supernatural, (2) is God (3) and is not a created angel. The determination of which member of the Trinity the Angel represents is less clear but most conservative, evangelical sources interpret the **Angel of the LORD** as the the second member of the Trinity, representing a pre-incarnate manifestation of the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Angel** in both Hebrew ([malak](#)) and Greek ([aggelos or angelos](#)) means a **messenger** and Jesus as the [Word of God](#) (Jn 1:1; Re 19:13-[note](#)) is the ultimate **Messenger** sent from the Father with a message of the good news of God's covenant love for sinful mankind...

Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle (**apostéllō** = send from **apo** = from + **stello** = send) and High Priest of our confession. (He 3:1-note) (An apostle is defined as one sent out on a mission or orders or commission and with the authority of the one who sent him)

## MALACHI 3 THE MESSENGER OF THE COVENANT

In **Malachi Jehovah Sabaoth, the LORD of hosts** promised...

**Behold, I am going to send My messenger** (Hebrew = [malak](#) = one sent on business or diplomacy by another; LXX = [aggelos/angelos](#) one sent to tell or bring a message, to announce or proclaim = transliterated "angel" and in context referring to John the Baptist, as affirmed by Jesus Himself in Lk 7:27) and **he** (John the Baptist) will clear the way before Me (**the LORD of hosts**) and the **Lord** (Hebrew = [adon](#), LXX = referring in context to the Messiah), **Whom** you seek, will suddenly (Hebrew = [pitom](#) = unexpectedly, surprisingly, all of a sudden - somewhat an ironic word here because the Jews should have known the day of His visitation according to Lk 19:44), which they could have known by studying Da 9:24, 25, 26, 27 {see notes Da 9:24; 25; 26; 9:27}) come to **His** temple and the **MESSENGER OF THE COVENANT**, (Malak = "Angel"; and thus the "Angel of the Covenant")

in **Whom** you delight, behold, **He** is coming," says the LORD of hosts.  
(Malachi 3:1-see commentary)

**John F. Walvoord**, highly respected for his exposition of the prophetic sections of the Scriptures and former president of Dallas Theological Seminary, lists four arguments supporting the conclusion that the appearances of the Angel of Jehovah represent "*Christophanies*" or visible appearances of our Lord Jesus Christ prior to His incarnation

(1) The Second Person is the Visible God of the New Testament.

(2) The Angel of Jehovah of the Old Testament no longer appears after the incarnation of Christ. (**Ed note:** but see comments **below**)

(3) Both the Angel of Jehovah and Christ are sent by the Father.

(4) The Angel of Jehovah could not be either the Father or the Holy Spirit for the Father and the Spirit are invisible to man.

**Dr. Walvoord** concludes that

there is not a single valid reason to deny that the **Angel of Jehovah** is the Second Person, every known fact pointing to His identification as the Christ of the New Testament. (See Dr Walvoord's article [Part 2: The Preincarnate Son of God](#) from his [Series in Christology](#))

I strongly encourage you to perform your own Inductive Study of the passages that follow, reading and **observing** them in context, **interrogating** the passages (and especially the occurrences of the phrase "Angel of the LORD") with the **5W's & H** questions so that you might arrive at an accurate interpretation. Then you will also be better able to assess the accuracy of these notes on the Angel of the LORD. As you go through the references, note that the Angel often manifests Himself that He might address specific needs or accomplish special tasks. In so doing you will appreciate that this topic is not only theologically intriguing but is also imminently practical in our everyday life.

## **THE ANGEL OF THE LORD A Brief Scriptural Survey**

This is Only a sampling of the 60+ OT allusions - see complete list

**Michael Rydelnik** - Throughout the OT, the Son of God appears (usually in the form of a man) in various situations that are not connected to his future role as Christ. These pre-incarnational appearances of the Son, otherwise termed "theophanies" (meaning "appearances of God"), or more precisely "Christophanies" (i.e., "appearances of the Christ"), are of great significance. **That the many appearances of God throughout**

**the OT are indeed always appearances of the Son is made clear by John's pointed statement at the beginning of his gospel** (Jn 1:18), that "no one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him." John's point is that the triune God is made known to man—whether in the past, present, or future—always and only by the manifestation of the Son. (The Moody Bible Commentary)

The first encounter with the **Angel of the LORD** is found in Ge 16:6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 (click to read the Scripture in context remembering that context is "king" in interpretation) where we learn that this Angel is God and that He appears at a time of great distress to fulfill the need (cp Php 4:11, 12, 13-notes).

In Genesis 16:10, the **Angel of the LORD** promised to multiply [Hagar's](#) descendents, which is something that only God could promise and fulfill (cf similar promise given to Abram in Gen 13:16 15:5).

**Genesis 16:10** Moreover, the **Angel of the LORD** said to her, "I will greatly multiply your descendants so that they will be too many to count."

When the Angel appeared to Hagar, she acknowledged that she was in the presence of God, referring to the **Angel of the LORD** as **El Roi**, (el = God; ) **the-God-Who-Sees** (cf Ge 15:3, omniscience).

**Genesis 16:11** The **ANGEL of the LORD** said to her further, "Behold, you are with child, and you will bear a son; and you shall call his name Ishmael, because the LORD has given heed to your affliction.... 13 Then she called the Name of the LORD Who spoke to her **"You are a God Who sees"** (El Roi) for she said, "Have I even remained alive here after seeing Him?"

The **Angel of the LORD** appeared a second time to [Hagar](#) ("stranger") after being expelled for a second (and final) time by Abraham at a time of severe distress and great need (in the wilderness and out of water). Moses records

**Genesis 21:17** God heard the lad crying (Ishmael = "God hears") and the **ANGEL OF GOD** called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, "What is the matter with you, Hagar? DO NOT FEAR, for God has heard the voice of the lad where he is. (Related Resource: Fear, How to Handle It)

Note the fascinating play on Ishmael's name, "God will hear" and twice in this verse this fact is stated "God heard" and "God has heard".

**David Guzik** explains that "As Hagar escaped this difficult situation the Angel of the Lord (here, the pre-incarnate presence of Jesus) met her by a spring of water in the wilderness. We can assume that this was God, in the Person of Jesus Christ, appearing to Abraham before His incarnation and birth at Bethlehem. We assume this because of God the Father

it says, "No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him" (John 1:18), and no man has ever seen God in the Person of the Father (1Timothy 6:16). Therefore, if God appeared to someone in human appearance in the Old Testament (and no one has seen God the Father) it makes sense the appearance is of the eternal Son, the Second Person of the Trinity, before His incarnation in Bethlehem. (David Guzik. The Enduring Word Commentary Series)

**John MacArthur** comments on the **Angel of the LORD** noting that "This special individual spoke as though He were distinct from Yahweh, yet also spoke in the first person as though He were indeed to be identified as Yahweh Himself, with Hagar recognizing that in seeing this Angel, she had seen God (v. 13). Others had the same experience and came to the same conclusion (cf. Ge 22:11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18; 31:11, 12, 13; Ex 3:2, 3, 4, 5; Nu 22:22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35; Jdg 6:11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23; 13:2, 3, 4, 5; 1Ki 19:5, 6, 7). The Angel of the Lord, who does not appear after the birth of Christ, is often identified as the pre-incarnate Christ (**Ed note:** NT verses with phrase "angel of the Lord" appear but none are equated with Divinity as is the Angel in this OT passage and those surveyed below). ([MacArthur, J.: The MacArthur Study Bible Nashville: Word](#))

**Warren Wiersbe** - This is the first appearance in Scripture of the Angel of the Lord, who is generally identified as our Lord Jesus Christ. In Genesis 16:10, the angel promised to do what only God can do; and in Genesis 16:13, Hagar called the angel "God." These pre-Incarnation visits of Jesus Christ to the earth were to meet special needs and to accomplish special tasks. The fact that the Son of God took on a temporary body, left heaven, and came down to help a rejected servant-girl surely reveals His grace and love. His servants Abraham and Sarah had sinned against the Lord and against Hagar, but the Lord did not desert them. (Wiersbe, W. W. Be Obedient. Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books)

**John Gill** - This is the first time that mention is made of an angel in Scripture, but is not to be understood of a **created angel**, but of a divine Person, as appears from Genesis 16:10 ("I will greatly multiply your descendants so that they shall be too many to count" = essentially the same covenant promise Jehovah gave to Abraham in Genesis 22:17), **the uncreated angel, the Logos or Son of God, called the Angel of God's presence, and the Angel of the covenant**, Isa 63:9, Mal 3:1; who often appeared in an human form before his incarnation, being sent by his divine Father on one account or another; and hence called an angel, a messenger, or one sent, as in the fulness of time he was sent in human nature to be the Redeemer of his people; though many of the Jewish writers take this angel to be a man sent of God. Gersom {n} says he was one of the prophets that lived in those times, and observes, that some of their Rabbins say {o} he was Shem, the son of Noah; and Maimonides {p} suggests, that this angel was but a mere man, by comparing this passage with that in Ge 37:15, "a certain man found him", &c. but the context most clearly confutes this notion, and proves him to be the almighty and omniscient God; since he promises to do what none but the omnipotent Being could do, and declares such things as none but the omniscient God could know: and when it is said he "found Hagar", it is not to be understood as if it was a chance matter, or the fruit and effect of search and inquiry,

or as if he had not seen her before; but rather it shows that his eye was upon her, and he had a concern for her, and at a proper time and place appeared to her at once, and unawares, and unthought of by her. And the place where he found her was (Gill, J. Exposition of the Entire Bible)

**Wenham** in his commentary note on **Genesis 16:7** writes that "The **Angel of the Lord** is mentioned 58 times in the OT, "the angel of God" 11 times. Angels of the Lord appear either singly as here or in groups. When first seen, they are usually taken to be men, but by the end of the encounter one of them is realized to be God (Genesis 18:2, 22; Jdg 6:11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22; 13:3-22). When, as here, the text simply speaks of a single **Angel of the Lord**, this must be understood as God himself appearing in human form, a nearly always to bring good news or salvation. The **Angel of the Lord** appears frequently in Genesis and in the Book of Judges but rarely in the literature dealing with later periods. The exact relationship between the **Angel and God** himself has been the subject of much inconclusive discussion. The (Early Church) Fathers identified him with the **Logos**. ...Within Genesis, the angel of the Lord tends to appear at moments of dire personal crisis (cf. Ge 21:17; 22:11, 15). (Wenham, G. J. Vol. 2: Word Biblical Commentary : Genesis 16-50. Word Biblical Commentary. Dallas: Word)

## GENESIS 22

### THE ANGEL AND JEHOVAH JIREH

Speaking to Abraham on Mt Moriah, the **Angel** unequivocally identifies Himself as **the LORD** (YHWH or Jehovah - see study **Jehovah = Jesus**).

**Genesis 22:10-16** (Abraham in obedience to the LORD's command had taken Isaac, his only son, whom he loved to the land of Moriah to offer him as a burnt offering on Mt Moriah, the site of Solomon's Temple and the same area where the Lamb of God was crucified. In an incredible act of faith Abraham obeyed...) And Abraham stretched out his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. But the **Angel of the LORD** called to him from heaven, and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." And he said, "Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me. Then Abraham raised his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the place of his son. And Abraham called the name of that place The Lord Will Provide (see study of **Jehovah Jireh**), as it is said to this day, "In the mount of the Lord it will be provided. Then the **Angel of the LORD** called to Abraham a second time from heaven and said "By Myself I have sworn, declares

the LORD, because you have done this thing & have not withheld your son, your only son"

In the following two stories in Jacob's life compare the God of Bethel with the Angel of God.

**John Gill** writes that the Angel in Genesis 22 is "Not a created angel, but the eternal one, the Son of God, Who perhaps appeared in an human form, and spoke with an articulate voice, as He frequently did; for that this was a divine Person is clear from his swearing by Himself, and renewing the promise unto Abraham (Ge 22:17,18 "indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens, and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies.18 And in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.") , (Gill, J. Exposition of the Entire Bible)

## GENESIS 28

### JACOB'S DREAM AT BETHEL

**Genesis 28:12-22** And he had a dream, and behold, a ladder was set on the earth with its top reaching to heaven; and behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.13 And behold, the LORD stood above it and said, "I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie, I will give it to you and to your descendants. (reaffirming the **Abrahamic Covenant**) 14 "Your descendants shall also be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread out to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and in you and in your descendants shall all the families of the earth be blessed.15 "And behold, I am with you, and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."

16 Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it."17 And he was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

18 So Jacob rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up as a pillar, and poured oil on its top. 19 And he called the name of that place Bethel; (means "the house of God") however, previously the name of the city had been Luz. 20 Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will keep me on this journey that I take, and will give me food to eat and garments to wear, 21 and I return to my father's house in safety, then the LORD will be my God. 22 "And this stone, which I have set up as a pillar, will be God's house; and of all that Thou dost give me I will surely give a tenth

to Thee."

## GENESIS 31

### THE ANGEL AND THE GOD OF BETHEL

**Genesis 31:11, 12, 13** Then the **Angel of God** [said](#) to me in the dream, 'Jacob,' and I said, 'Here I am.' He said, 'Lift up now your eyes and see that all the male goats which are mating are striped, speckled, and mottled; for I have seen all that Laban has been doing to you. **I am the God of Bethel**, where you anointed a pillar, where you made a vow to Me; now arise, leave this land, and return to the land of your birth.'

In Genesis 31, the Angel of God calls Himself the God of Bethel which would imply that they are one and the same Person. The Angel of God is the same as the Angel of the LORD and clearly identified Himself as the LORD, pointing back as He did so to the earlier critical encounter with God in Jacob's life (Genesis 28:12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22).

## GENESIS 48

### THE ANGEL WHO REDEEMS

Jacob before he dies, in giving a blessing to Joseph, uses the names "**God**" and "**the Angel**" interchangeably. In addition he identifies the "Angel" as the One Who has redeemed him from all evil, a transaction that would not be plausible for a created angel.

**Genesis 48:15** He blessed Joseph, and said, "The God before Whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked. The God Who has been my shepherd (Hebrew verb means to care for, protect, graze and to feed flocks) [all](#) my [life](#) to [this day](#). 16 (Jacob continues describing "God") The **Angel** Who has [redeemed](#) (**Goel** [word study] Hebrew = ga'al which is a verb meaning to redeem, the first use in the OT. Ga'al {Goel} means to act as one's kinsman-redeemer, to be a savior. The LXX translates ga'al with the Greek verb rhuomai - see word study; see also use of rhuomai to describe deliverance by Jesus in study on 1Th 1:10-note); me from all evil. Bless the lads and may my name live on in them, and the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac and may they grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth. (**Comment:** Ro 11:26-See **notes** on Ro 11:26 for more on rhuomai describing **Israel's Deliverer**.)

The Amplified Version renders **Genesis 48:16** as follows...

The redeeming\*\* Angel [that is, the Angel the Redeemer—not a created being but the Lord Himself] Who has redeemed me continually from every evil, bless the lads! And let my name be perpetuated in them [may they be worthy of having their names coupled with mine], and the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them become a multitude in the midst of the earth." (**Comment:** \*\*Footnote in Amplified = "The "Angel of the Lord" is here identified as Christ Himself.")

In his commentary **Adam Clarke** writes that in this verse

we have full proof that this was no created angel, but the Messenger of the Divine Council, the Lord Jesus Christ. Who then was the angel that redeemed Jacob, and Whom he invoked to bless Ephraim and Manasseh? Is it not Jesus? He alone can be called Goel (Hebrew word for "redeemed" is ga'al =**Goel** [word study]), the redeeming Kinsman; for He alone took part of our flesh and blood that the right of redemption might be His; and that the forfeited possession of the favour and image of God might be redeemed, brought back, and restored to all those who believe in His name. To have invoked any other angel or messenger in such a business would have been impiety. Angels bless not; to God Alone this prerogative belongs. With what confidence may a truly religious father use these words in behalf of his children: "Jesus, the Christ, Who hath redeemed me, bless the lads, redeem them also, and save them unto eternal life!" (Clarke, A.. Clarke's Commentary: Genesis)

**John MacArthur** echoes Clarke's comments noting that

This is the first mention of God as Redeemer, Deliverer, or Savior. (The MacArthur Study Bible. Nashville: Word Pub)

**Henry Morris** comments on Genesis 48:16 adding that...

the word "redeem" (Hebrew goel) is used here for the first time in the Bible, and it is significant that it occurs as a description of the work of the great Angel of Jehovah, none other than the preincarnate Christ. The God of his fathers had surely provided for Jacob and protected him marvelously through the years, just as He had promised when He first spoke to him (Genesis 28:15); and Jacob knew he could call on Him in faith to bless his sons, specifically those two on whose heads his hands rested, in the same ways. He then prayed especially that God would let "my name be named on them" that is, Jacob's character, for which his name stood and also let them "grow into a multitude" in the midst of the land. (Henry Morris. Genesis Record)



## EXODUS 3

### THE ANGEL IN THE BURNING BUSH

At the burning bush, it was the “**Angel of the Lord**” Who appeared and Who called to him from the midst of the bush, Moses “hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God”.

Exodus 3:2, 3, 4, 5, 6 And the **Angel of the LORD** appeared to him in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, yet the bush was not consumed...4 When the LORD saw that he turned aside to look, **God** called to him from the [midst](#) of the [bush](#) & [said](#), "[Moses, Moses](#) !" And he [said](#), "[Here](#) I am." 5 Then **He** (the Angel of the LORD) said, "Do not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground. 6 He said also, "**I Am** the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." (an allusion to God's covenant first with Abram and passed on to and through Isaac and Jacob - see Abrahamic Covenant) Then Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at **God** (the Angel of the LORD)

**MacArthur** comments that the Angel of the LORD is literally...

“messenger of Yahweh” who, in context, turns out to be the Lord Himself talking to Moses (cf. Acts 7:30 Stephen's Sermon comments this OT event). ([MacArthur, J.: The MacArthur Study Bible Nashville: Word](#))

## EXODUS 13-14

### THE ANGEL IN THE PILLAR OF CLOUD & FIRE

The **LORD** Who went before Israel in a pillar of cloud ( Click here for note on the Shekinah glory cloud of the LORD) was none other than **the Angel of God**

**Ex 13:21** The **LORD** was [going before](#) them in a [pillar](#) of [cloud](#) by [day](#) to [lead](#) them on the [way](#), and in a [pillar](#) of [fire](#) by [night](#) to [give](#) them [light](#), that they might [travel](#) by [day](#) and by [night](#).

**Ex 14:19** The **Angel of God**, Who had been [going before](#) the [camp](#) of [Israel](#), [moved](#) and [went behind](#) them; and the [pillar](#) of [cloud](#) [moved](#) from [before](#) them and [stood behind](#) them. (Ex 14:19-see note)

So comparing Scripture with Scripture (the best commentary on Scripture is Scripture), we can interpret the Angel of God is "the LORD".

# JUDGES 2

## THE ANGEL OF THE LORD

### "I WILL NEVER BREAK MY COVENANT"

In the introductory section of Judges we meet the Angel of the Lord in chapter 2

Now the **angel of the LORD** came up from Gilgal to Bochim. And he said, "I brought you up out of Egypt and led you into the land which I have sworn to your fathers; and I said, 'I will never break My covenant with you, 2 and as for you, you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall tear down their altars.' But you have not obeyed Me; what is this you have done? (Jdg 2:1,2-notes)

Clearly a literal interpretation of this passage identifies the Angel of Jehovah with the One Who made a covenant with Israel. A created angel is never recorded as cutting a covenant, leaving no doubt that this Angel is no ordinary created angel but is the Lord Himself.

**Warren Wiersbe** - In the Old Testament, the "angel of the Lord" is generally interpreted to be the Lord Himself, who occasionally came to earth (a theophany) to deliver an important message. It was probably the Lord Jesus Christ, the second Person of the Godhead, in a temporary pre-incarnation appearance. (See Ge 16:9; 22:11; 48:16; Ex 3:2; Jdg 6:11, 13:3; 2Ki 19:35.) The fact that God Himself came to give the message shows how serious things had become in Israel. (Wiersbe, W. W. Be Available. An Old testament Study. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books)

The **New Bible Commentary** writes that "The angel of the Lord is 'the Lord' himself in the form of an angel (Carson, D. A. New Bible Commentary : 21st Century Edition. Inter-Varsity Press)

**Moore** - The Messenger of Yahweh not a prophet, but, as always in Judges., Yahweh himself as He appears to men in human form or otherwise sensibly manifests His presence; (Moore, G. F. A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Judges. New York: C. Scribner's sons. 1910)

Even older commentators like **John Wesley** acknowledge the fact that this Angel was God, Wesley writing that...

Christ the Angel of the covenant, often called the Angel of the Lord, to Whom the conduct of Israel out of Egypt into Canaan, is frequently ascribed. He alone could speak the following words in His own name and person; whereas created angels and prophets universally usher in their message with, *Thus saith the Lord*, or some equivalent expression. And this angel having assumed the shape of a man, it is

not strange that He imitates the motion of a man, and comes as it were from Gilgal to the place where now they were: by which motion He signified, that He was the Person that brought them to Gilgal, the first place where they rested in Canaan, and there protected them so long, and from thence went with them to battle, and gave them success. (Wesley, J. Wesley's Notes: Judges).

**John Gill** writes the following note regarding the Angel of the LORD...

The Targum calls him a prophet and the Jewish commentators in general interpret it of Phinehas and that a man is meant is given into by others, because he is said to come from a certain place in Canaan, and not from heaven, and spoke in a public congregation, and is not said to disappear; but neither a man nor a created angel is meant, or otherwise he would have spoken in the name of the Lord, and have said, "thus saith the Lord", and not in his own name; ascribing to himself the bringing of the children of Israel out of Egypt, and swearing to them, and making a covenant with them, and threatening what he would do to them because of their sin; wherefore **the uncreated Angel, the Angel of the covenant**, is meant, who brought Israel out of Egypt, was with them in the wilderness, and introduced them into the land of Canaan, and appeared to Joshua as the Captain of the Lord's host at or near Gilgal, Joshua 5:13 (Gill, J. Exposition of the Entire Bible)

Similarly **Matthew Henry** comments...

This extraordinary messenger was sent to command, if possible, the greater regard to the message, and to affect the minds of a people whom nothing seemed to affect but what was sensible. The learned bishop Patrick is clearly of opinion that this was not a created angel, but the Angel of the covenant, the same that appeared to Joshua as captain of the hosts of the Lord, who was God himself. Christ himself, says Dr. Lightfoot; who but God and Christ could say, I made you to go up out of Egypt? Joshua had lately admonished them to take heed of entangling themselves with the Canaanites, but they regarded not the words of a dying man; the same warning therefore is here brought them by the living God himself, the Son of God appearing as an angel. If they slight his servants, surely they will reverence his Son...It was the great Angel of the covenant, the Word, the Son of God, who spake with Divine authority as Jehovah, and now called them to account for their disobedience. God sets forth what he had done for Israel, and what he had promised.

**Keil and Delitzsch** write that...

The "**angel of Jehovah**" is not a prophet, or some other earthly messenger of Jehovah, either Phinehas or Joshua, as the Targums, the

Rabbins, Bertheau, and others assume, but the angel of the Lord who is of one essence with God. In the simple historical narrative a prophet is never called Maleach (malak) Jehovah. The prophets are always called either *אִישׁ נְבִיא* or *נְבִיא*, as in Judges 6:8, or else "man of God," as in 1Kings 12:22; 13:1, etc.; and Hag. 1:13 and Mal. 3:1 cannot be adduced as proofs to the contrary, because in both these passages the purely appellative meaning of the word Maleach (malak) is established beyond all question by the context itself. Moreover, no prophet ever identifies himself so entirely with God as the angel of Jehovah does here. The prophets always distinguish between themselves and Jehovah, by introducing their words with the declaration "thus saith Jehovah," as the prophet mentioned in Judges 6:8 is said to have done. (Keil, C. F., & Delitzsch, F. Commentary on the Old Testament. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson)

## JUDGES 6

# JEHOVAH SHALOM: THE LORD IS PEACE

In the book of Judges, Gideon became fearful that he would die because he had seen the **Angel of the LORD**, Whom he equated with the Lord God (see Ex 33:20).

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**." 23 The **LORD said** to him, "[Peace](#) to you, do not [fear](#) ([see How to Handle Fear](#)) you shall not [die](#)." 24 Then [Gideon built](#) an [altar there](#) to the **LORD** and [named](#) it **The LORD is Peace** (which means Jehovah Shalom). To [this day](#) it is [still](#) in [Ophrah](#) of the [Abiezrites](#). (Jdg 6:22, 23,24-see notes Jdg 6:22-24)

So here we observe the **Angel of the LORD** speaking **Peace** and being memorialized with an altar named the LORD is peace.

**John MacArthur** adds that

In the realization of the presence of God, the sensitive sinner is conscious of great guilt. Fire from God further filled Gideon with awe and even the fear of death. When he saw the Lord, he knew the Lord had also seen him in his fallenness. Thus he feared the death that sinners should die before Holy God. But God graciously promised life." ([MacArthur, J.: The MacArthur Study Bible Nashville: Word](#))

**John Gill** writes...

This was not the prophet before mentioned, as Ben Gersom thinks, but

an Angel of God, as expressed, and not a created one, but the Angel of Jehovah's presence, the Word and Son of God, and Who is expressly called Jehovah Himself (Gill, J. Exposition of the Entire Bible)

**Warren Wiersbe** adds that

For a man with a worried heart, **The-Lord-Is-Peace** was just what he needed. You can enjoy God's peace today as you fight the battle (Php 4:6, 7, 8, 9, 10-see notes on Php 4:6-7 4:8-10). ([Wiersbe, W: With the Word: Chapter-by-Chapter Bible Handbook. Nelson](#))

## JUDGES 13

### "WE HAVE SEEN GOD"

But the **ANGEL of the LORD** said to him, "[Why](#) do you [ask](#) my [Name](#) seeing it is **Wonderful** (Hebrew = [piliy or pilay](#) = incomprehensible, fantastic, beyond understanding, marvelous, only used one other time Ps 139:6; LXX = thaumastos = that which causes or is worthy of amazement and wonder used in LXX in Ex 15:11 as to describe God and His work)?" (Jdg 13:18-see **note** Jdg 13:18)

Manoah and his wife fell on their faces—an act that would have been improper if the **Angel** were less than God (cf John's prostration before angels - Re 19:10, 22:8, 9-see notes [Revelation 19:10 22:8; 22:9](#)). They felt they would die for in seeing the **Angel** they had "seen God." (see Ex 33:20).

For it [came](#) about when the [flame went](#) up from the [altar](#) toward [heaven](#), that the **ANGEL of the LORD** ascended in the flame of the altar. When Manoah and his wife saw this, they fell on their faces to the ground. 21 Now the **ANGEL of the LORD** did not appear to Manoah or his wife again. Then Manoah knew that he was the **ANGEL of the LORD**. 22 So Manoah said to his wife, "We will surely die, for we have seen God. (Jdg 13:20, 21, 22-see **notes** Jdg 13:20-22)

Again in the spiritually dark days of the book of Judges ("In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes." see Jdg 21:25- notes) we encounter a glorious appearance of the **Angel of the Lord** who announced Samson's birth to his father, [Manoah](#), and referred to Himself as Wonderful (in Hebrew thought the name often reveals the nature), which is one of the names of God (Isaiah 9:6, although here "wonderful" is not the same Hebrew word) (See God's Attribute Incomprehensible)

## PSALM 34

# THE ANGEL WHO ENCAMPS AROUND

[Psalm 34:7](#) is one of three mentions of **angel of the LORD** in the Psalms ([Ps34:7](#); [35:5](#); [35:6](#)). This verse pictures a battlefield scene, in which the angel of the Lord makes his camp around the faithful and delivers them. The word deliver means to snatch or tear away, to rescue. Let the truth that special providence watches over the chosen cheer and comfort you. God not only rescued David from his enemies but also from his “fears, “from being “ashamed,” and from “troubles” (read all of [Psalm 34](#)) Is He not able to deliver you also beloved? And so David records...

The **angel of the LORD** encamps (Hebrew = pitch a tent, set up camp) around (LXX = forms a circle around = on all sides) those who fear (live with a sense of reverential awe of, LXX = has this verb in present tense = speaks of a lifestyle or habitual practice) Him, and rescues (Hebrew = halas = draws out, deliver from danger; LXX = rhuomai - see word study = draw or snatch to oneself, invariably from danger, evil or an enemy) them. ([Psalm 34:7](#))

**C H Spurgeon** comments that **the angel of the Lord** in Psalm 34:7 is the

covenant angel, the Lord Jesus, at the head of all the bands of heaven, surrounds with his army the dwellings of the saints. **Encampeth round about them that fear him.** On every side the watch is kept by warriors of sleepless eyes, and the Captain of the host is one whose prowess none can resist. And delivereth them. We little know how many providential deliverances we owe to those unseen hands which are charged to bear us up lest we dash our foot against a stone. (Spurgeon [The Treasury of David](#))

In **Surgeon's** devotional, **Faith's Checkbook**, he writes on ([Psalm 34:7](#)) that

We cannot see the angels, but it is enough that they can see us. There is one great **Angel of the Covenant** Whom, not having seen, we love; and His eye is always upon us both day and night. He has a host of holy ones under Him, and He causes these to be watchers over His saints and to guard them from all ill. If devils do us mischief, shining ones do us service. Note that the Lord of angels does not come and go, and pay us transient visits, but He and His armies encamp around us. The headquarters of the army of salvation are where those live whose trust is in the living God. This camp surrounds the faithful, so that they cannot be attacked from any quarter unless the adversary can break through the entrenchments of the Lord of angels. We have a fixed protection, a permanent watch. Sentineled by the messengers of God, we shall not be surprised by sudden assaults, nor swallowed up by overwhelming forces. Deliverance is promised in this verse, deliverance by the great Captain of our salvation (allusion to another Theophany,

probably a Christophany, to Joshua before the battle of Jericho in Joshua 5:14, 15 slowly wiggle pointer over link to keep open). That deliverance we shall obtain again and again until our warfare is accomplished and we exchange the field of conflict for the home of rest.

**John Gill**, although agreeing with Spurgeon, et al, does offer an alternative possible interpretation of this Psalm. Although the context (especially the immediate surrounding verses) as well as the use of the word "rescue", tends to support that this "angel" is the LORD, it would be difficult to be too dogmatic in stating that the "angel" is the Lord Jesus Christ. Gill writes...

By whom may be meant, either the uncreated **Angel**, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Angel of God's presence, and of the covenant, the Captain of salvation, the Leader and Commander of the people; and whose salvation is as walls and bulwarks about them, or as an army surrounding them; or a created angel may be intended, even a single one, which is sufficient to guard a multitude of saints, since one could destroy at once such a vast number of enemies, as in 2Ki 19:35 (although I believe this passage in 2Kings is more likely the LORD than a created angel) or one may be put for more, since they are an innumerable company that are on the side of the Lord's people, and to whom they are joined; and these may be said to encamp about them, because they are an host or army; and are the guardians of the saints, that stand up for them and protect them, as well as minister to them.

## ISAIAH 63

### THE ANGEL OF HIS PRESENCE

The **Angel of His presence** is a synonym of the Angel of the Lord, Isaiah recording that...

In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the **Angel of His presence** saved them; In His love and in His mercy He redeemed them; And He lifted them and carried them all the days of old. (Isaiah 63:9)

The Hebrew word for presence is literally **face**, which pictures the entire Person. This same Hebrew word is used in a parallel passage, Exodus 33:14, 15, in which the LORD encourage Moses promising him that

My **presence** shall go with you, and I will give you rest." to which Moses responds [as should we all] "If Thy **presence** does not go with us, do not lead us up from here."

**Morris** commenting on Isaiah 63:9 writes that

Christ, in a pre-incarnate theophany, was suffering with, and for, His

people even prior to His incarnation. ([Morris, Henry: Defenders Study Bible. World Publishing](#))

**MacDonald** writes that in Isaiah 63:9...

**The Angel** is the **Messenger** of His Presence, that is, the Messiah, (Who) saved them. ([MacDonald, W & Farstad, A. Believer's Bible Commentary: Thomas Nelson](#))

**J Vernon McGee** commenting on Isaiah 63:9 writes...

How tender are these words. I believe that the angel of the Lord is none other than the pre-incarnate Christ. We are told that in His love and pity He redeemed and carried them. He entered into the sufferings of His people." (Thru the Bible commentary. Vol. 3, Page 341: Thomas Nelson)

## HOSEA 12

### THE ANGEL WHO WRESTLED WITH JACOB

Hosea describes the patriarch Jacob (jaqob = "wrestler") who is held out by the prophet as an example of an Israelite who won victories through turning to God. Again we find the **Angel** clearly identified as God...

In the womb he took his brother by the heel, and in his maturity he **contended** (Hebrew = sarah = to persist, to exert oneself, to persevere) with **God** 4 Yes, he **wrestled** (Hebrew = sarah) with the **Angel** and **prevailed**. He **wept** and **sought** His **favor**. He **found** Him at **Bethel** and **there He spoke** with us, 5 Even the **LORD**, the **God of hosts**, **the LORD** is His **name**. (Hos 12:3, 4, 5)

**Jameison** comments that this is...

the uncreated Angel of the Covenant, as God the Son appears in the Old Testament ([Ref](#))

**Guzik** observes that the fact that **Jacob**...

struggled with God reinforces a point already made clear in Genesis 32:24-30: Jacob wrestled with the LORD God, Who appeared in human form as a Man. Since this was a unique messenger from heaven, He is also appropriately described as an **Angel of the LORD**. ([Ref](#))

In **Hard Sayings of the Bible** we read this comment...

It thus appears that the "man" or "angel" with whom Jacob wrestled was Jesus himself, in a temporary incarnate form prior to his permanent enfleshment when he would come to earth as a human baby. This is



consistent with other places in the Old Testament where the "angel of the Lord" can be identified as the second person of the Trinity.

**Matthew Poole** writes that the...

The **angel** called God (in) Hosea 12:3, and, Hosea 12:5, is Jehovah, Lord of hosts. He was no created angel, but the uncreated Angel Christ, the **Messiah**, eternal God by nature and essence, angel by office and voluntary undertaking. (Bolding added)

## OTHER COMMENTS ON THE ANGEL OF THE LORD

**MacDonald** believes that

The **angel of the Lord**, that is, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, serves as an encircling garrison for those who fear Him, delivering them from dangers seen and unseen. No sheep of His can ever perish (John 10:28). ([MacDonald, W & Farstad, A. Believer's Bible Commentary: Thomas Nelson](#))

**John MacArthur** comments that the **angel of the LORD** is

A special manifestation of Yahweh Himself at strategic historical junctures. A strong case can be made that these were pre-incarnate appearances of the Lord Jesus Christ. ([MacArthur, J.: The MacArthur Study Bible Nashville: Word](#))

**J Vernon McGee** writes

I am not going to go into any detail about this subject, but I believe the Angel of the Lord is the preincarnate Christ. You do not find the Angel of the Lord in the New Testament because the Lord is no longer an angel, but a Man. When He appeared in the Old Testament as an angel, He was none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. ([McGee, J V: Thru the Bible Commentary: Thomas Nelson](#))

## ANGEL OF THE LORD IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Note that Dr McGee's comment above is not completely accurate for the phrase **angel of the Lord** does in fact appear 12 times in the NT. However careful attention to the context

of each of these passages, reveals that unlike the same phrase in the OT, none of these NT passages directly or indirectly indicate any of these angels are God, but only the messengers of God. In each of the passages below, the **angel** is clearly a created holy being, and there is no support that they refer to the Person of Jesus Christ.

Mat 1:20 But when he had considered this, behold, an **angel of the Lord** appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for that which has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.

Mat 1:24 And Joseph arose from his sleep, and did as the **angel of the Lord** commanded him, and took her as his wife,

Mat 2:13 Now when they had departed, behold, an **angel of the Lord** appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Arise and take the Child and His mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is going to search for the Child to destroy Him."

Mat 2:19 But when Herod was dead, behold, an **angel of the Lord** appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying,

Mat 28:2 And behold, a severe earthquake had occurred, for an **angel of the Lord** descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it.

Luke 1:11 And an **angel of the Lord** appeared to him, standing to the right of the altar of incense.

Luke 2:9 And an **angel of the Lord** suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened.

John 5:4 for an **angel of the Lord** went down at certain seasons into the pool, and stirred up the water; whoever then first, after the stirring up of the water, stepped in was made well from whatever disease with which he was afflicted.>

Acts 5:19 But an **angel of the Lord** during the night opened the gates of the prison, and taking them out he said,

Acts 8:26 But an **angel of the Lord** spoke to Philip saying, "Arise and go south to the road that descends from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This is a desert road.)

Acts 12:7 And behold, an **angel of the Lord** suddenly appeared, and a light shone in the cell; and he struck Peter's side and roused him, saying, "Get up quickly." And his chains fell off his hands.

Acts 12:23 And immediately an **angel of the Lord** struck him because he did not give God the glory, and he was eaten by worms and died.

# ACTS 7

## STEPHEN'S SERMON

As discussed above, although the phrase **Angel of the Lord** is present 12 times in the NT, none of those instances can be identified as a God. The only NT reference to the Angel of God which can be unequivocally identified as Divine is a historical reference in Stephen's Sermon in [Acts 7:30-38](#)

And after forty years had passed, AN **ANGEL** APPEARED TO HIM (Moses) IN THE WILDERNESS OF MOUNT Sinai, IN THE FLAME OF A BURNING THORN BUSH. 31 "And when Moses saw it, he began to marvel at the sight; and as he approached to look more closely, there came the voice of the Lord: 32 'I AM THE GOD OF YOUR FATHERS, THE GOD OF ABRAHAM AND ISAAC AND JACOB.' And Moses shook with fear and would not venture to look. 33 "BUT THE LORD SAID TO HIM, 'TAKE OFF THE SANDALS FROM YOUR FEET, FOR THE PLACE ON WHICH YOU ARE STANDING IS HOLY GROUND. 34 'I HAVE CERTAINLY SEEN THE OPPRESSION OF MY PEOPLE IN EGYPT, AND HAVE HEARD THEIR GROANS, AND I HAVE COME DOWN TO DELIVER THEM; COME NOW, AND I WILL SEND YOU TO EGYPT.' 35 "This Moses whom they disowned, saying, 'WHO MADE YOU A RULER AND A JUDGE?' is the one whom God sent to be both a ruler and a deliverer with the help of the **Angel** who appeared to him in the thorn bush. 36 "This man led them out, performing wonders and signs in the land of Egypt and in the Red Sea and in the wilderness for forty years. 37 "This is the Moses who said to the sons of Israel, 'GOD SHALL RAISE UP FOR YOU A PROPHET LIKE ME FROM YOUR BRETHREN.' 38 "This is the one who was in the congregation (ekklesia = in context the literal meaning applies = "called out ones") in the wilderness together with the **Angel** who was speaking to him on [Mt Sinai](#) (see cross reference below - Scripture is always the best commentary on Scripture click here for discussion of this principle), and Who was with our fathers (Who was "*with our fathers*"?); and he received living oracles to pass on to you." ([Acts 7:30-38](#))

SCRIPTURE OCCURRENCES OF  
THE PHRASES...  
**ANGEL of the LORD**  
**ANGEL OF GOD**

## All 62 OT SCRIPTURES

If you are still uncertain about Who the **Angel of the LORD** represents I would strongly encourage you to perform an Inductive Study and make careful observations on each of the Scriptural uses listed below which will enable you to arrive at an accurate interpretation. Remember that for the most accurate interpretation of any isolated passage of Scripture, you should always read the passage in context ("Enjoy!").

Genesis 16:7, 9, 10, 11,21:17, 22:11,15,31:11

Exodus 3:2, 14:19

Numbers 22:22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 22:31, 32, 33, 34, 35

Judges 2:1,4; 5:23; 6:11,12, 20-22; 13:3,6,9,13,15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21

1Samuel 29:9

2Samuel 14:17; 14:20; 19:27; 24:16,

1Kings 19:7;

2Kings 1:3; 1:15; 19:35;

1Chronicles 21:12; 21:15, 16; 21:18; 21:30

Psalms 34:7; 35:5; 35:6

Isaiah 37:36

Zechariah 1:11, 12; 3:1, 5, 6;12:8

## OTHER REFERENCES TO THE THE ANGEL OF THE LORD

[Dr John Walvoord's article in Bibliotheca Sacra from his Series in Christology - Part 2: The Preincarnate Son of God \(recommended\)](#)

[Series in Christology Part 1- The Preincarnate Son of God](#)

[Series in Christology Part 2- The Preincarnate Son of God](#)

[Series in Christology Part 3- The Preincarnate Son of God](#)

[Series in Christology Part 4- The Preincarnate Son of God](#)

[Who Is the Angel of the Lord? \(Jdg 6:22-23\) - Hard Sayings of the Bible](#)

[Angel of the LORD - Loren Jacobs at I Dolphin](#)

Study on the "Angel of the LORD" by John Baze - unfortunately this journal now requires a [\\$50 annual fee](#) - that's the bad news but the good news is that the annual fee gives you access to literally 1000's of other theological journal articles from multiple conservative seminaries - [click for more info](#)

[The Angel of the Lord in the Old Testament -Part 1 \( \\$ \)](#)

[The Angel of the Lord in the Old Testament -Part II \( \\$ \)](#)

[Angel of the Lord in the Pentateuch - E W Hengstenberg](#)

[Genesis 16:7-13 The Angel of the LORD](#)

[Don Stewart -- Who Is the Angel of the Lord in the Old Testament?](#)

Study the Scriptural links - Over 100 glorious Names of our Lord Jesus Christ...

[Torrey's Topic - Titles & Names of Christ](#)

[Naves references on the Angel - Holy Trinity](#)

Dictionary Articles, etc

[Angel of the LORD - Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology](#)  
(See also [Theophany](#))

[Angel of the Lord - American Tract Society Bible Dictionary](#)

[Angel of the Lord \(Yahweh\) - Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible](#)

[Angel of the Lord - Smith's Bible Dictionary](#)

[The Angel of the Lord - Watson's Biblical & Theological Dictionary](#)

[Angel of the lord - Girdlestone's Synonyms of the Old Testament](#)

See discussion of The Angel of the LORD in RBC Booklet

[What Can We Learn From The Angels?](#)

## **Summary of the Message of the Angel of the LORD (modified from John Baze)**

[The Angel of the Lord in the Old Testament -Part 1](#)

[The Angel of the Lord in the Old Testament -Part II](#)

### **1) PROPHETIC PROMISES of PERSONAL BLESSING**

Hagar (Ge 16:6-16) and Manoah's wife (each a son)

(Jdg 13:1-25)

Abraham and his descendants (greatly multiplied)  
(Ge 22:1-24)

## **2) PERSONAL ASSISTANCE**

Elijah (food) (1Kings 19:1-21)

Abraham (sacrificial ram) (Ge 22:1-24).

## **3) NATIONAL/CITY ASSISTANCE**

Jerusalem and Israel (protection) (Zech 12:8)

Protection from Pharaoh's pursuing chariots ("Angel of God") (Ex 14:19, 20)

## **4) PERSONAL JUDGMENT**

Balaam (wrong motive) (Nu 22:1-41 especially verses 22ff)

Ahaziah (seeking false gods) (2Ki 1:2, 3)

David (disobedience) (2Sa 24:16, 17 cf 1Chr 21:12,15,16 Ps 35:5,6)

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David (disobedience) (2Sa 24:16, 17 cf 1Chr 21:12,15,16 Ps 35:5, 6)

## **5) NATIONAL/REGIONAL JUDGMENT**

Israel (disobedience) (Jdg 2:1-23)

Assyrians (attacked Jerusalem) (2Ki 19:1-37 especially 2Ki 19:35, 36, 37ff)

Meroz (curse) (Jdg 5:23).

## 6) PERSONAL PROTECTION

For those who fear (reverential awe not shaking fear) the LORD (Ps 34:7) (see [Spurgeon's note](#) on this psalm)

## 7) PERSONAL COMMISSION

Moses (deliver Israel from Egypt) (Ex 3:1-22)

Gideon (deliver Israel from Midianites) (Jdg 6:1-40)

Samson (deliver Israel from Philistines) (Jdg 13:1-25)

# OLD TESTAMENT THEOPHANIES OF CHRIST OTHER THAN THE ANGEL OF JEHOVAH

**Theophany** is from **theos** (God) and **phaino** (to appear) and describes an appearance of God in some form, such as the **Angel of the LORD**.

**John Walvoord** writes that

While fewer in number, other forms of **theophany** are afforded in the Old Testament.

In Genesis 18:1-35, Jehovah appears in the form of a man, accompanied by two other men who were probably angels. In view of the revelation afforded in other theophanies, there can be little doubt that this theophany is also an appearance of Christ.

Jacob's experience of wrestling with God (Gen 32:24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32) is identified in Hosea 12:4 as the time when Jacob "had power over the angel, and prevailed." (**Ed:** click discussion)

The appearance of God to the elders of Israel is probably another theophany of Christ (Ex 24:9, 10, 11).

The cloud of the Lord, the glory of the Lord (Ex 40:38) and the cloudy pillar (Ex 33:9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23) are all to be taken as appearances of Christ in the Old Testament, even

though in somewhat different character than a formal theophany like the Angel of Jehovah. (**Ed:** See related discussions **Shekinah glory cloud** and **Glory of the LORD: Past, Present, Future**)

It is safe to assume that every visible manifestation of God in bodily form in the Old Testament is to be identified with the Lord Jesus Christ. The prince of the host of Jehovah (Josh 5:13, 14, 15), the appearance of the likeness of the glory of Jehovah of Ezekiel (Ezek 1:1-28-see notes), and other similar appearances are easiest explained as theophanies of Christ...

The number of theophanies which are without question furnish one of the major forms of Old Testament revelation of God. Their identification with the Son of God refutes at once the Arian heresy that Christ was a created being and the Socinian and Unitarian perversions of the Person of Christ. For anyone who will accept the Scriptures in their plain intent, there is a clear portrayal of Christ in these Old Testament theophanies. (From [Christology—Part 4: The Preincarnate Son of God](#))

**Walvoord** adds that "The testimony of the early (Church) Fathers on the theophanies of Christ in the Old Testament is full and conclusive."

## **Genesis 16:7-11**

### **“The Angel of the LORD”**

#### **Allen Ross**

Throughout the Old Testament, but in the patriarchal narratives especially, God reveals Himself through “the Angel of Yahweh.” However, if these narratives are looked at more closely, it becomes pretty clear that this “Angel of Yahweh” is Yahweh Himself, or, we may say, is the Lord who reveals the Godhead.

In Genesis 16, for example, the Angel of Yahweh finds Hagar in the wilderness and instructs her on what to do and promises her a future through Ishmael. The Angel is the subject in verses 7, 9, 10, and 11. Of course, what the Angel of the Yahweh says is the word of Yahweh. But Hagar’s response is that here she has seen the Living God who sees her. There is no indication in this chapter that says He appeared to Hagar, but she obviously saw something that inspired her to name Him



and the place.

In Genesis 18 Yahweh did appear to Abraham to announce the future birth of Isaac. This chapter does not say it is the Angel of Yahweh, just Yahweh. But the appearance begins with the visitation of three men, who, for all practical purposes, seem to Abraham to be ordinary people who come and eat in his tent. But it was Yahweh in a human form. The men then got up to go to Sodom, and Yahweh stopped to inform Abraham of what was to happen. In Genesis 19, then, two angels arrive at Sodom. One explanation is that the three were Yahweh and two angels in human form, and only the angels went down to the city of Sodom.

In Exodus 3:2 we read that the Angel of Yahweh appeared to Moses in the burning bush; but in verse 4 this Angel is called both Yahweh and God. In the passage He revealed Himself to Moses as "I AM," whom we have already identified as Christ.

In the story of Balaam it is the Angel of Yahweh who gets in front of Balaam and his donkey and prevents his easy passage. The donkey saw the Angel, but Balaam did not at first. Then his eyes were open and he saw the Angel of Yahweh with sword drawn. So he bowed and acknowledged his sin.

In Judges 6:11 the Angel of Yahweh appeared to Gideon to commission him for the task of delivering Israel. In the conversation with Gideon we find it is the Angel of the Yahweh who speaks in verse 12, then Yahweh himself who speaks in verse 14 saying He was sending Gideon, as well as in verses 16 and 18. Then in verse 20 it is the Angel of God. When Gideon placed the offering on the rock, it was the Angel of Yahweh who touched it with his rod and ignited it. The text then says that the Angel of Yahweh then disappeared. At this Gideon realized who this Visitor was, for he was afraid and said, "Ah, Lord Yahweh! I have seen the Angel of Yahweh face to face" (v. 22). But Yahweh said to him, "Peace, do not be afraid, you are not going to die." Gideon then built an altar to Yahweh and called it "Yahweh is peace." It is clear that the Angel of Yahweh and Yahweh are used interchangeably in the passage, that the Angel says things that Yahweh would say, and that Gideon worshiped Him as Yahweh. His worship was approved by Yahweh who granted him his peace.

The same phenomenon occurred in Judges 13 when the Angel of Yahweh appeared to the parents of Samson. According to the woman the Visitor looked awesome, like an angel of God. At the end of this exchange between the Angel and Manoah and his wife, the Angel ascended in the flame of the offering. And the man said, "We are doomed to die. We have seen God" (v. 22).

The Angel of Yahweh appears a good bit in the narratives of Elijah, such as in 1 Kings 19 and 2 Kings 1.

It seems pretty clear in these and other passages that the title “the Angel of Yahweh” refers to “Yahweh” Himself, and so it is a description of an incarnation of the Lord, for He appeared in human form to many people. The Bible does not clarify who this Yahweh is who appears as the “Angel” (or messenger), but every indication is that it would be the second person of the trinity, the divine Son. What commends this interpretation is 1) the appearances of the Angel of Yahweh parallel appearances of Yahweh which later Scriptures indicate would be Christ, 2) and this fits theology because it is the property of the Son to be the one who reveals the Godhead on earth, the Father never having taken on human form to walk among men, and the Spirit never having the property of corporeality, and 3) the phenomenon of the visitation of this Angel of Yahweh ceases when the incarnation occurs, indicating that there would no longer be a need for a “pre-incarnate” appearance now that the LORD took on mortal flesh to reveal the Godhead fully

## TESTIMONIES FROM THE EARLY CHURCH FATHERS

**Justin Martyr** declared

Our Christ conversed with Moses out of the bush, in the appearance of fire. And Moses received great strength from Christ, who spake to him in the appearance of fire.

**Irenaeus** wrote

The Scripture is full of the Son of God’s appearing: sometimes to talk and eat with Abraham, at other times to instruct Noah about the measures of the ark; at another time to seek Adam; at another time to bring down judgment upon Sodom; then again, to direct Jacob in the way; and again, to converse with Moses out of the bush.

**Tertullian** stated,

It was the Son who judged men from the beginning, destroying that lofty tower, and confounding their languages, punishing the whole world with a flood of waters, and raining fire and brimstone upon Sodom and Gomorrah, the Lord pouring it down from the

Lord: for he always descended to hold converse with men, from Adam even to the patriarchs and prophets, in visions, in dreams, in mirrors, in dark sentences, always preparing his way from the beginning: neither was it possible, that God who conversed with men upon earth, could be any other than that Word which was to be made flesh.

Clemens Alexandrinus, Origen, Theophilus of Antioch, the synod of Antioch, Cyprian, Hilary, St. Basil, and others are also reported as holding the same viewpoint regarding the reality of the theophanies of Christ in the Old Testament ([Series in Christology Part 4- The Preincarnate Son of God](#))

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## **ANGEL OF THE LORD**

### **Henry Law**

### **(1877)**

From a chapter in his book [Gleanings from the Book of Life](#) which is entitled "Angel of the LORD."

"The Angel of the Lord appeared to him...And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God."—Ex. 3:2-6

An avenue of sacred story leads to this wondrous scene. The prelude is awakening which introduces the grand subject. In the foreground Moses is seen. Forty years had run their course since he fled from the court of the Egyptian king. His burning zeal and patriotic spirit had flared too high. The fears of a suspicious monarch had been roused, and the safety of the reputed grandson necessitated flight. His refuge was the land of Midian. Here he long dwelt in peace, as a shepherd among shepherds. His calm employ would give abundant leisure for communion with heaven. Reflection would review past days. Thus profitable training schooled him for his destined course.

God frequently ordains that early obscurity should lead to most distinguished work. Dark hours precede the break of day. Joseph rises from prison to sit beside the king. From the sheepfolds David is called to occupy the throne.

The set time has now arrived. The deliverance may no longer tarry. The discipline has ended, and the prime instrument is prepared.

Moses, now seeking refreshment for his flock, leads them to Horeb, the mount of God. As he journeyed, his eye is attracted to a bush. Great indeed is his amazement as he surveys this sight! It was bright with fire; but though it blazed, it still retained its substance. Each branch, each fiber, was wrapped in flame; but the flame was harmless to destroy. Each leaf was clasped in the fangs of a devouring element, but still each leaf remained as if untouched. The fiery fury seemed to be in sport. The bush defied the attack. It stood uninjured, as if incapable of losing verdure.

The gazing shepherd would indeed be rapt in wonder. But amazement deepened into awe, when in the bush he saw the form of "the Angel of the Lord." A voice too addressed him, "Moses, Moses." He replied, "Here am I. And the Angel said, Do not come any closer: take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." (Ex 3:5)

What constitutes the sanctity? Why is the rash approach of mortal foot forbidden? Surely one more than man must now be revealed! Present Deity must hallow the spot. It was so. The voice continued: "I am the God of your 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 3:6)

We here learn that Jesus is "the Angel of the Lord." The voice announced, "I am God," and the appearance exhibited a human form. Who can be both God and man but Jesus? The Father never appeared as man. The Holy Spirit never thus condescended. But the blessed Jesus, anticipating the time when earth should claim Him as its child, not infrequently assumed our form. Therefore, without hesitation, we receive "the Angel of the Lord" as Jesus the incarnate God.

Here let a pause be conceded, which without digression asks, What brings Jesus to the burning bush? What feelings actuate His heart? The reply lingers not. We hear the voice: "I have surely seen the affliction of My people, who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians." (Ex 3:7, 8) Exquisite tenderness melts in these words. Assurance of compassion is most sweetly stated. Let no believer faint in the hour of trial. His feet may travel in affliction's road. He may be called to lie on the hard couch of sorrow. Troubles may roll over him as wave upon wave. But the eye of love ever watches him, the heart of love ever throbs sympathetically for him, the ear of love ever listens to his cry, the hand of love will in due season be outstretched to help him. The patient sufferer will sing with David, "He brought me forth also into a large place; He delivered me, because He delighted in me." (Ps 18:19-[note](#)) Thus comfort to the

sorrowing is an early lesson from the "Angel of the Lord" appearing in the burning bush.

It is, too, scarcely a digression to note, that this appearance was deeply engraved on the patriarch's mind. His course throughout the wilderness was not external ease. Hard were his toils, and grievous his afflictions. But in his trials thought would fly back and take solace from this scene. The recollection of his Lord's appearance would check desponding fears. Strength would revive, refreshed by these sweet memories. Thus it is wise to erect Ebenezers in the course of Christian pilgrimage.

The closing scene shows this appearance to have been a life-long comfort. Forty years again rolled on, and the man of God reached the conclusion of his earthly career. Before his lips are silenced, a legacy of precious gifts, brilliant with prophetic luster, is invoked. The treasures of earth are ransacked to find suitable gifts for the tribe of Joseph. But the crown of desired mercy is, "the good will of Him who dwelt in the bush." (Dt. 33:16) Thus, when ready to depart, Moses remembers "the Angel of the Lord," and he recalls Him as the source of blessings to the sons of men. Here let the ready prayer ascend, Good Lord! give us grace ever to bask under the sunshine of Your good will; Your favor is life; Your smile is deliverance from all woe!

The vestibule is now passed, and we are prepared to seek general instruction from this title.

**I. It is obvious that the name mainly denotes that Jesus is the channel of communication between heaven and earth.**

There was a time, but it was very brief, when communion with God was free. In Eden's happy hours charming communion was maintained. A loving child drew near, a loving Father given a welcome. No barrier intervened; no separating obstacle presented checks; access was unimpeded. The garden was the open door of heaven.

But sin comes, and instantly a breach is made. Illimitable distance now parts God and man. Can that distance be removed, and converse be again established? "The Angel of the Lord" appears, and in His mission there is full reply.

Restoration to this blessed communion springs directly from His wondrous person. Jesus, as both God and man, brings heaven to earth, and raises earth to heaven. Thus the mountains upon mountains of obstacles are swept away, and intervening seas are annihilated. Thus a ladder is constructed, resting on earth, and soaring above the skies.

Let each aspect of our Lord's person now be pondered in confirmation of this truth. It cannot be kept too constantly before the mind, that He is very God—co-equal with the Father—His partner in majesty, in

dignity, in power, in glory, in all preeminence. For a moment imagine Jesus displaced from the throne of Deity. The whole fabric of salvation crumbles into dust. No expiation can be made, no sin pardoned, no soul saved. But on all His acts on earth the impress of Deity is inscribed. His footprints are Deity. The echo of His voice is Deity. The whole gospel-story resounds, "Behold your God!" Of all the truths of revelation, none more brightly shines than that "the Angel of the Lord" is Himself God over all, blessed forevermore. What God is, He is. What God knows, He knows. What God wills, He wills.

If He were only God, the separating distance would still check communion. But all praise to His unbounded love, in the plenitude of overflowing grace He becomes an inhabitant of earth! Without ceasing to be God forever, with no diminishing of essential Deity, He enters the family of man. Without the capability of sin, He is as truly man as any woman-born can be. "As the children were partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same." (He 2:14-note) He humbles Himself to be "the first-born among many brethren." (Ro 8:29-note) As God, He is one with God; as man, He is one with man. On each His hand is placed. In Him as a center they can meet. The link is perfect, an unobstructed way unites our earth to heaven.

## **II. But as "the Angel of the Lord," He especially reveals God to the sons of men.**

He visits earth, not only that He may live our life and die our death, and suffer our sufferings, and pay our every debt, and bear our every curse, and make atonement for our every sin, and redeem us from all iniquity, and work out for us a heaven-deserving robe. This is indeed His glorious work, as the Savior of His people from their sins. But He came, moreover, on a sweet embassy—to open out the Father's heart, to tell us the Father's will, to shine before us as the express image of His Father's person.

Let a kindred title here give light. Jesus is announced as "**the Messenger of the Covenant.**" Almost the concluding words of prophecy in the ancient Church proclaim,

"Behold, I will send My Messenger, and He shall prepare the way before Me: and the Lord, whom you seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the Covenant, whom you delight in: behold, He shall come, says the Lord of hosts." (Mal. 3:1)

It is faith's privilege to know, that before time was, an everlasting Covenant secures salvation. In all its terms Christ has essential part. He stipulates to God for man. He speaks to man for God.

But not only is He its Surety, He is also its Messenger—its Angel. He reveals its mysteries, and opens out its wonders, and invites to the contemplation of its grace. Let no doubts here intervene. Let all mists of hesitating ignorance disappear. Hear the grand word, "God, who at sundry times and in diverse manners spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son." (He 1:1, 2-note) Through Him, the Eternal Word, the counsels and purposes of heaven are announced. We are invited to draw near and give heed. "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear Him." (Mt 17:5) We are called to receive the message, "Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters, and he who has no money: come, buy and eat; yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend money for that which is not bread? and your labor for that which satisfies not? Listen diligently unto Me, and eat that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." (Is 55:1, 2)

Sweet promises, also, cheer obedient hearers. "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you shall find rest unto your souls." (Mt. 11:29) And again, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." (Re 3:20) Rich is the heritage of the listening Mary. She sat at the feet of Jesus to hear His voice, and received the full assurance, "She has chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." (Lk 10:42)

Is not the same access open to us now? May we not at all times and in all places cry, "Speak, Lord, for Your servant hears?" "In Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." (Col 2:3-note) And the gates of this storehouse are never closed. He has come, a light into the world, that those who follow Him should not walk in darkness, but should have the light of life. Never is the Sun of Righteousness eclipsed. It is faith's chosen pleasure-ground to come apart from lesser luminaries, and to revel in the rays of this unclouded sun, and to rise above schools of nature, science, philosophy, and to drink lessons from celestial springs of truth. Are our souls athirst for God, for the living God, eager to know Him as He really is? In this ardent desire we may fly to "the Angel of the Lord." He replies, "Look unto Me." "He who has seen Me, has seen the Father." (John 14:9) He is the light of life, and on this brightness we may gaze. "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2Co 4:6)

Here we may study, written as with a sunbeam, all the Divine attributes. If we seek such discoveries from this world's school, how blighting is our disappointment! If we ask, "What are the feelings of

God's heart?" The world presents a fearful roll, written within and without, with "lamentations, and mourning, and woe." (Ezek. 2:10) Misery stalks up and down the earth, wretchedness sits beside each hearth, tears are ever flowing, sighs are ever heaving, pain is a constant visitant, apprehensions are ever banishing repose, earthquakes and storms and floods and famine, and wars and rumors of wars, move on with desolating speed. These dark spots affright, and we ask, Can these be offshoots of benevolence?

"The Angel of the Lord" appears, and all is bright. He gloriously shows that "God is love." The proof is His own mission. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins." (1John 4:10) "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16) "The Angel of the Lord" exhibits Himself as sent by the Father, to rescue immortal souls from misery, to crown them with eternal bliss, to wash out in His blood their every sin, to robe them with unfading righteousness, to fill them with all the fullness of God, to make them sharers of all the glory of heaven forever. Thus He illustrates the glorious truth, "God is love."

Similarly He commends every attribute. All are conspicuously glorified in Him. Justice is honored; all that is asked is fully given; not one debt remains uncanceled. Much is demanded. Jesus paid all. Truth sits triumphant on its highest throne, not one word from its lips fails, not one promise is unfulfilled, not one threat is put aside. It is declared that without holiness no man can see the Lord; that none but the sanctified can sit down at the marriage-supper of the Lamb. "The Angel of the Lord" assures us, that for all this blessedness there is full provision, that a new creation shall be established in the hearts of the redeemed, that "old things shall pass away, that all things shall become new." Thus "the Angel of the Lord" is the channel of communication between heaven and earth, and gives full manifestation of the Father's essence.

Angel of the Lord! Who will not adore You as the way to heaven, and the source of all saving light! We beseech You to enlighten us more and more, to sanctify us daily by Your truth; "Your word is truth;" to fulfill in us Your blessed declaration, "O righteous Father, the world has not known You: but I have known You, and these have known that You have sent Me. And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it; that the love with which You have loved Me may be in them, and I in them." (Jn 17:25, 26) When other teachers would perplex, mislead, beguile; shine forth in all the luster of heaven's own light! From our inmost souls we profess, Angel of the Lord! "we know that You are a Teacher sent from God"—to none other will we go; "You have the words of eternal life."