

STUDY SIX – ANGELS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT I

“For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him.” (Hebrews 2:2-3)

INTRODUCTION

This study concerns the specific ministries of angels in Old Testament times. This summary was developed from the study of Old Testament references to angels. In some instances, other words such as “Man” or men etc., might be used however, this is a study of angelic activities in the Old Testament.

OLD TESTAMENT MINISTRIES OF ANGELS

The Old Testament reveals that angels...

- **Blocked access to the garden.**

Cherubim angels were stationed at the entrance to Eden to block access to the Garden after Adam and Eve sinned lest they partake of the tree of life and live forever in their sinful state:

“So, He [God] drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.” (Genesis 3:24)

- **Directed Hagar.**

Abraham’s wife, Sarah, concocted a plan for her servant to birth a child through her husband, Abraham. After Hagar conceived, Sarah was jealous and treated her badly, so Hagar fled into the wilderness. There, God sent an angel with divine direction:

“Now the Angel of the LORD found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, by the spring on the way to Shur. And He said, “Hagar, Sarai’s maid, where have you come from, and where are you going?” She said, “I am fleeing from the presence of my mistress Sarai.” The Angel of the LORD said to her, “Return to your mistress, and submit yourself under her hand.”” (Genesis 16:7-9)

- **Announced the name of the child - Ishmael.**

An angel was sent to Hagar with this message:

“And the Angel of the LORD said to her: “Behold, you are with child, and you shall bear a son. You shall call his name Ishmael, because the LORD has heard your affliction.” (Genesis 16:11)

This is believed to be an appearance of the Angel of the Lord which you will learn about in the next bible study. There were several appearances of this Angel in the Old Testament.

- **Announced the birth of Isaac.**

Two angels and God, appearing in human form, came calling on Abraham and Sarah:

“Then the LORD appeared to him by the terebinth trees of Mamre, as he was sitting in the tent door in the heat of the day. So, he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing by him; and when he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them, and bowed himself to the ground, and said, “My Lord, if I have now found favor in Your sight, do not pass on by Your servant... Then they said to him, “Where is Sarah your wife?” So, he said, “Here, in the tent.” And He said, “I will certainly return to you according to

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the time of life, and behold, Sarah your wife shall have a son.” (Sarah was listening in the tent door which was behind him.)” (**Genesis 18:1-3, 9-10**)

- **Rescued Hagar and Ishmael.**

“And God heard the voice of the lad. Then the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said to her, “What ails you, Hagar? Fear not, for God has heard the voice of the lad where he is. Arise, lift up the lad and hold him with your hand, for I will make him a great nation.” Then God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water. And she went and filled the skin with water and gave the lad a drink.” (**Genesis 21:17-19**)

This is believed to be another appearance of the Angel of the Lord.

- **Warned of the destruction of Sodom.**

Angels appeared in human form to warn Lot regarding the coming destruction of sinful Sodom.

“Now the two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them, and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground... Then the men said to Lot, “Have you anyone else here? Son-in-law, your sons, your daughters, and whomever you have in the city—take them out of this place! For we will destroy this place, because the outcry against them has grown great before the face of the LORD, and the LORD has sent us to destroy it.”” (**Genesis 19:1, 12-13**)

- **Prevented the slaying of Isaac.**

God told Abraham to take his only son, Isaac, and sacrifice him to the Lord. Early the next morning, Abraham set out for the place of sacrifice:

“Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, “Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.” Then He said, “Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.” ... Then they came to the place of which God had told him. And Abraham built an altar there and placed the wood in order; and he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, upon the wood. 10 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!” So, he said, “Here I am.” And He said, “Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now, I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.” Then Abraham lifted his eyes and looked, and there behind him was a ram caught in a thicket by its horns. So, Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son.” (**Genesis 22:1-2, 9-13**)

This is believed to have been another appearance of the Angel of the Lord.

- **Guided Eliezer on his mission.**

When Abraham dispatched his servant, Eliezer, to find a wife for Isaac, Abraham declared:

“The LORD God of heaven, who took me from my father’s house and from the land of my family, and who spoke to me and swore to me, saying, To your descendants I give this land,’ He will send His angel before you, and you shall take a wife for my son from there.” (**Genesis 24:7**)

The servant testified to this divine direction in Genesis 24:40.

“But he said to me, ‘The LORD, before whom I walk, will send His angel with you and prosper your way; and you shall take a wife for my son from my family and from my father’s house.’” (**Genesis 24:40**)

- ***Jacob had various angelic encounters for various reasons.***

Fleeing from his childhood home because of his transgressions, Jacob encountered angels:

“Now Jacob went out from Beersheba and went toward Haran. So he came to a certain place and stayed there all night, because the sun had set. And he took one of the stones of that place and put it at his head, and he lay down in that place to sleep. Then he dreamed, and behold, a ladder was set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.” (Genesis 28:10-12)

Jesus later confirmed that through Him the angels will be ascending and descending perhaps based on the people faith in Jesus and application of God’s Word:

“And He said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.”” (John 1:51)

While Jacob was working for his conniving Uncle Laban, the Angel of the Lord visited him:

“And it happened, at the time when the flocks conceived, that I lifted my eyes and saw in a dream, and behold, the rams which leaped upon the flocks were streaked, speckled, and gray-spotted. Then the Angel of God spoke to me in a dream, saying, ‘Jacob.’ And I said, ‘Here I am.’ And He said, ‘Lift your eyes now and see, all the rams which leap on the flocks are streaked, speckled, and gray-spotted; for I have seen all that Laban is doing to you. I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed the pillar and where you made a vow to Me. Now arise, get out of this land, and return to the land of your family.’” (Genesis 31:10-13)

This is believed to be an appearance of the Angel of the Lord because of the declaration, “I am the God of Bethel.”

In the next chapter, Jacob is returning to his homeland as the angel had directed:

“So, Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. 2 When Jacob saw them, he said, “This is God’s camp.” And he called the name of that place Mahanaim.” (Genesis 32:1-2)

Assured of God’s protection, Jacob called the place of this revelation “Mahanaim” meaning “two hosts”. The word is in its dual form and means two or dual camps. It was used by Jacob to indicate that God had encamped in the midst of Jacob and his family.

Before arriving home, Jacob had another encounter with an angel. This is another appearance of Angel of the Lord:

“Then Jacob was left alone; and a Man wrestled with him until the breaking of day. Now when He saw that He did not prevail against him, He touched the socket of his hip; and the socket of Jacob’s hip was out of joint as He wrestled with him. And He said, “Let Me go, for the day breaks.” But he said, “I will not let You go unless You bless me!” So, He said to him, “What is your name?” He said, “Jacob.” And He said, “Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men and have prevailed.” Then Jacob asked, saying, “Tell me Your name, I pray.” And He said, “Why is it that you ask about My name?” And He blessed him there. So, Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: “For I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.”” (Genesis 32:24-30)

In his last days, Jacob...

“And he blessed Joseph, and said: “God, before whom my fathers, Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has fed me all my life long to this day, the Angel who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; Let my

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name be named upon them, and the name of my fathers, Abraham and Isaac; And let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.”” (Genesis 48:15-16)