

STUDY EIGHT – THE ANGEL OF THE LORD!

INTRODUCTION

The Angel of the Lord. The Angel of His Presence. The Angel of Jehovah. The Angel of the Covenant. Captain of the Lord's hosts. These are the names given to a mysterious angel who appears frequently in Old Testament times. Who was this angel? To whom did He appear? What were His purposes?

THE TRINITY OF GOD

To discover the identify of this Angel, one must first understand the doctrine of the Trinity of God. The one true God is revealed in three distinct personalities of the Father, the Son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. They are one in essence, one God with three distinct natures.

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word for God, "Elohim", is a plural word. Plural pronouns are used of God at the time of creation (Genesis 1:26). The strongest Old Testament verse for the doctrine of the Trinity is:

“Come near to Me, hear this: I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, I was there. and now the Lord GOD and His Spirit have sent Me.” (Isaiah 48:16)

In the New Testament, the Father, Son, and Spirit are confirmed to be divine, to do the works of God, and to be worshipped. Much is written about the deity of Jesus (examples in John 1:1; Titus 2:13), yet He is distinguished from the Father and the Spirit. The Spirit is also God (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 5:3-5), but is distinguished from the Father and the Son. God has a triune nature with three distinct personalities, yet He is one God:

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord.” (Deuteronomy 6:4)

There are several Scriptures which confirm this triune nature of God. When Jesus was being baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan River, God spoke and the Holy Spirit descended:

“And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him: And lo, a voice from Heaven saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” (Matthew 3:16-17)

Understanding this triune nature of God is essential to identifying the Angel of the Lord. Here are some other Scriptures confirming the Trinity: John 15:26; 1 Peter 4:14; Romans 8:2-3; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Ephesians 2:18; Acts 2:33.

APPEARANCES OF THE ANGEL OF THE LORD

With this background summary of the theology of the Trinity, we are ready to survey the appearances of the Angel of the Lord in Old Testament times.

First, we must be clear that the Angel of the Lord was not God the Father, as God has never appeared in bodily form:

“No man hath seen God at any time.” (1 John 4:12)

“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)

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The Angel of the Lord is not the Holy Spirit. Although He “came upon” people of God in Old Testament times, He did not come to dwell with Believers until after the ascension of Christ (Acts 2).

The Angel of the Lord is believed to be Old Testament appearances of Jesus Christ. The Angel of the Lord was not just from the Lord; He is the Lord. This belief is supported by the promises He makes, the actions He takes, and how He spoke for God in the first person.

Let’s look at the Old Testament appearances of the Angel of the Lord which provide confirmation that this Angel is the Lord Jesus Christ.

- Hagar. An angel was sent to Hagar with this message:

“Then the Angel of the LORD said to her, “I will multiply your descendants exceedingly, so that they shall not be counted for multitude.” 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. He shall be a wild man; His hand shall be against every man, and every man’s hand against him. And he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren.” Then she called the name of the LORD who spoke to her, You-Are-the-God-Who-Sees; for she said, “Have I also here seen Him who sees me?”” (Genesis 16:10-13)

The promise to Hagar was in the first person: “I will multiply...” (Genesis 16:7-13; 21:17-20).

Moses also confirmed that it was the Angel of Jehovah who spoke to her (Genesis 16:13 ASV).

- Abraham.

“Then the Angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, and said: “By Myself I have sworn, says the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son— blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.”” (Genesis 22:15-18)

How do we know this angel in Genesis 22:17 is actually God? A messenger angel would not say “I will multiply your descendants exceedingly, so that they shall not be counted for multitude” (verse 10). A messenger angel would say “God will do this.”

- Jacob.

While Jacob was working for his conniving Uncle Laban, an angel visited him:

“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 31:11-13)

The identity of this angel was made clear. He said: “I am the God of Bethel...”

Before arriving home, Jacob had another encounter with an angel. In Genesis 32:24-30, Jacob wrestled with this Angel and sought for a blessing to which he received. The Angel did what Jesus does through the born-again experience: He supernaturally changed Jacob and gave Him a new identity. Jacob knew that He had seen a member of the Trinity of God face-to-face. He said:

“So, Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: “For I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.”” (Genesis 32:30)

Nearing the end of his life, while blessing Joseph’s sons, Jacob said...

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“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 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)

Jesus is the Redeemer!

- Moses.

When the Angel of the Lord appeared to Moses, the one who spoke to Him is called the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It was on that occasion that God revealed His name as “I Am That I am” (Exodus 3:1-6).

Stephen confirmed this appearance of the Lord in his final message prior to his martyrdom:

“And when forty years had passed, an Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire in a bush, in the wilderness of Mount Sinai. When Moses saw it, he marveled at the sight; and as he drew near to observe, the voice of the Lord came to him, saying, I am the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’ And Moses trembled and dared not look.” (Acts 7:30-32)

- The nation of Israel.

The Angel of the Lord was assigned to deliver Israel, to go before them, to lead them to their promised land, and to pardon their sins—all functions of Jesus. An angel cannot pardon sin (Exodus 23:20-23).

“In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the Angel of His Presence saved them; In His love and in His pity, He redeemed them; And He bore them and carried them all the days of old.” (Isaiah 63:9)

Who saves us? Who redeemed us? Jesus Christ!

Later, in Judges 2:1 it was confirmed that “I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I swore unto your fathers”. An angel did not promise the land to Israel. It was promised by God.

At one point in Israel’s journey to their Promised Land “... the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them” (Exodus 14:19). Paul clearly identifies Him as the Lord Jesus, our spiritual rock:

“Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.” (1 Corinthians 10:1-4)

- Joshua.

The Angel of the Lord introduced himself as “Captain of the Army of the Lord”:

“And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, a Man stood opposite him with His sword drawn in His hand. And Joshua went to Him and said to Him, “Are You for us or for our adversaries?” So, He said, “No, but as Commander of the army of the LORD I have now come.” And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped, and said to Him, “What does my Lord say to His servant?” Then the Commander of the LORD’s army said to Joshua, “Take your sandal off your foot, for the place where you stand is holy.” And Joshua did so.” (Joshua 5:13-15)

Jesus is the leader of the heavenly host known as the army of God.

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- Manoah and his wife.

An angel announced to Manoah's barren wife that she would have a son (Judges 13:2-5). The woman told her husband what happened and Manoah prayed and asked God to send the angel again to teach them how to raise the child. The angel returned to give further instructions in Judges 13:7-15. The Bible says that ...

“And the Angel of the LORD said to Manoah, “Though you detain Me, I will not eat your food. But if you offer a burnt offering, you must offer it to the LORD.” (For Manoah did not know He was the Angel of the LORD.) Then Manoah said to the Angel of the LORD, “What is Your name, that when Your words come to pass, we may honor You?” And the Angel of the LORD said to him, “Why do you ask My name, seeing it is wonderful?” ... And Manoah said to his wife, “We shall surely die, because we have seen God!” But his wife said to him, “If the LORD had desired to kill us, He would not have accepted a burnt offering and a grain offering from our hands, nor would He have shown us all these things, nor would He have told us such things as these at this time.” (Judges 13:16-18, 22-23)

Manoah and his wife knew this was a special Angel of the Trinity of God.