

PREFACE

So far we have been searching for (and finding) Christ in the OT as prophecies that foreshadow later realities. But some of the more fascinating components of a study of Christ in the OT are His *actual* appearances in a preincarnate form—which is a bit of a misnomer, since in these appearances He is, presumably, in flesh. We use the term “preincarnate” to refer to Messiah’s appearances on earth, in visible form to the human eye, prior to His physical Bethlehem birth. These are also referred to as *theophanies*—from the Greek meaning “God to appear.”

THE WORDS IN THE WEEDS

Scripture teaches that wherever we find the term “the angel of the LORD” in the OT (that is, the angel of Yahweh or Jehovah), we have found an earthly appearance of the second Person of the Trinity. And we will substantiate this conclusion in a moment. But first, let’s make sure that we are all sharing the same mental image when we say “angel”—and that it is *not* necessarily that of a white robed figure with wings. In OT Hebrew the word “angel” is *malak*, and in the NT Greek it is *angelos*. The two words have essentially the same meaning:

malak = from an unused root meaning **to despatch as a deputy; a messenger; specifically of God**, i.e. an angel (also a prophet, priest or teacher) :- ambassador, angel, king, messenger. [The last book of the OT is Malachi, written by the prophet named Malachi, which means “my messenger.”]

angelos = from *aggello* [probably derivative from <G71> (ago); compare <G34> (agele)] **(to bring tidings); a messenger**; especially an “angel”; **by implication a pastor** :- angel, messenger.

Thus an “angel” can be

- a literal angelic being, or
- anyone sent by God to deliver a message; for example, the “angels” of the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3 *may* [not all agree] refer to the pastors or leaders of those churches.

One more thing before we make the case for these OT theophanies being the Christ: One of the best clues is the Bible’s use of the definite article.

- Every occurrence in the **OT** (with only one exception) is “*the* angel of the Lord” [i.e., **the specific**].
 - The exception, which is an issue of translation: In the KJV, Judges 2, 6, and 13 use “*an* angel of the Lord,” while the newer translations (NASB, NIV and ESV) make it “*the* angel of the Lord.”
- Every occurrence in the **NT** (with only one exception) is always “*an* angel of the Lord” [i.e., **one of many**].
 - The one exception is found in Matthew 1:24, and there the context makes clear that it just refers back to the angel speaking to Joseph, who had already been introduced as “*an* angel of the Lord.”

Note: In the handout for Part 2 will be a comprehensive list of *all* passages for the preincarnate Christ as the angel of the Lord.

IDENTIFIED AS JEHOVAH

Now, let's prove the case that wherever we find the term "the angel of the Lord" in the OT (that is, the angel of Yahweh or Jehovah), we have found an earthly appearance of the second Person of the Trinity. The first line of evidence is that in a large number of these the angel of Yahweh is identified **as Yahweh**.
[credit to Dr. John F. Walvoord, president of Dallas Theological Seminary for more than 30 years, for *structure* of this study]

Hagar

Turn to Genesis 16.

Sarai, unable to bear children, has given Abram her maid, Hagar. Now Hagar is pregnant, and Sarai has turned against her. As a result, Hagar has run away, and in the wilderness, someone finds her.

Read Genesis 16:7.

In vv11-12 the angel of the Lord delivers His message, in which He speaks of Yahweh in the third person: "Because *the Lord* has given heed to your affliction" (v11). But then notice what happens in v13.

Read Genesis 16:13.

Hagar not only understood that she had been in the presence of very God (*el*), but was astonished that she had survived the experience! What she says in v13 is, literally, "I have been seen here after the one who saw me." That is, *Am I truly able to be seen (am I still alive!) after seeing God?*

K&D: In the angel, Hagar recognized God manifesting Himself to her, the presence of Jehovah, and called Him, "Thou art a God of seeing; for she said, Have I also seen here after seeing?" Believing that a man must die if he saw God (Exo 20:19; Exo 33:20), Hagar was astonished that she had seen God and remained alive, and called Jehovah, who had spoken to her, "God of seeing," i.e., who allows Himself to be seen, because here, on the spot where this sight was granted her, after seeing she still saw, i.e., remained alive. From this occurrence the well received the name of "well of the seeing alive," i.e., at which a man saw God and remained alive: *Beer-lahai-roi*.

The Burning Bush

Let's look at one more. In Exodus 3 the angel of the Lord is explicitly identified as the one revealed to Moses in fire in a bush on Mount Horeb.

Read Exodus 3:1-2.

But notice what "the angel of the Lord" says:

When the Lord saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." Then He said, "Do not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." He said also, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Then Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God. (Exodus 3:4-6; emphasis added)

These are just two passages in the OT where the angel of the Lord is explicitly identified as either *Yahweh* (LORD) or *elohim* (God).

DISTINCT FROM YAHWEH (I.E., FATHER GOD)

Remember: We are examining evidence that proves that the angel of the Lord in the OT is not just deity, but the *second* member of the Trinity: the Son of God, who later came to earth as the Messiah. So far we have established that on more than one occasion the angel of the Lord was identified—or self-identified—as very God. The next step is to show that the angel of the Lord is *distinct from* Yahweh—distinct from *Father* God.

The Pillar

In Numbers 20, during the Exodus, Moses sends a message to the king of Edom requesting safe passage through his land for the children of Israel. In it Moses explains that

“...when we cried out to the Lord, He heard our voice and sent an angel and brought us out from Egypt.” (Numbers 20:16a)

If you’re paying attention you might say, “Hold on, teacher. This says “*an* angel”—not “the angel of the Lord.” Right you are. But let’s look at what is said about this same angel in Exodus 14.

Read Exodus 14:19-20.

Putting together the two passages, we see (in Numbers 20) that Yahweh “sent” an angel to lead them out of Egypt. So the angel was *not*, literally, Yahweh—or we would say, God the Father. Then from Exodus 14 the sent angel is associated with the familiar pillar of cloud by day and fire by night. So the pillar was actually God—but not *Father* God.

Zechariah and the Horses

In the prophecy of Zechariah we have a clear instance of the separation between the angel of the Lord and the Lord Himself. First, let’s establish the presence of the angel of the Lord and His role in the scene, as well as the other characters.

Read Zechariah 1:8-9.

Here’s the scene: Zechariah is given a vision of “a man riding on a red horse,” and at the moment, the man is “standing among the myrtle trees.” There are other horses (and, presumably, riders) there as well. For all his eight apocalyptic visions, Zechariah is assigned an interpreting angel to help explain what is going on. It is to this angel that Zechariah says, “Sir, what are these?” [*lord = adon*] So the angel who speaks first—referred to only as “the angel”—says, “I’ll show you.”

But before the interpreting angel can explain further [*after all, he did say show you*], the man standing among the myrtle trees answers.

Read Zechariah 1:10-11.

The “man” explains the horses (and riders) as—note this—“those whom the Lord (Yahweh) has sent to patrol the earth.” And now v11 makes the association between the “man” standing among the myrtle trees and “the angel of Yahweh.” It is the preincarnate Christ.

Then v12 effectively reinforces the separation between the two—between Yahweh and the angel of the Lord.

Read Zechariah 1:12.

Not the interpreting angel standing next to Zechariah, but “the angel of the Lord” standing among the myrtle trees, calls out to *Yahweh tsaba*—the “Lord of hosts,” which, in Zechariah is the standard reference to Father God. [4 times in the first paragraph alone]

The angel *is* God—but He is also *sent* by God. The angel *is* God—but He *prays* to God. The only sensible conclusion to draw from this is that “the angel of the Lord” is a member of the triune Godhead, but not *Father* God.

CONCLUSION

So far we have shown that “the angel of the Lord” is identified as God [specifically, *Yahweh*, or *Jehovah*]. We have also shown that though the angel of the Lord *is* God, He is not *Father* God, but some other member of the Godhead.

In our next session we will make the case for the angel of the Lord being the *second* person of the triune Godhead: Son of God, Messiah, Christ.

Christ in the OT

Identified *as* Yahweh

Genesis 16:7, 13

7 Now the angel of the Lord found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, by the spring on the way to Shur.
13 Then she called the name of the Lord who spoke to her, "You are a God who sees"; for she said, "Have I even remained alive here after seeing Him?"

Exodus 3:1-6

1 Now Moses was pasturing the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian; and he led the flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God.
2 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.
3 So Moses said, "I must turn aside now and see this marvelous sight, why the bush is not burned up."
4 When the Lord saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am."
5 Then He 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." Then Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

Pre-incarnate Son of God (1)

Literally, "seen here after the one who saw me"

"Angel of the LORD"

Every occurrence in the OT (with only one exception) is "*the* angel of the Lord" [i.e., the specific].

- The exception, which is an issue of translation: In the KJV, Judges 2, 6, and 13 use "an angel of the Lord," while the newer translations (NASB, NIV and ESV) make it "the angel of the Lord."

Every occurrence in the NT (with only one exception) is always "*an* angel of the Lord" [i.e., one of many].

- The one exception is found in Matthew 1:24, and there the context makes clear that it just refers back to the angel speaking to Joseph, who had already been introduced as "an angel of the Lord."

Distinct *from* Yahweh

Exodus 14:19-20

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.
20 So it came between the camp of Egypt and the camp of Israel; and there was the cloud along with the darkness, yet it gave light at night. Thus the one did not come near the other all night.

Zechariah 1:7-12

7 On the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month, which is the month Shebat, in the second year of Darius, the word of the Lord came to Zechariah the prophet, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo, as follows:
8 I saw at night, and behold, a man was riding on a red horse, and he was standing among the myrtle trees which were in the ravine, with red, sorrel and white horses behind him.
9 Then I said, "My lord, what are these?" And the angel who was speaking with me said to me, "I will show you what these are."
10 And the man who was standing among the myrtle trees answered and said, "These are those whom the Lord has sent to patrol the earth."
11 So they answered the angel of the Lord who was standing among the myrtle trees and said, "We have patrolled the earth, and behold, all the earth is peaceful and quiet."
12 Then the angel of the Lord said, "O Lord of hosts, how long will You have no compassion for Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, with which You have been indignant these seventy years?"