

**PREFACE**

In our last session we discussed the first two of three lines of evidence to prove the case that in the OT “the angel of the Lord” is the preincarnate second member of the Godhead. Last week we established that

- the angel is often identified **as Yahweh** (i.e., as God), and
- the angel is, at the same time, revealed to be **distinct from Yahweh** (i.e., God, but not God the Father).

In this session we will discuss the third and final line of evidence making the case that since the first two are true, we can only conclude that “the angel of the Lord” in the OT is indeed the second member of the Godhead: Son of God, Messiah, who would later be the incarnate Jesus. There are at least four lines of evidence for this. [\[again, credit to Dr. John F. Walvoord for the \*structure of this study\*\]](#)

**1. THE SECOND PERSON IS THE VISIBLE GOD OF THE NEW TESTAMENT**

First, in the NT it is only the second person of the Godhead—God the Son—that is visible God. John declares in the first chapter of his gospel that

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth... For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ. 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 1:14, 17-18)

God the Father is never seen; the Holy Spirit, except for descending in the form of a dove at Jesus’ baptism, is never seen. So it follows that it would be the same member of the triune Godhead who would appear in bodily form in both testaments.

To satisfy my own skepticism, as well as anticipate the questions that might arise in class, I spent a fair amount of time this week examining the passages in the OT that would seem to disprove the statement, “No one has seen God at any time.” After all, what about Jacob, who saw God “face to face” (Genesis 32:30); or Moses, with whom the Lord Himself declared, “With him I speak mouth to mouth” and “He beholds the form of the Lord”; what about the elders who went with Moses and the priests atop Mount Horeb and “saw the God of Israel”?

If we examined each of these in class we would have to extend this study of the preincarnate Christ into three or even four sessions. Instead, we’ll look at just one example—at a passage that has always confused me—then I’ll give you the bottom-line for *all* these appearances.

**Read Exodus 33:9-11.**

That seems pretty clear: Moses spoke with God “face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend.” But then, how do we reconcile this with what the Lord Himself says just a few verses later?

**Read Exodus 33:18-23.**

Well, which is it?

The word translated “face” in v11 is the Hebrew *panim* [paw-neem’], which more often than not is translated “before,” or “presence”—that is, in the presence of someone, before them. It does not necessarily mean that you see the other’s literal face.

Just as in Numbers 12:8, where the Lord says of Moses,

“With him I speak mouth to mouth,  
Even openly, and not in dark sayings,  
And he beholds the form of the Lord.”

the Hebrew word translated “form” is

**temunah** = from <H4327> (miyn); something portioned (i.e. fashioned) out, **as a shape**, i.e. (indefinite) phantom, or (specific) embodiment, or (figurative) manifestation (of favor) :- **image, likeness, similitude.**

In Vietnam my dearest possessions were a handful of snapshots of my fiancé back in Iowa. With these I could look upon Linda’s, ahem, “form” and be reminded of my beloved waiting for me back home. But as precious as they were, not one of those photographs was the real thing.

So here is the bottom line: When one examines the context and the specific words being used, **in none of these instances does the individual see with human, waking eyes the literal, essential Father God.**

You will never find passages where Abraham or Moses or the apostle John describe Yahweh, Father God, like this: “I’d say He’s about six feet tall, has an angular face with just the hint of a tasteful goatee. He’s handsome, with a wise but gentle expression to His countenance.” No, if they describe Him at all they invariably struggle to put into human terms the radiant, other-worldly vision to which they have been witness, employing fantastical imagery liberally laced with such modifiers as “like,” and “as.”

Taking God’s word as a whole, it is clear that each member of the Godhead has (to put it in crass human terms) His own job description. And in God’s salvation economy it is the second member, the Son, who is designated to appear in tangible form—first as “the Angel of the Lord,” and second as Jesus of Nazareth.

## **2. THE ANGEL OF THE LORD NO LONGER APPEARS AFTER THE INCARNATION**

As I pointed out in our last session, there is a marked difference in the language between the OT and NT. Repeatedly throughout the OT we read of visitations by “*the* angel of the Lord,” but except for one easily explainable occurrence (Matthew 1:24), that phrase is not found in the NT. One can only deduce that this is because “**the angel of the Lord**” is now **Christ Jesus in human flesh.**

### 3. THERE IS A SIMILARITY OF FUNCTION BETWEEN THE ANGEL OF THE LORD AND CHRIST

In the Bible one is called a “son” if one *behaves* as a son (e.g., John 8:39-47), and there is a marked similarity between the behavior of “the angel of the Lord” in the OT, and the incarnate Son of God in the NT.

#### *to reveal truth*

Read Judges 6:11-16. [Gideon]

Read John 14:5-11. [Christ is truth revealing the Father]

#### *to judge*

Read Genesis 22:10-12, 15-18. [the angel stops Abraham]

Read John 5:22, 25-27. [Christ’s authority to judge]

#### *to rescue or defend*

Read Psalm 34:7; 35:5-6. [the angel surrounds to protect and drives off the enemy]

Read Hebrews 2:18; 7:25. [Christ helps against sin and intercedes]

#### *to save and redeem*

Read Isaiah 63:8-9.

Read Ephesians 1:5-7.

### 4. *By the Process of Elimination, the Angel of the Lord cannot be Either the First or Third Member of the Godhead*

We began with the passage from John 1, which states

No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God [or Son] who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him. (John 1:18)

From this we can conclude that *only* the Son—as the angel of the Lord and as Christ Jesus—could be visible to man, and that God the Father and God the Spirit did not and do not reveal themselves in this visible manner.

- The angel of the Lord is **the sent one**: He cannot be God the Father, because (as we have demonstrated) the Father is **the sender**;
- the angel of the Lord characteristically appears in bodily, human form; He cannot be God the Spirit, because—except for that moment when He appeared as a dove at Jesus’ baptism—the Spirit does not appear bodily.

Thus we can conclude that any examination of Christ in the OT must include not just prophecies and poetic allusion, but the clear evidence that

1. “The angel of the Lord” in the OT is the embodied Son of God
2. As such, He was active on earth *prior to* His incarnation in Bethlehem
3. And that He is, indeed, the Messiah, the Christ

# Christ in the OT

## The Angel of the Lord (or reference to)

Genesis 16:7-13; 21:17 (Hagar)  
Genesis 22:11-18; 24:7, 40 (Abraham)  
Genesis 31:11; 32:24-32; cf. Hosea 12:4 (Jacob)  
Genesis 48:15, 16 (Joseph)  
Exodus 3:2; cf. Acts 7:30-35 (Moses and the burning bush)  
Exodus 13:21; cf. 14:19; 23:20-23; 32:34; 33:2 (pillar of cloud/fire)  
Numbers 20:16 (the exodus)  
Numbers 22:22-35 (Balaam and his donkey)  
Judges 2:1-4 (Israel rebuked)  
Judges 5:23 (the Song of Deborah and Barak)  
Judges 6:11-24 (Gideon)  
Judges 13:3-23 (Samson's parents)  
2 Samuel 14:17-20 (woman of Tekoa)  
2 Samuel 19:27 (David and Mephibosheth)  
2 Samuel 24:14-17 (pestilence)  
1 Kings 19:5-8 (Elijah flees Jezebel)  
2 Kings 1:3, 15 (Elijah)  
2 Kings 19:35 (killing 185,000 Assyrians)  
1 Chronicles 21:11-30 (pestilence)  
Psalm 34:7 (rescuer)  
Psalm 35:5-6 (defender)  
Ecclesiastes 5:6 (sinning before)  
Isaiah 37:36 (killing 185,000 Assyrians)  
Isaiah 63:9 (savior and redeemer)  
Daniel 3:24-28? (in Nebuchadnezzar's furnace)  
Daniel 6:22? (Daniel in the lion's den)  
Zechariah 1:9-21; 2:3; 3:1-10; 4:1-7; 5:5-10; 6:4-5 (in eight visions)  
Zechariah 12:8 (future attack on Jerusalem)

## *Pre-incarnate Son of God (2)*

### *Conclusions:*

1. "The angel of the Lord" in the OT is the embodied Son of God
2. As such, He was active on earth prior to His incarnation in Bethlehem
3. And that He is, indeed, the Messiah, the Christ

## Other theophanies ("God to appear")

Genesis 18:1-35 (three men visit Abraham and Sarah)  
Exodus 24:9-11 (Moses and elders atop Mt. Horeb)  
Exodus 33:9-23 (pillar of cloud/fire & cleft of the rock)  
Exodus 40:38 (pillar of cloud/fire)  
Joshua 5:13-15 (captain of the host of the Lord)  
Ezekiel 1:1-28 (visions by the river Chebar)  
Daniel 10:1-21 (vision by the river Tigris)

## Similarity of Function

### **to reveal truth**

Judges 6:11-16  
John 14:5-11

### **to rescue or defend**

Psalm 34:7; 35:5-6  
Hebrews 2:18; 7:25

### **to judge**

Genesis 22:10-12, 15-18  
John 5:22, 25-27

### **to save and redeem**

Isaiah 63:8-9  
Ephesians 1:5-7