

## THE ANGEL OF JEHOVAH

The preexistence of the Son of God is a subject that appears in many scriptures, such as in John 1:1, 2, 10, 15 and Philippians 2:6, which we discuss more fully later in this writing under the special studies section.

The angel of Jehovah is another topic related to the preexistence of the Son of God. This expression primarily occurs in the Old Testament. We purpose to show that the expression "the angel of Jehovah" is a description of Jehovah Himself, and involves His appearances repeatedly in the outworking of Jehovah's purposes and dealings with various Old Testament saints.

"No man hath seen God at any time" (John 1:18), but that statement is restricted to God "the Father." Moreover, "Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his face" (John 5:37), but that statement is restricted to God "the Father." In the Old Testament, some saw God, as He assumed various forms, such as human (Genesis 18), and conversed with Him. It is certain that they did not see, or converse, with God the Father. Every time God appeared in various forms in the Old Testament, whether in human form (Genesis 18), or as "the angel of the Lord" (Exodus 3), He did such in the second person in the Godhead, the Lord Jesus Christ.

In God's eternal plan, the Son of God is always the Revealer of God. One cannot see God without seeing the Son of God. You may think that you can know "the Father" without the Son, but Matthew 11:27 affirms, ". . .neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." Thus, in John 1:18, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him," that is, "led him forth, i.e. into full revelation." Since Christ is "the image of the invisible God" (Colossians 1:15), "being the effulgence of his glory, and the very image of his substance" (Hebrews 1:3, A.S.V.), He could, and did say, ". . .he that hath seen me hath seen the Father. . ." (John 14:9).

The appearings of "the angel of the Lord" in the Old Testament are simply appearings of God in the second person in the Godhead, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is an "angel" by office, so to speak. Since the Hebrew word "angel" means "messenger, agent," it is a fit descriptive of the One who is the Revealer of God. These manifestations can be traced from Adam to Abraham, from Abraham to Moses, from Moses to all the prophets, and from the prophets to the Lord Jesus Christ. In every appearance, He was in the very "form of God," never thinking it robbery to be "equal with God." He received divine homage.

As we develop the subject matter involving "the angel of Jehovah,"

we purpose, by scripture, to show the following:

1. That "the angel of Jehovah" is Jehovah Himself, and that He bears the very name and titles applicable to Deity;
2. That "the angel of Jehovah" did those things which only God can do;
3. And, that "the angel of Jehovah" is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ.

The information given in this article is but a small portion of the total that pertains to this great subject. It is my desire to give you an outline of thoughts from which you can study, and hopefully more fully expand. My aim is to exalt Him "who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen" (Romans 9:5), to the end "that in all things he might have the preeminence" (Colossians 1:18), for He "is above all" (John 3:31), and "all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father" (John 5:23).

In Genesis 16:9-13 we read as follows:

"And the angel of the Lord said unto her, Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands. And the angel of the Lord said unto her, I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude. And the angel of the Lord said unto her, Behold thou art with child, and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael; because the Lord hath heard thy affliction. And he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren. And she called the name of the Lord that spake unto her, Thou God seest me: for she said, Have I also here looked after him that seeth me?"

In verses 9, 10, 11 reference is made to "the angel of the Lord." Verses 9-13 involve the conversation between Him and Hagar, the Egyptian handmaid of Sarai, Abram's wife. In verse 13, we have the clear identity of "the angel of the Lord" for "she called the name of the Lord that spake unto her, Thou God seest me . . ." It was clearly "the angel of the Lord" that conversed with her, yet she identifies Him by "Lord" and "God." The word "Lord" is Jehovah, the ineffable name of Deity, and the word "God" is El, the Mighty One.

In this story, "the angel of the Lord" claimed to be able to do only what God can do, and demonstrated that He possessed the very attributes of God. He said, "I will multiply thy seed exceedingly," verse 10, displaying His omnipotence. He predicted "that it shall not

be numbered for multitude." He knew also that Hagar was "with child," which anyone might be able to visibly see; but He predicted that "a son" would be born, and He gave the name and characteristics of that "son" before he was ever born, verses 11, 12, displaying His omniscience.

Let us note another case. In Genesis 22:11, 15 we have reference to "the angel of the Lord." This context involves the offering of Isaac, and the conversation between "the angel of the Lord" and Abraham. Genesis 22:15-18 reads as follows:

"And the angel of the Lord called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice."

Here, as in Genesis 16:13, "the angel of the Lord" is identified as "Jehovah." Notice: "And the angel of the Lord called unto Abraham . . . And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord. . ." In addition to this identity, "the angel of the Lord" claimed to be able to do only what God can do, namely multiply seed, and bless, displaying His omnipotence. He also made certain predictions, which only God could know, displaying His omniscience.

Let us note yet another case. In Genesis 31:11 we have reference to "the angel of God," a term used interchangeably with "the angel of the Lord," as Judges 13:9, 13 proves. The context in Genesis 31 involves an event in the life of Jacob, and his dealings with Laban. Genesis 31:11-13 reads as follows:

"And the angel of God spake unto me in a dream, saying, Jacob: And I said, Here am I. And he said, Lift up now thine eyes, and see, all the rams which leap upon the cattle are ringstraked, speckled, and grisled: for I have seen all that Laban doeth unto thee. I am the God of Bethel, where thou anointedst the pillar, and where thou vowest a vow unto me: now arise, get thee out from this land, and return unto the land of thy kindred."

Here, as clearly as words can express thoughts, "the angel of God" identified Himself as "the God of Bethel." The word "God" is from "El."

Moreover, "the angel of God" displayed His omniscience, saying to Jacob, "I have seen all that Laban doeth unto thee," verse 12.

Let us note yet another case. In Exodus 3:2 reference is made to "the angel of the Lord." This context involves the call of Moses, and the burning bush incident. Exodus 3:2-4 reads as follows:

"And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I."

"The angel of the Lord" is here called "Lord" and "God." The word "Lord" is "Jehovah," and the word "God" is "Elohim," the same word in Genesis 1:1. In verses 7-9 this "angel" possesses the attributes of God, and claims to be able to do what only God can do. He sees all, verse 7. He is able to deliver, verse 8. And, he is able to predict the future, verse 8.

In coupling Genesis 16:13 to Genesis 22:15, 16 to Genesis 31:13 to Exodus 3:2-4, we have "the angel of the Lord" is identified as "Jehovah," "El," and "Elohim." This is significant since the name "Jehovah," unlike "Elohim," refers only to absolute Deity. The word "Elohim" is used in places of other than the true and living God. It is translated "gods" in Exodus 20:3, in referring to false gods. Wherever the word "Elohim" is used in a lesser sense, that is, refers to other than Deity, the context always involves a limitation in order that the reader may know that reference is not to Deity in those cases. For instance, in Psalms 82:6, those who were set to "judge" among the people are referred to as "gods," the translation of "Elohim." The limitation, "But ye shall die like men," verse 7, contrasts them with the Lord Jesus Christ of whom it is said, ". . . thy years shall not fail" (Hebrews 1:12). Again, in Psalms 97:7, we read, ". . . worship him all ye gods," the translation of "Elohim." These words are quoted in Hebrews 1:6, and "the gods" are seen to be "the angels of God," and the object of their worship is the Lord Jesus Christ. True, they are "Elohim," but the limitation, "worship him," clearly shows their inferiority, and the Lord's superiority. The name "Jehovah," however, at no time, is applicable to other than absolute Deity. In Amos 5:8, we read, ". . . thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH, art the most high over all the earth." And, in Isaiah 42:8, we read, "I am the Lord: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images." Therefore, when "the angel of the Lord" is identified as "the

Lord," or "Jehovah," it is proof positive of absolute Deity.

Let us note another case involving this "angel." In Judges 13:1-23, we find again "the angel of God. . .the angel of the Lord," verses 9, 13. This context involves the birth of Samson, and the conversation between "the angel of the Lord" and the parents of Samson. "The angel of the Lord" apparently assumed human form, just as Jehovah did in Genesis 18, for He is referred to as "a man of God. . .the man," verses 6, 11. In verse 16, "Manoah knew not that he was an angel of the Lord." In verses 17, 18, we read, "What is thy name, that when thy sayings come to pass we may do thee honour? And the angel of the Lord said unto him, Why askest thou thus after my name, seeing it is secret?" The word "secret" here is rendered "wonderful" in the text of the American Standard Version, and it is the same word translated "Wonderful" in Isaiah 9:6 where reference is made to the promised Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. In view of what happened in Judges 13, Manoah reached a point where he "knew that he was an angel of the Lord. And Manoah said unto his wife, We shall surely die, because we have seen God." The word "God" is from "Elohim." This "angel," identified as "God," possessed the attributes of God. He was able to predict the future, which only God can do (Isaiah 46:9, 10).

When Manoah said, "We have seen God," did they really "see God?" According to John 1:18 and John 5:37, they did not "see God" the Father. But since the Son of God, the second person in the Godhead, has always been the revealer of God (Matthew 11:27; John 1:18; 14:9), then we believe "Manoah and his wife" really did "see God" the Son.

There are other examples of this subject matter that could be cited, but these suffice to show two things:

1. The titles, "Elohim" and "El" and the name "Jehovah" are used when speaking of "the angel of the Lord."

2. And, "the angel of the Lord" possessed the attributes of God, and claimed to be able to do only what God can do, namely, predict the future, see all, bless, multiply seed exceedingly, deliver, etc.

This "angel," in His preincarnate appearances, is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ, the One who revealed God, and who enabled men to "see God." But why is He designated "the angel?" Because the word means "messenger," and therefore is a fit descriptive of Christ whose special function was to reveal God. Is He the messenger? Malachi 3:1 reads:

"Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye

delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts."

Here we have reference to a "messenger," which is the meaning of the word "angel." But a fact often overlooked is that Malachi 3:1 speaks of two entirely different messengers, not one.

Of one "messenger," the Lord said, "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me." These words are quoted in Matthew 11:10 and applied to John the Baptist. When John came he "bare witness of him," speaking of Christ (John 1:15). The "me" of Malachi 3:1 is Jehovah. Yet, John announced Christ. Therefore, He was and is Jehovah, and existed from all eternity. It is not my purpose, at this point, to expound Jehovah, but simply to show that one messenger in Malachi 3:1, sent to "prepare the way before" the Lord, is none other than John the Baptist, the harbinger of the Messiah.

But there is another "messenger" mentioned in Malachi 3:1. Of Him, the Lord said, ". . .and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts." Here, the speaker, "the Lord" himself, clearly makes "the Lord. . .the messenger of the covenant." Notice: "the Lord. . .even the messenger," etc. In this text, the Messiah's Deity and oneness with God are revealed. "The temple" that He "shall suddenly come to" is called "his temple," marking His divine lordship over it, contrasted with all His creatures, who are but servants in it. Thus, God, the speaker, makes "the Lord. . .the messenger of the covenant" one with Himself for He says, "I will send my messenger. . .the Lord. . .even the messenger," etc. Thus, the Lord is the sender, and the one sent is the Lord.

We know "the Father sent the Son" (I John 4:14). But, the one "sent" was not a creature, rather He was "equal with God" (John 5:18; 10:33; Philippians 2:6). Therefore, God sent God, and this is exactly what Malachi 3:1 says. Zechariah similarly testifies, "For thus saith the Lord of hosts; After the glory hath he sent me. . .for, lo, I come. . .saith the Lord. . .the Lord of hosts hath sent me. . ." (Zechariah 2:8-11). As clearly as words can express a fact, the Lord was the sender, and the one sent was also the Lord.

"The angel of the Lord" is "the Lord," or "God," as we have shown from Genesis 16:9-13; 22:15, 16; 31:11-13; Exodus 3:2-5; Judges 13:18-22.

But the word "angel" in the Hebrew means "messenger, agent." And "the messenger of the covenant" is clearly stated to be "the Lord" in Malachi 3:1.

When Jehovah appeared to many in the Old Testament, He did so as "the angel of the Lord." This is simply another designation of the preincarnate Christ. He is an "angel" by office, so to speak. This means that He is one of the Godhead who serves as "messenger" or

revealer. He is ever the revealer, or manifestation of God (Matthew 11:27; John 1:14, 18; 14:9).