HE WHO DWELT IN THE BUSH: A BIBLICAL AND HISTORICAL
THEOLOGY OF THE ANGEL OF THE LORD

by

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To my loving and faithful wife, Abigail Joy
“Now unto the King Eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen” (1 Timothy 1:17, NAU). I am grateful to the Lord for His great grace in saving me and showing His goodness to me throughout my entire life. He has especially blessed me by bringing people into my life that have encouraged me to look to Him and taught me to love His Word.

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ABBREVIATIONS

BDT  Baker’s Dictionary of Theology
BDB  Brown, Driver & Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon
BV   Biblical Viewpoint
ESV  English Standard Version, 2001
EDB  Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Bible
ERK  The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge
EDT  Evangelical Dictionary of Theology
GT   Henry Alford’s The Greek Testament
GTJ  Grace Theological Journal
HCC  Philip Schaff’s History of the Christian Church
JETS  Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society
KJV  King James Version, 1769
LXX  Septuagint
MT   Masoretic Text
MSJ  Master’s Seminary Journal
NAU  New American Standard Update, 1995
NDBT New Dictionary of Biblical Theology
NBD  New Bible Dictionary
NIV  New International Version, 1984
NKJ  New King James Version, 1982
NTS  New Testament Studies
BibSac Bibliotheca Sacra
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<tr>
<td>TJ</td>
<td>Trinity Journal</td>
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<td>TWOT</td>
<td>Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament</td>
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<td>WTJ</td>
<td>Westminster Theological Journal</td>
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<td>VT</td>
<td>Vetus Testamentum</td>
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INTRODUCTION

In his final act as the shepherd of the nation of Israel, Moses blessed the tribe of Joseph with the “favor of Him who dwelt in the bush” (Deut 33:17, NAU). Although stated somewhat obliquely, this is an obvious allusion to a momentous event in the life of Moses and in the history of Israel. It also refers to one of the most fascinating and mysterious personages in the pages of Old Testament Scriptures. Moses’ profound interest in what he saw on that occasion and his consequent investigation has been prototypical of those who have observed the Angel of Yahweh in the Scriptures. Indeed the entire corpus of teaching regarding the Angel, from the writings of Moses and the prophets to the seemingly scanty references within the New Testament, remarkably continues to pique theological fascination and investigation down to the present day.¹ Curiosity, however, has not always been the driving force behind the exploration of this doctrine.

Early Christian writers such as Justin Martyr and Irenaeus of Lyons sought to garner support from the Old Testament doctrine of the Angel of Yahweh to defend the deity of Christ against gainsaying Jews and other heretics. Later the Arian heretics of the third and fourth centuries A.D. took some of the

very same texts and argued against the deity of Christ. For that reason Augustine was hesitant to identify the Angel of Yahweh as the preincarnate Christ.

In spite of Augustine’s dominant influence on later writers in church history, his view of the Angel of Yahweh did not sway John Calvin. The Genevan Reformer could say in his day that a majority of interpreters throughout church history had correctly identified the Angel of Yahweh as the Messiah.\(^2\) However, it wasn’t until the nineteenth century that the doctrine of the Angel was systematized. Ernst Wilhelm Hengstenberg’s monumental *Christology of the Old Testament* provides an organized and exegetical treatment of the doctrine of the Angel of Yahweh as the Messiah, yet the focus of his work is more on the prophecies of the Messiah rather than the presence of Christ in the Old Testament.\(^3\) Hengstenberg thus did not present a comprehensive treatment of the doctrine of the Angel of Yahweh, but he did emphasize its importance.

A number of Old Testament theological studies subsequently followed his lead with at least a summary of the doctrine. While such summaries have been helpful to the study of Old Testament theology, they rarely if ever address the connection of the doctrine to New Testament theology. This lack of connection between the Old and New Testaments is a major reason for the necessity of the development of a biblical theology of the Angel of Yahweh. Other reasons include the lack of substantial exegetical basis in the literature for identifying the

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Angel of Yahweh in difficult passages and the relative lack of focus on the function of the Angel of Yahweh. Some writers do not treat certain passages that seem to apply to the study of the Angel of Yahweh, particularly within the later prophets of the Old Testament. The failure to treat such passages is perhaps due to the relative prominence of the Angel of Yahweh’s involvement in earlier periods. This study will present the doctrine of the Angel of Yahweh with a view toward showing the progression of the doctrine within the biblical corpus as well as delineating a full biblical theology.

Subject

By employing the biblical theological method of identifying the biblical data related to the Angel of Yahweh and comparatively analyzing Scripture with Scripture, one may identify a definite body of teaching regarding the Angel of Yahweh that exhibits a progression through the Old and New Testament revelation. The intent of this study, rather than summarization, is to examine the biblical evidence pertaining to the Angel of Yahweh with a view to formulating a comprehensive biblical theology of the doctrine. Unlike previous studies that have truncated the study of the Angel of Yahweh due to inadequate definition and classification (i.e., Christophany), this dissertation will focus on the Angel of Yahweh in the entirety of the biblical data. The thesis of this dissertation is that the biblical theology of the Angel of Yahweh demonstrates his primary role in the covenant history of the nation of Israel and his identity as Jesus Christ in the New Testament.

Statement of the Problem

Formidable obstructions lie in the path of explicating the full Old Testament teaching concerning the Angel of Yahweh, including the foundational
matter of classifying the subject. The study of the Angel of Yahweh potentially falls under six different categories of theology, the broadest of which is that of theology proper. If the Angel is called God (as he often is), then it is plausible that the study should be classed within theology proper, the study of God himself.

From another standpoint, however, the Angel of Yahweh is better viewed as an agent of God’s revelation to man. Yet the category of revelation is too imprecise and broad, and thus the subcategory of revelation called theophany better describes the phenomenon. Yet theophany, which can be defined as the visible or audible manifestation of God to mankind, also includes many more means of revelation than the Angel of Yahweh. Consequently, some prefer the precision of the term *Christophany*. This term identifies the Angel of Yahweh as a human form theophany, unlike the Shekinah cloud or the theophany at Sinai. This classification, however, begs the question of the identification of the Angel of Yahweh as Christ. However, if this connection between Christ and the Angel of Yahweh is correct, Old Testament Christology is also an appropriate classification. As such the doctrine has implications for understanding both the preexistence and the preincarnate ministry of Christ. If, on the other hand, the Christological interpretation is not correct, the subject becomes a subset of angelology. In view of such potential classifications, many of which are actually used within the literature, even investigating the doctrine of the Angel of

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4 Oehler observes, “The doctrine of the angel of the Lord is one of the most important and difficult points in the Old Testament, on which, even as early as the Church Fathers, there were various views, and about which, to this day, no agreement has been reached” (emphasis original). Gustav Friedrich Oehler, *Theology of the Old Testament* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1883; reprint, Minneapolis: Klock and Klock, 1978), 131.

5 Such a doctrine obviously has implications for the doctrine of the Trinity as well.
Yahweh obviously becomes quite a task.

Another foundational impediment to an exhaustive treatment of the doctrine of the Angel of Yahweh is the artificial limitation that some writers place on the biblical data. The Angel of Yahweh appeared directly to individuals as well as by means of dreams and visions. Writers such as James A. Borland therefore limit their study by looking only at the so-called appearances of the Angel of Yahweh. Borland defines Christophanies as “those unsought, intermittent and temporary, visible and audible manifestations of God the Son in human form, by which God communicated something to certain conscious human beings on earth prior to the birth of Jesus Christ.”

Valuable as this definition is for the subject of Christophany, it excludes texts in which the Angel of Yahweh reveals himself in dreams. It also eliminates propositional statements regarding the Angel (e.g., Psalm 34:7). Thus these artificial distinctions remove relevant biblical data from discussion.

Such distinctions, while obstructing a full view of the doctrine, do serve to make the doctrine more manageable. There is, in fact, a profusion of Old Testament data on the subject of the Angel of Yahweh. For those who have read through the Old Testament a few times or surveyed theological dictionaries on the subject, this assertion might seem a bit strained. Yet a cursory survey of the

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6 James A. Borland, *Christ in the OT*, 10. Biblically speaking, theophanic “appearances” do not conform to Borland’s definition. An appearance does not become an appearance because the recipient is conscious. Jacob spoke of an “appearance” at Bethel, which was a dream (Gen 28:12; Gen 48:3), and the writer of Kings spoke of two “appearances” to Solomon, both of which were dreams (2 Kgs 11:9). The writer of Kings even places weight upon Solomon’s sin because of these appearances, which has implications for the significance that God places upon such revelations to men.

7 One theological dictionary, for instance, devotes only two paragraphs in an article to the Angel of Yahweh. This is a relatively small amount of material to devote to this subject, particularly in contrast with the ten paragraphs devoted to the subject of Anglican Communion
biblical data reveals that the Angel of Yahweh was present in nearly every period of Old Testament revelation, beginning with the patriarchal period of Genesis and continuing all the way to the post-exilic prophets Zechariah and Malachi. Of course, some would admit that the Angel of Yahweh is indeed present in these periods but would argue that the identity of the angel is still dubious. In certain periods the Angel of Yahweh mentioned seems to bear no marks of deity, and as such the passages under discussion are excluded from the doctrine. A further complicating factor is that some passages do not contain the designation “Angel of Yahweh,” yet they reveal his persona. Thus the size and complexity of the data present a challenge to delineating the doctrine.

A final difficulty facing those who seek to make a full treatment of the doctrine relates to the seeming paucity of references to the Angel of Yahweh within New Testament revelation. Stephen’s speech in Acts 7 is the only passage in the New Testament that mentions the Angel specifically, and connecting Christ and the Angel of Yahweh does not seem to be a concern of New Testament writers. Some may argue that the New Testament writers express no concern because there is no connection, but the New Testament writers do mention Christ’s presence in Old Testament passages that virtually identify him as the Angel of Yahweh. The seeming paucity of references to the Angel of 

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9 Compare Jude 1:5 with Judges 2:1-5. Jude says the Lord saved them out of Egypt while the writer of Judges depicts the Angel of Yahweh claiming responsibility. A textual variant in Jude 1:5 suggests the possibility that Jude actually said that Jesus saved the people of Israel out of Egypt.
Yahweh in the New Testament did not keep the early Christian apologists from identifying the Angel of Yahweh as the preincarnate Christ, nor did it limit orthodox interpreters throughout church history. If New Testament links between the Angel of Yahweh and Christ do exist, one must provide conclusive argumentation based on exegetical evidence from both the Old and the New Testament.

*Delimitations*

Because this subject touches many areas of theology and both Old and New Testaments, it is necessary to establish concrete boundaries. First, this work is not an attempt at an Old Testament Christology. Such a work would necessitate investigation into Old Testament names of Christ, types of Christ, prophecies of his incarnation, and more. This dissertation is focused on a body of teaching related specifically to the Angel of Yahweh. Where there are passages that connect the Angel to Christ, the connections between the two will be explored for the purpose of identifying the personality and explicating the theology and no more.

Second, considerations from other areas of theology such as the study of Old Testament angelology and theology proper will be employed as a basis for contrast alone. A thorough understanding of Old Testament angelology is certainly helpful to the discussion of the Angel of Yahweh, particularly in biblical passages where the question is one of identity. Theology proper is likewise an important counterbalance when the identity of the Angel of Yahweh is in question. While such doctrines are obvious benchmarks for determining the personality in certain passages, this dissertation is not an attempt to provide any substantive contribution to Old Testament angelology or theology proper.

Third, references to the Angel of Yahweh in such areas as historical
theology and Bible translations will be examined in depth only when they have significantly influenced the history of the doctrine or provide further light on the possible interpretation of a passage. For instance, since the Septuagint reading of Isaiah 9:6 was used extensively within early historical theology in connection with the Angel, it will be examined.\textsuperscript{10}

Fourthly, this dissertation will not treat in any full detail the possible extra-biblical references to the Angel of Yahweh in Jewish theological literature. The \textit{Metatron}, a name of the Angel of Yahweh within Jewish theological literature, is often ascribed divine qualities and accorded divine rights.\textsuperscript{11} In the light of Jewish monotheism, the \textit{Metatron} is certainly an interesting phenomenon, but it lies outside the realm of biblical theology. Because the theories associated with this type of literature suggest that Christianity borrowed Jewish thought for the purpose of deifying Jesus Christ, some refutation may be necessary, but extensive treatment is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

Finally, the search for parallels to the personality of the Angel of Yahweh within Ancient Near Eastern literature stands outside the purview of this study. While the use of such comparative studies may be increasing within theological literature today, subjecting the discussion of the Angel of Yahweh to such a trend introduces unnecessary complexity to an already perplexing subject. For that reason this dissertation will focus on the biblical evidence for the purpose of formulating a biblical theology of the Angel.


Previous Works

The subject of the Angel of Yahweh is discussed within several areas of theological study, including Old Testament theology and the study of revelation, theophany, and Christophany. Some works on Old Testament Christology also present summaries of the doctrine.

Old Testament Theology

Perhaps the most well established domain of theological material on the Angel of Yahweh is Old Testament Theology. The following Old Testament theologians furnish significant sections specifically focusing on the Angel of Yahweh: A.B. Davidson, Walther Eichrodt, Paul Heinisch, Edmond Jacob, Gustav Friedrich Oehler, J. Barton Payne, Gerhard Von Rad, Geerhardus Vos, and Th. C. Vriezen. In addition, Old Testament subject studies on angels may include discussions of the Angel of Yahweh. George Heidt, for instance, in his *Angelology of the Old Testament*, wrote of what he calls the “Malak’h Yahweh problem” in biblical angelology. Heidt examines numerous passages in the Old Testament and provides a summary of the different theories of the identity of the Angel of Yahweh.


Works on Revelation, Theophany and Christophany

General works on revelation, theophany and Christophany also provide a venue for material on the Angel of Yahweh. Because the distinctions among these three areas are often blurred, the literature will be included under one heading. One of the more recent works on theophany is Jeffrey Niehaus’s *God at Sinai: Covenant and Theophany in the Bible and Ancient Near East.* Niehaus attempts to explicate the theophanies of the Old Testament in the light of parallels from Ancient Near Eastern literature. He also attempts to describe a form of theophanic literature. He divides biblical theophanies into “Pre-Sinai Theophanies,” the “Sinai Theophany,” and “Post-Sinai Theophanies.” This obviously places the Sinai theophany at the center of the study of theophany. While his contribution is not primarily to the study of the Angel of Yahweh, his observations on the nature of theophany and his examination of texts dealing with the Angel of Yahweh are of value to this study.

*The Self Revelation of God* by John Kenneth Kuntz is limited by form-critical presuppositions, but Kuntz’s observations do have some value for the discussion of theophany. Kuntz provides descriptive and exegetical presentation of the

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15 Pre-Sinai theophanies include the incident in the Garden of Eden after man sinned (Gen 3:8), the theophany of the Noahic flood in connection with Psalm 29, and Abraham’s vision of the covenant ceremony with Yahweh in Genesis 15. The theophanies of Sinai, beginning with Moses’ encounter at the burning bush, are grouped together with the subsequent theophanic events during the Exodus and the wilderness wanderings. The fiery judgment of Nadab and Abihu as well as the incident at Taberah are theophanic events as well. The theophanies after Sinai include the Angel of Yahweh’s appearances to Joshua, Gideon, Manoah and his wife; the appearance of the theophanic cloud at the dedication of Solomon’s temple; the appearance to Elijah at Horeb; the call of Isaiah; and Ezekiel’s visions of the glory of God throughout his prophecy.

16 Kuntz’s application of the JEDP documentary theory to theophanic passages often breaks up the discussion so drastically that it inhibits cohesive discussion. Exodus 19-24, for instance, is divided into three lines of “literary stratification” (E, J, and P), and the discussion
theophanic literature of the patriarchs, Mount Sinai, the Prophets, and the Psalms.

John Van Diest’s *A Study of the Theophanies of the Old Testament* is an exegetically thorough work on theophany.\(^{17}\) One of Van Diest’s unique contributions is his suggestion that the word *Angel* as applied to the Angel of Yahweh in the Old Testament would be better translated and viewed as *Messenger*. As such it would eliminate possible implications of the term *angel* in the title “Angel of Yahweh” and clarify his function. Van Diest identifies exactly thirty-one theophanies in the Old Testament and examines the biblical and theological purposes of each one. Nevertheless, this work is limited because of an inadequate definition of theophany and a lack of interaction with the literature on the subject.

Less technical attempts in the study of theophany are William Baker’s *The Ten Theophanies*\(^{18}\) and Raymond L. Scott’s *The Hiding God: Jesus in the Old Testament*.\(^{19}\) Baker identifies Melchizedek and Abraham’s guest at the Oaks of Mamre (Genesis 18-19) both as theophanies. Jacob’s wrestling at the Jabbok and Christ at Sinai are also heads of discussion in this work. Raymond L. Scott’s work identifies the Angel of Yahweh as Jesus. His conception of the appearances of the Angel of Yahweh is unusual: he suggests that on some occasions Jesus as the Angel of Yahweh purposely revealed himself as an angel while on others he slavishly follows the outline instead of the natural flow of the narrative. John Kenneth Kuntz, *The Self Revelation of God* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967).


merely appeared in the form of a man.\textsuperscript{20} Both of these works are limited in their value for this study due to a lack of substantial interaction with the literature on the subject.

One outstanding work on Christophany is James Borland’s \textit{Christ in the Old Testament: Old Testament Appearances of Christ in Human Form}.\textsuperscript{21} Originally Borland’s Th.D. dissertation,\textsuperscript{22} this work was published in 1978 and revised in 2001. Borland identifies a number of passages as unquestionable appearances of the Angel of Yahweh because they indicate human form. These passages are called “human-form theophanies” and they are few in number in Scripture. He also examines a group of “problem passages” that seem to contradict the statement in John’s Gospel, “No one has seen God at any time” (John 1:18, NAU). In his final chapter, “The Theology of the Christophany,” Borland suggests that the doctrine of Christophanies makes a significant contribution to the fields of bibliology, theology proper, Christology, and biblical theology. He also examines God’s purposes in the Christophanies and suggests the value of the doctrine of Christophanies. Borland concludes that the Christophanies provide a sort of case study for progressive revelation, a greater breadth for the study of Christology in general, and an “apologetic help” for the Christian church. While there is great value in Borland’s work, his approach to the subject has a major limitation. Since his focus is on only the appearances of the Angel of Yahweh, he does not

\textsuperscript{20} Scott unfortunately does not explain why such a change in form would be necessary, nor does he support it from Scripture. Manoah’s wife commented on the Angel of Yahweh’s “awesome” appearance (Judges 13:6), but Scott’s descriptions are baseless.


examine dreams, visions, or propositional statements about the Angel. His method makes the subject more manageable, but it obscures the progressive development of the doctrine of the Angel of Yahweh and unnecessarily abbreviates the evidence.

Three German works are worthy of note on this subject as well. Jörg Jeremias’ *Theophanie; die Geschichte einer alttestamentlichen Gattung* and J. Barbel’s *Christos Angelos: Die Anschauung von Christus als Bote und Engel in der gelehrten und volkstumlichen Literatur des christlichen Altertums* are referenced in English works on theophany in spite of the fact that neither has been translated into English. Another work is Joseph Rybinski’s *Der Mal`akh Jahwe*, which presents both biblical and historical theology of the doctrine.

**Other Theological Works**

Because the study of the Angel of Yahweh intersects other vast areas of theological literature, including Christology, systematic theology, and historical theology, only significant works related to the present study will be included. Three Old Testament Christological works with significant contributions to the study of the Angel of Yahweh include Ernst Wilhelm Hengstenberg’s *Christology of the Old Testament*, Michael Barrett’s *Beginning at Moses: A Guide to Finding*

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26 Hengstenberg, *Christology*. 

Specialized Works

Ben K. Duffy’s master’s thesis, The Role of the Angel of the Lord in the Location of Solomon’s Temple, provides an exegetical basis for identifying the angel who appeared to David in 2 Samuel 24 and 1 Chronicles 21 as the unique Angel of Yahweh and the one who determined the location of the temple in Jerusalem. Robert Brian Merrill’s monograph The Identity of the Angel of the Lord in the Old Testament


Testament: A Critical Evaluation of William Graham MacDonald's View is a refutation of the view of William Graham MacDonald, who argued against the Christological interpretation of the Angel of Yahweh in his essay “Christology and ‘The Angel of the Lord.’” MacDonald charges that the Christological interpretation of the Angel of Yahweh is contrary to the historical expression of the doctrine of Christ’s humanity, namely that Christ became a man at the incarnation and could not have appeared as a man in the Old Testament. Merrill responds by showing that Christological interpretation of the Angel is consistent with the historical doctrine based upon the distinction between the human form of the Angel of Yahweh and the human nature of Christ, a distinction that MacDonald fails to make.

Journals

A survey of the journal articles related to the study of the Angel of Yahweh turned up approximately twenty articles that deal either with a specific passage of Scripture or with the subject broadly. The most significant contributions in journal material are provided by Bibliotheca Sacra, which is responsible for nearly half of all the articles available on this topic. Journal articles dealing with specific passages or issues will be included at appropriate places within later discussions and are included in the bibliography.


Method of Procedure

This dissertation presents the biblical data related to the Angel of Yahweh in both Old and New Testaments with a view toward a comprehensive biblical theology of the Angel. Preceding this examination, the first three chapters will present a historical theology of the Angel of Yahweh from the post-apostolic period to the present. Chapters four through nine will present the biblical data related to the personality of the Angel of Yahweh in specific time periods, including the patriarchal period, the Exodus and wilderness wanderings, the time of the Judges to the establishment of the temple at Jerusalem, the period of the divided kingdom, the exilic and post-exilic periods, and the New Testament period. Chapter ten concludes with a summary and applications based on the historical and theological survey and analysis.
PART I: HISTORICAL THEOLOGY

CHAPTER 1

A SURVEY OF THE HISTORICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE ANGEL OF YAHWEH IN THE ANTE-NICENE PERIOD

One of the most challenging doctrines for Christian theologians is the Old Testament teaching about of the Angel of Yahweh. From the beginning of church history, Christian interpreters have wrestled with various questions related to the Angel of Yahweh, the most common being whether the Angel is the preincarnate Christ.\(^1\) If the interpreter interprets the Angel of Yahweh Christologically, he has to answer a number of other questions. He must explain why the Scripture writers call him an angel. He must also explain how individuals could claim to have seen him when other passages teach that God is invisible. Furthermore, he must explain the nature of his existence before he came in the flesh. For instance, if Christ did not yet have a body in the Old Testament, he must explain how he ate with Abraham (Gen 18-19) and wrestled with Jacob (Gen 32). Finally, he must explain the doctrine in such a way as not to lessen the significance of New Testament assertions of the incarnation (e.g., John 1:14; Phil 2:5-8). All of these questions face the interpreter when exegeting this doctrine.

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\(^1\) A chart categorizing the two primary views of the Angel of Yahweh and listing representatives from both views may be found in Appendix B. Each individual who is discussed at length in chapters 1-3 are included in the chart.
These kinds of issues are not be evaded by the other line of interpretation. Those who claim that the Angel of Yahweh is simply an angel must face questions that are just as problematic. If this personage is a created angel, they must explain why he speaks in first person with words only appropriate for God himself. Likewise, they must explain who was wrestling with Jacob at the Jabbok and why he claims to have seen God. Furthermore, they must explain how an angel can be said to have Yahweh’s name in him (Ex 23:21) and why the Angel personally claims to be God (Gen 31:13; Ex 3:6).

Such questions about the doctrine, while difficult to answer, have not gone unanswered in church history. Church fathers as early as the Ante-Nicene period (A.D. 90-325) provided logical and Scriptural answers to such questions. In answer to the question of the identity of the Angel of Yahweh, the majority of the Ante-Nicene fathers identified him as Christ. The Ante-Nicene fathers also discussed the exact nature of the Angel of Yahweh’s appearances, exploring the question of his corporeality or incorporeality. In addition, they sought to explain the Christological significance of the title “Angel,” as well as his visibility. In this explanation they carefully sought to guard his deity while explaining his mission.

The theological milieu out of which such discussions about the Angel of Yahweh arose in the Ante-Nicene period was not mere curiosity but rather opposition to the New Testament doctrine of Christ. Because the strongest opponents to Christianity in the post-apostolic church were the unbelieving Jews, the Ante-Nicene polemicists expounded Angel of Yahweh passages from

2 John Calvin observed that the “the orthodox doctors of the church have rightly and prudently interpreted that chief angel to be God’s Word, who already at that time, as a sort of foretaste, began to fulfill the office of Mediator.” *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1960), 1.13.10, 132.
the Old Testament Scriptures and interpreted them Christologically for apologetic purposes. In doing so they provided a foundational point in their argument against the Jews, who regarded the Angel to be only a messenger.³ They sought to prove that Christ was present in the Old Testament in preincarnate form by showing that even Moses and the Prophets distinguished between the persons of the Godhead in their writings. This obvious reinforcement of the doctrine of the Triune God was a demonstration of the deity of Christ at the same time. They also added weight to their arguments against the Jewish position by their use of the Old Testament Scriptures as their primary source.

Justin Martyr (A.D. 110-65)

The first of the Ante-Nicene fathers to address the doctrine of the Angel of Yahweh is Justin Martyr, whose particular interest in and use of Old Testament theophanies is well established.⁴ In his First Apology Justin presents a simple argument from the designation “Angel of Yahweh” to show a distinction between God the Father and God the Son in the Old Testament. According to him, the designation “Angel” describes the function, not the nature, of an individual.⁵ Thus the Angel of Yahweh, who in Justin’s interpretation is Christ, is

³ Calvin complains in his day, “I do not see by what subtleties they [the Jews] can elude the fact that Jehovah is so frequently set forth in the person of an angel.” Ibid., 1.13.10, 132.

⁴ The most outstanding work on this subject is Benedict Kominiak’s *The Theophanies of the Old Testament in the Writings of St. Justin* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1948). Kominiak traces Justin’s use of the theophanies in his First Apology, Second Apology, and his Dialogue with Trypho the Jew.

⁵ In the Christological interpretation of the Angel of Yahweh, this is a distinction not always followed by later church fathers.
not angelic in nature, though at times he may have appeared in such a form. The term Angel is used, in the words of Justin, “because, as I already said, He [Christ] brings messages to those to whom God the Maker of all things wishes [messages to be brought]” (brackets original).

One of the reasons that Justin had no trouble applying this designation of “Angel” to Christ was that the Greek translation of the Old Testament that he was using did. According to the Septuagint, Isaiah applied the designation “Angel” directly to Christ in Isaiah 9:6 [v. 5, MT]. Rather than “Wonderful Counselor” (KJV), the Messiah born of David’s line is the “Angel of Mighty Counsel” (μεγάλης βουλῆς ἀγγελὸς). This translation was accepted by many of the earlier fathers in addition to Justin, and as such it strengthened the belief that the Messiah was indeed the Angel of Yahweh. In spite of the apparent lack of basis in the Hebrew text, the translation of this verse in the Septuagint continued

6 Justin Martyr First Apology 53. In another place he says, “So much is written for the sake of proving that Jesus the Christ is the Son of God and His Apostle, being of old the Word, and appearing sometimes in the form of fire, and sometimes in the likeness of angels.” Later he observes, “Of old He appeared in the shape of fire and in the likeness of an angel to Moses and to the other prophets.” Ibid., 53.

7 Justin Martyr Dialogue with Trypho 55.

8 Isaiah 9:6 in the Septuagint reads, “οὗτος παιδίων ἐγεννηθή ἡμῖν νεός καὶ ἑδόθη ἡμῖν ὁ ἅγιος ἐγεννηθή ἐπὶ τοῦ ὄμων αὐτοῦ καὶ καλεῖται ὁ ἄτόκης αὐτοῦ μεγάλης βουλῆς ἀγγελὸς ἐγὸ γὰρ ἄξω εἰρήνην ἐπὶ τοὺς ἄρχοντας εἰρήνην καὶ ὑγίειαν αὐτῷ” (emphasis added). One English translation of the Septuagint renders the verse, “For a child is born to us, and a son is given to us, whose government is upon his shoulder: and his name is called the Messenger [Angel] of great counsel: for I will bring peace upon the princes, and health to him.” Lancelot C. L. Brenton, The Septuagint with Apocrypha: Greek and English (London: Samuel Bagster & Sons, 1851). The Hebrew text of this phrase does not include the word ἀγγελός but instead simply reads νησίον σοφός, “a wonder of a Counselor.” There is thus no basis for translating the phrase with the word angel or messenger.

9 Justin sees the designation as predictive when he says, “And when Isaiah calls Him the Angel of mighty counsel, did he not foretell Him to be the Teacher of those truths which He did teach when He came to earth.” Justin Martyr Dialogue with Trypho 75.
to be accepted by the church for several hundred years as denoting a connection between the Angel of Yahweh and Christ.\textsuperscript{10}

In addition to his application of the designation \textit{Angel} to Christ, Justin also based his Christological interpretation of the Angel of Yahweh on solid exegesis of Scripture. Of his major works, Justin spent the most time with the doctrine of the Angel of Yahweh in his \textit{Dialogue with Trypho the Jew}. In laying out his case for the Angel’s identity as Christ, Justin uses Genesis 18-19 as his primary text.\textsuperscript{11}

With this text in hand, Justin puts forth his argument to Trypho the Jew with two major objectives. First, he seeks to distinguish between God the Father and the one (i.e., Christ) who met Abraham at the Oaks of Mamre using Old Testament texts, thereby implying the doctrine of the Trinity.\textsuperscript{12} Second, by using Scripture alone, Justin endeavors to show the deity of the one who is distinguished from God the Father.\textsuperscript{13} Kominiak’s summary of Justin’s argument appears below:

\begin{enumerate}
\item According to Scripture, the Lord who appeared to Abraham is God (Gen. 18, 13-14; 21, 12).
\item This Lord who appeared to Abraham is the same Lord who destroyed Sodom (Gen. 18, 17-23; 19, 18-25).
\item Therefore, the Lord who destroyed Sodom is the God who appeared to Abraham.
\item But the Lord who destroyed Sodom is distinct from God the Creator in
\end{enumerate}

\textsuperscript{10} Isaiah 9:6 appears in the \textit{Tome of Leo}, which was regarded by the council of Chalcedon in 451 A.D. to be an orthodox statement of Christology. Although Christ’s identification as the MA was not the heart of the issue at hand, the council did not object to its presence in Leo’s \textit{Tome}.

\textsuperscript{11} Although his primary proof to Trypho is from Genesis 18-19, Justin also argues for the distinction between the Father and Son on the basis of the encounters of Jacob and Moses with the MA. See Justin Martyr \textit{Dialogue with Trypho} 54.

\textsuperscript{12} Justin adds that the distinction in personality does not indicate a difference in will. In support of this point, he quotes Genesis 19:24, “Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven.” \textit{Ibid.}, 56.

\textsuperscript{13} Trypho, whom some have suggested to be Justin’s literary invention for the purpose of setting forth his doctrine, admits that Justin’s arguments are based on Scripture rather than philosophical speculations when he says, “Nor would we have tolerated your conversation, had you not referred everything to the Scriptures.” \textit{Ibid.}, 56.
Therefore, the God who appeared to Abraham is distinct from God the Creator in heaven.\(^{14}\)

Trypho, after listening to Justin’s presentation, actually admits that the argumentation is Scriptural.\(^{15}\) However, he objects to the idea that God ate what Abraham presented to him.\(^{16}\)

Though far from comprehensive, Justin’s treatment does identify some key points at issue in the historical discussion of this doctrine. He is the first to explain that the designation Angel as applied to Christ must refer to the function and not the nature of the Angel of Yahweh. Second, Justin used the Septuagint’s translation of Isaiah 9:6 to support the connection between the Angel and Christ. Third, Justin points to a distinction that he suggests the Old Testament writers make between the persons of the Trinity.

\textit{Irenaeus of Lyons (A.D. 120-202)}

A second polemicist to shed light on the doctrine of the Angel of Yahweh was Irenaeus of Lyons (A.D. 120-202). Similar to Justin Martyr, Irenaeus interpreted the Angel of Yahweh passages in the Old Testament Christologically, and he did so facing the same Jewish opposition. He also strengthened his interpretation of Christ as the Angel with the use of the Septuagint text of Isaiah 9:6.\(^{17}\) In addition, he made two important contributions to the discussion of this doctrine:


\(^{15}\) He concedes Justin’s basic argument, “That Scripture compels us to admit this, is manifest.” Justin Martyr \textit{Dialogue with Trypho} 57.

\(^{16}\) For Justin’s answer to this question, see \textit{Ibid.}, 58.

\(^{17}\) Irenaeus quotes or refers to Isaiah 9:6 three times in \textit{Against Heresies}, once seeming to quote from the Masoretic text, once in a confused conflation of Isaiah 7:14 and Isaiah 9:6, and
doctrine. First, he sought to resolve a contradiction that arises if the Angel of Yahweh is identified as Christ, namely, the invisibility of God.\(^{18}\) Second, he suggested that a Christological interpretation of the Old Testament encounters between God and man was appropriate, particularly in the Pentateuch.

Regarding the matter of invisibility, Irenaeus sought to resolve a contradiction that arises in the light of two truths. Scripture plainly asserts that men cannot see God and live (Ex 23:20). At the same time, those who have seen the Angel claim to have seen God and continued to live (e.g., Hagar in Gen 16:13 and Jacob in Gen 32:30). Irenaeus suggested a Scriptural resolution that maintained God’s invisibility as well as the deity of the Angel. Irenaeus appealed to John 1:18, which says, “No man hath seen God at any time; the only Begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.” This text, according to Irenaeus, makes a clear distinction between the Father, who is invisible, and the Son, who makes the Father known. Revealing the Father, furthermore, is the unique ministry of the Son, and it has been so from the beginning of God’s revelation to man.\(^{19}\) Thus John 1:18 is an important and foundational text in understanding the appearances of God in the Old

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\(^{18}\) Irenaeus asserts that not seeing the Son of God as the Angel is the particular error of the Jews when he writes, “Therefore have the Jews departed from God, in not receiving His Word, but imagining that they could know the Father [apart] by Himself, without the Word, that is, without the Son; they being ignorant of that God who spake in human shape to Abraham, and again to Moses, saying, ‘I have surely seen the affliction of my people in Egypt, and I have come down to deliver them.’ For the Son, who is the Word of God, arranged these things beforehand from the beginning, the Father being in no want of Angels, in order that He might call the creation into being, and form man, for whom also the creation was made.” \textit{Ibid.}, 4.7.4.

\(^{19}\) Anytime God appears, according to Irenaeus, it is always God the Son. “Therefore the Son of the Father declares [him] from the beginning, inasmuch as He was with the Father from the beginning, who did also show to the human race prophetic visions, and diversities of gifts, and His own ministrations, and the glory of the Father, in regular order and connection, at the fitting time for the [benefit of mankind]” (brackets original). \textit{Ibid.}, 4.20.7.
Testament. At once it guards the invisibility of the Father and declares the visibility of the Son. It also identifies the particular function of the Son, as the following explanation shows:

If then, neither Moses, nor Elias, nor Ezekiel, who had all many celestial visions, did see God; but if what they did see were similitudes of the splendour of the Lord, and prophecies of things to come; it is manifest that the Father is indeed invisible, of whom also the Lord said, ‘No man hath seen God at any time.’ But His Word, as He Himself willed it, and for the benefit of those who beheld, did show the Father’s brightness, and explained His purposes (as also the Lord said: ‘the only-begotten God, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared [Him];’ and He does Himself also interpret the Word of the Father as being rich and great); not in one figure, nor in one character did He appear to those seeing Him, but according to the reasons and effects aimed at in his dispensations, as it is written in Daniel. 20

Thus the Word, while appearing in different “figures” or “characters,” revealed the Father in the Old Testament as well as the New.

The implication of Irenaeus’s argumentation is obvious. The theophanies of the Old Testament, as well as visions and dreams where a person is allowed a sight of God, must be interpreted Christologically. This is certainly true in the Pentateuch, as Irenaeus indicates, because “the Son of God is implanted everywhere throughout his [Moses’] writings.” This is true of the theophany at Mamre, where three visitors came to Abraham’s tent door (Gen 18). One of them was Christ. Christ was also the one who destroyed Sodom (19:23). The Son, as well, is the one seeking Adam in the Garden of Eden (Gen 3:8) and the one giving Noah instructions for the ark (Gen 6). In another place Irenaeus asserts, “For it is He who sailed [in the ark] along with Noah, and who guided Abraham;

20 Irenaeus illustrates this final point by referring to the images of Christ in Daniel and Revelation. In Daniel Christ is the Stone cut out of the mountain without hands (Dan 2), the fourth person in the fiery furnace with the three Hebrew children (Dan 3), and the one like the Son of Man (Dan 7). In Revelation he is One walking in the midst of the golden candlesticks (Rev 1), a Lamb as it had been slain (Rev 5), the one on the horse whose name is Faithful and True (Rev 19). *Ibid.*, 4.20.11.
who was bound along with Isaac, and was a wanderer with Jacob.”

It is also Christ who foretells the details of his passion right down to the very timing as he relays the instructions for the Passover to Moses. For Irenaeus, these are but a few of many examples that could be found within the writings of Moses alone.

*Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 153-217)*

Clement of Alexandria likewise identified Christ as the member of the Trinity having direct interaction with the patriarchs. In a work titled *The Instructor*, Clement identifies Christ as both “Instructor” and God Almighty, the one appearing to Abraham and making a covenant with him (Gen 17), the one standing at the top of Jacob’s ladder (Gen 28), the one wrestling with Jacob at the brook Jabbok (Gen 32), and the one giving the Decalogue to Moses (Ex 20).

These events were not the full revelation of Christ, however, for elements within these Old Testament accounts prove that there was a deliberate concealing of Christ’s full identity until later in history. The Angel’s refusing to give his name to Jacob at the Jabbok, for instance, was a concealing of his name until he came in the flesh (see Hos 12:3-4; Gen 32:30). Clement observes, “He reserved the new name for the new people—the babe; and was as yet unnamed, the Lord God not

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22 Regarding the timing of the death of Christ, Irenaeus observes, “He did not describe the day only, but the place also, and the time of the day at which the sufferings ceased, and the sign of the setting of the sun, saying: ‘Thou mayest not sacrifice the Passover within any other of thy cities which the LORD God gives thee; but in the place which the LORD thy God shall choose that His name be called on there, thou shalt sacrifice the Passover at even, towards the setting of the sun.’” Irenaeus *Against Heresies* 4.10.1.

23 Irenaeus suggests, “It would be endless to recount [the occasions] upon which the Son of God is shown forth by Moses” (brackets original). *Ibid.*, 4.10.1.

24 Identifying the instructor, Clement notes, “But our Instructor is the holy God Jesus, the Word, who is the guide of all humanity.” *Clement of Alexandria The Instructor* 2.7.
having yet become man. Yet Jacob called the name of the place, ‘Face of God.’”

This progressive revelation of Christ seems to be what Clement implies in another place when he says, “Formerly the older people had an old covenant, and the law disciplined the people with fear, and the Word was an angel; but to the fresh and new people has also been given a new covenant, and the Word has appeared, and fear is turned to love, and that mystic angel is born—Jesus.”

*Tertullian (A.D. 145-220)*

The Latin church father Tertullian raises an important theological issue regarding the Angel of Yahweh in his work *On the Flesh of Christ*. If the Angel of Yahweh is Christ, and he is not an angel by nature, what exactly was the nature of his appearances? Did he have a body? If so, what kind of body did he have? Tertullian suggests that Christ did have a real physical body when he appeared to Abraham. He says, “But the Lord Himself at that very time appeared to Abraham amongst those angels without being born, and yet in the flesh without doubt.” However, he asserts the real physical body of Christ was made of flesh “not yet born,” making a distinction between a human body that is born and one

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25 Clement of Alexandria identified the Word as the one who wrestled with Jacob and the change of Jacob’s name as reflecting what Jacob saw that night. “The face of God is the Word by whom God is manifested and made known. Then also was he named Israel, because He saw God the Lord. It was God, the Word, the Instructor, who said to him again afterwards, ‘fear not to go down into Egypt’” (See Gen 46:3-4). *Ibid.*, 1.7. This interpretation, which was not unique to Clement, suggests that the name Israel can be broken down into the following: נָאָה וָיִרְאוּ, meaning, “the man seeing God.” This explanation seems to have originated with Philo. Philo, *On Abraham* (http://www.earlyjewishwritings.com/text/philo/book22.html). Accessed on 3/16/08.

26 Clement of Alexandria *The Instructor* 1.7.

that was not born. Tertullian, had to be born to effectively and completely save humanity.

Tertullian’s view on the “not yet born” flesh of Christ raises a serious theological issue regarding the incarnation of Christ. The idea that Christ came in the flesh before he was born seems to lessen the significance of his incarnation. Tertullian therefore may have been trying to guard against minimizing the importance of the incarnation by distinguishing between flesh that is born and flesh that was not yet born.

While Tertullian’s distinction between two types of flesh raises more questions than it answers, his other comments on the Angel of Yahweh were less controversial. He agreed, for instance, with Irenaeus’s distinction regarding the invisibility of the Father and the visibility of the Son. He says in his Answer to the Jews, “For He who ever spake to Moses was the Son of God Himself; who too was always seen. For God the Father none ever saw, and lived.” He also argued

28 “But for other heretics, also, who maintain that the flesh in the angels ought to have been born of flesh, if it has been really human, we have an answer on a sure principle, to the effect that it was truly human flesh, and yet not born. It was truly human, because of the truthfulness of God, who can neither lie nor deceive, and because (angelic beings) cannot be dealt with by men in a human way except in human substance.” Tertullian Against Marcion 3.9.

29 Tertullian suggests that the purpose of Christ’s birth was to “regenerate our birth, and might further by His death also dissolve our death.” Ibid., 3.9.

30 Tertullian argues that these occasions were a means of Christ’s acquainting himself with human nature. “Therefore on that occasion He did Himself appear with the angels to Abraham in the verity of the flesh, which had not as yet undergone birth, because it was not yet going to die, although it was even now learning to hold intercourse amongst men.” Ibid., 3.9.

31 By his explanation Tertullian contradicts passages such as John 1:14, “And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us” (KJV, emphasis added). John is indicating a point in time when Christ became flesh, implying that he did not have flesh before.

32 Tertullian An Answer to the Jews 9.
that Christ could be called an angel if the designation refers to his function, not his nature.  

Novatian (A.D. 210-280)

Novatian (A.D. 210-280), perhaps a lesser-known writer of the Ante-Nicene period, discussed the Angel of Yahweh in his Treatise Concerning the Trinity. Novatian argued that it was the Son who appeared to both Abraham and Jacob as an angel and that he claimed and exercised the prerogatives of God. Acknowledging God’s warning to Moses that no one can see him and live (Ex 33:20) and New Testament texts indicating that no one has seen God (John 1:18; 1 Tim 6:16), Novatian followed Irenaeus’s distinction between the invisible Father and the visible Son based on John 1:18. He likewise interpreted the LXX version of Isaiah 9:6 with reference to the function of Christ rather than his nature.

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33 Highlighting the function of the Son as a messenger, Tertullian notes, “I may, then, more easily say, if such an expression is to be hazarded, that the Son is actually an angel, that is, a messenger, from the Father, than that there is an angel in the Son.” Tertullian On the Flesh of Christ 534. Commenting on Isaiah 9:6 (LXX), he notes, “He has been, it is true, called ‘the Angel of great counsel,’ that is, a messenger, by a term expressive of official function, not of nature. For He had to announce to the world the mighty purpose of the Father, even that which ordained the restoration of man.” Ibid., 14.

34 Novatian Treatise Concerning the Trinity 18.

35 Novatian’s argument also rests on Colossians 1 and Hebrews 1, which identify Christ as “the Image of the invisible God.” He observes, “Behold, the same Moses tells us in another place that ‘God was seen of Abraham.’ And yet the same Moses hears from God, that ‘no man can see God and live.’ If God cannot be seen, how was God seen? Or if He was seen, how is it that He cannot be seen? For John also says, ‘No man hath seen God at any time;’ and the Apostle Paul, ‘Whom no man hath seen, nor can see.’ [1 Timothy 6:16] But certainly the Scripture does not lie; therefore, truly, God was seen. Whence it may be understood that it was not the Father who was seen, seeing that He never was seen; but the Son, who has both been accustomed to descend, and to be seen because He has descended. For He is the image of the invisible God, as the imperfection and frailty of the human condition was accustomed sometimes even then to see God the Father in the image of God, that is, in the Son of God.” Ibid., 18.

36 He explains, “But, because He is subjected to the Father, and the Announcer of the Father’s will, He is declared to be the Angel of Great Counsel. Therefore, although this passage neither is suited to the Father, lest He should be called an angel, nor to the person of an angel, lest
Cyprian (A.D. 200-258)

A final contribution from the Ante-Nicene period is from Cyprian of Carthage (200-258). In the second book of his *Three Books of Testimonies Against the Jews*, Cyprian lists a catena of Old Testament passages under the heading “Christ is likewise the Angel and God.” While not diverging from the Christological interpretation of the Angel, Cyprian did suggest one other connection between Christ and the Angel. The Angel of Yahweh and Christ both associate themselves with the name of the Father. It is this close association with the name of the Lord (i.e., God the Father) that shows the exact identity of the two.

Summary and Conclusion

In summary, the fathers of the Ante-Nicene period provide a unified testimony as to the identity of the Angel of Yahweh as the Logos, the Lord Jesus Christ. They do so by appealing to a distinction of persons in certain Old Testament theophany passages and by explaining the designation Angel as applied to Christ in the sense of “messenger.” They often strengthened their Christological interpretation of the Angel of Yahweh by appealing to a classic Messianic text, Isaiah 9:6, which in the Septuagint directly connects the Angel of Yahweh and Christ. Several of them also address the question of the visibility of

he should be called God; yet it is suited to the person of Christ that He should be both God because He is the Son of God, and should be an angel because He is the Announcer of the Father’s mind.” *Ibid.*, 18.

Cyprian quotes from Abraham’s encounter with the Angel on Mount Moriah (Gen 22:11-12), the Angel’s appearance to Jacob in a dream at Laban’s (Gen 31:13), the Angel’s presence with Israel during the flight from Egypt (Ex 13:21; Ex 14:19), and Moses’ instruction regarding the Angel (Ex 23:20-21). Cyprian *Three Books of Testimonies Against the Jews* 2.5.

Cyprian connects Exodus 23:21, “My name is in Him,” with Psalm 118:26, “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord,” and Christ’s own statement in John 5:43, “I came in the name of my Father, and ye received me not. When another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive.” *Ibid.*, 2.5.
Christ as the Angel of Yahweh. They guard the deity of Christ by appealing to John 1:18, which in their view explains a fundamental difference in function between the Father and the Son.
CHAPTER 2

A SURVEY OF THE HISTORICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE ANGEL OF YAHWEH IN THE NICENE AND POST-NICENE PERIOD

The Jewish opposition to the deity of Christ found unlikely support in the fourth century. The Arian heretics likewise objected to the idea that Christ was divine, but they did not entirely dismiss his significance. They instead saw Christ as a creature, and they imagined that God was solitary rather than triune. The widespread infection of such heresy in the early church soon led to the first church council at Nicea in A.D. 325. It likewise provided an impetus for the church leaders to defend the doctrine of Christ and the logical corollary, the nature of God as triune.¹

Since the Arians attempted to use any doctrine or text of Scripture seeming to militate against the deity of Christ in their favor, it may seem surprising that they took particular interest in the doctrine of the Angel of Yahweh.² The Ante-Nicene Church Fathers, after all, had employed the very same doctrine to defend Christ’s deity. The Arians, however, took a different tactic. They did not deny the identity between the Angel and Christ. That was, in

¹ Among the major treatises defending the doctrine of the Trinity during this time period include Athanasius’s *Four Discourses Against the Arians*, Hilary of Poitier’s *De Trinitate*, Gregory of Nyssa’s *Against Eunomius*, and Augustine’s *On the Trinity*.

² They also used texts that taught the oneness of God (i.e., monotheism) in an attempt to dismiss the idea of the Trinity. Hilary of Poitiers observes, “The heretics imagine that they can use his [Moses’] assertion of the Unity of God in disproof of the Divinity of God the Son.” Hilary of Poitiers *De Trinitate* 4.23.
fact, a part of their argument. It was Christ’s very identity as the Angel of Yahweh that proved his creaturely nature. Thus the Arians sought to wrestle the doctrine away from the hands of the Trinitarians to support their heretical position.

_Eusebius of Caesarea (A.D. 260-340)_

One of the most controversial figures during the earlier part of this controversy was the father of church history, Eusebius of Caesarea. While claiming to be orthodox, he opposed Athanasius at the Nicene Council of A.D. 325 and suggested a creed for the Council that gave too much latitude to the Arians. These two facts along with his efforts to bring the two opposing sides together combined to cast a shadow on his orthodoxy that continues to this day. In spite of that, Eusebius openly and unmistakably taught that Christ was the Angel of Yahweh who appeared in Old Testament theophany.

One illustration of his view is found in Eusebius’s groundbreaking work on church history, which begins with an outline of “the origin of Christ’s dispensation.” Essentially Eusebius provided a brief history of Christ’s preincarnate activity. He began by asserting that Christ’s work began as the Creator and that it continued as he became intimately involved in the lives of his people before the incarnation. The Word appeared in the form of a man to

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3 Eunomius, the opponent of Gregory of Nyssa in his work _Against Eunomius_, is an example of an Arian who used the doctrine of the MA in this manner. See Gregory of Nyssa _Against Eunomius_ 11.3.


6 Eusebius of Caesarea *Church History* 2.1-27.
Abraham, Jacob, and Moses, and Joshua worshipped him as “great Captain of God” near Jericho (Josh 5:13ff.). Isaiah likewise identified Christ to be the “Angel of the great Council” [sic] (Isa 9:6, LXX).

In addition to advancing his own view, Eusebius repudiated the notion that someone less than the Word himself could have appeared. The Scripture writers reserved such language for the Angel of Yahweh alone, and they would never attribute deity and lordship to a finite angel. Thus while Eusebius is sometimes criticized for his amiable disposition toward the Arians, his writings give evidence to the fact that he did not share their view of the Angel of Yahweh as a finite creature.

**Athanasius of Alexandria (A.D. 296-373)**

The champion of orthodoxy against the Arians at the Council of Nicea was Athanasius, a deacon of the church in Alexandria. One of his major contributions to the Council was the strongly Trinitarian creed that he offered to it. His creed was accepted over the creed of Eusebius, which gave more latitude to the Arian position. As a result the Arians were dealt a major defeat, but the

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8 This view suggests Eusebius’s dependence upon the Septuagint like the other early church fathers.

9 Eusebius *Church History* 2.1-27. Eusebius denies that the MA is a finite angel. “Nor is it admissible to suppose that the theophanies recorded were appearances of subordinate angels and ministers of God, for whenever any of these appeared to men, the Scripture does not conceal the fact, but calls them by name not God nor Lord, but angels, as it is easy to prove by numberless testimonies.”

10 Philip Schaff suggests that Eusebius’s orthodoxy was questioned primarily because of his “indecision,” “doctrinal latitudinarianism,” and “weakness of character,” not necessarily his theological position. *HCC*, 3:871-879.
battle was far from over. For nearly half a century longer, Athanasius tenaciously defended orthodoxy against the doctrines of the Arians.

In the ensuing struggle Athanasius wrote an aggressive polemic called *Four Discourses Against the Arians*. It is this work that provides the primary context for understanding his views of Old Testament theophanies and the Angel of Yahweh.\(^{11}\) He postulates an unprecedented view of the Angel of Yahweh which provides a theologically mediate position between the Ante-Nicene Fathers and Augustine.\(^{12}\)

Like earlier church fathers Athanasius taught that the Son revealed the Father in both the Old and New Testaments. He likewise admitted that the Son was called an Angel in Scripture.\(^{13}\) Nevertheless, he also taught that finite angels appeared on occasion to individuals in the Old Testament as a sort of angelic mediator. In these cases, the “Angel of Yahweh” mediated between the human recipient of revelation and the Son of God, who was speaking.\(^{14}\) Realizing the potential for confusion, Athanasius suggested that the recipients of such revelations never mistook one for the other. The following illustrates his thinking:

He who beholds a vision of Angels, knows that he has seen the Angel and not God. For Zacharias saw an Angel; and Isaiah saw the Lord. Manoah,

\(^{11}\) Athanasius’s stated goal was to “unrip ‘the folds of its [the Arian heresy’s] breast-plate.’” *Athanasius Four Discourses Against the Arians* 1.1.1.

\(^{12}\) See Augustine’s view below.

\(^{13}\) Athanasius points to Jacob’s prayer to the Angel in Genesis 48:15-16 and Isaiah’s prophecy (9:6, LXX) as evidence that the Son is called an Angel in the Old Testament. Of the former passage he observes, “In saying ‘Who delivered me from all evil,’ he shewed that it was no created Angel, but the Word of God, whom he joined to the Father in His prayer.” *Athanasius Four Discourses Against the Arians* 3.15.12.

\(^{14}\) Athanasius suggests that the Angel to whom Jacob is speaking in his prayer must be “God’s Word” (Gen 48:15-16), “because it is He alone who reveals the Father.” *Ibid.*, 3.14.13.
the father of Samson, saw an Angel; but Moses beheld God. Gideon saw an Angel, but to Abraham appeared God. And neither he who saw God, beheld an Angel, nor he who saw an Angel, considered that he saw God. As his explanation shows, Athanasius does not deny that God himself appeared to men. He does suggest, however, that the Angel of Yahweh could be other than the Son of God. Christ, in such cases, received revelation from the Father initially, but then he conveyed the message through a finite angel. Thus the Angel of Yahweh is simply a mediator between Christ and the recipient of the revelation.

Hilary of Poitiers (c. A.D. 300-368)

Like others before him, Hilary of Poitiers also wrote a formal defense of the doctrine of the Trinity. His twelve-volume apology De Trinitate provides cogent argumentation against the Arian position based on Old and New Testament revelation. One particular area to which Hilary gave significant attention was the Arian employment of monotheistic texts within the Pentateuch for the purpose of disproving the Trinity. He frustrated their strategy by using the doctrines of the Angel of Yahweh and theophany to show that Moses also taught that there is a plurality of persons in the Godhead.


\[16\] Athanasius does not explain the method he uses in determining which appearances are angels and which are appearances of God. The responses of Gideon and Manoah to the Angel of Yahweh (Jdg 6, 13), in particular, are very similar to those who were recipients of theophany.

\[17\] Athanasius viewed the Father as the source of revelation, whereas the Son was the Messenger. He writes, “And he who hears the Word, knows that he hears the Father; as he who is irradiated by the radiance, knows that he is enlightened by the sun.” Athanasius Four Discourses Against the Arians 3.14.14.

\[18\] See Hilary De Trinitate 4.23.
Drawing mostly on the theophanic revelation to Abraham and Jacob in Genesis, Hilary argued that Moses’ primary purpose in using the designation *Angel of God* was to reveal a distinction within the Trinity.\(^{19}\) He also emphasized the function of the Son: “The title of Angel informs us of office, not of His nature.”\(^{20}\) As an indication of function, the title does not suggest any inferiority of the Son in respect to the Father.\(^ {21}\)

Hilary’s understanding of the designation *Angel of Yahweh* closely parallels the views of earlier fathers, particularly Justin Martyr. He used the same text that Justin used against Trypho to demonstrate the distinction between the persons of the Trinity in the Old Testament: Genesis 18-19. Hilary, however, went one step further. Justin purposed to show Trypho only that Moses taught a plurality of persons in the Godhead, but Hilary went so far as to suggest the exact identity of the Son in the passage based on his function.\(^ {22}\) Hilary argued that since the Father has delegated all judgment to the Son (John 5:22-23), and since the context in Genesis 19 is the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah, one must conclude that the Son alone could have been the person of the Trinity who

\(^{19}\) Hilary observes, “To discriminate clearly between the Persons, He is called the Angel of God; He Who is God from God is also the Angel of God, but, that he may have the honour which he is due, He is entitled also Lord and God.” *Ibid.*, 4.23.

\(^{20}\) *Ibid.*, 5.11.

\(^{21}\) Elaborating on the title, Hilary notes, “The title Messenger proves that He has an office of His own; that His nature is truly Divine is proved when He is called God. But this sequence, first Angel, then God, is in the order of revelation, not in Himself.” *Ibid.*, 5.11.

\(^{22}\) The hermeneutical principle Hilary uses in this passage suggests that it is possible to identify the divine person acting in Old Testament passages based upon the function of the one acting. Once the function is established, and if the function is unique to one of the persons of the Trinity, then one may reasonably identify the person of the Trinity described in the passage.
acted in judgment upon the cities. \(^{23}\) Specifically, the Son is the “LORD who rained down fire and brimstone from the LORD” (Gen 19:24, KJV). \(^{24}\)

**Gregory of Nyssa (A.D. 331-395)**

The Arians met another formidable foe in Gregory of Nyssa, who like Hilary assaulted their doctrine with no less than twelve volumes. *Against Eunomius* is Gregory’s challenge to a bishop of Cyzicus in Mysia \(^{25}\) who was unusually creative in his efforts to deny the deity of Christ. Eunomius’ handling of the doctrine of Angel of Yahweh in connection with Christ, in particular, demonstrates remarkable insidiousness.

Eunomius agreed that the Angel of Yahweh in the Old Testament was Christ, and he acknowledged that the Angel of Yahweh was addressed as God. His seeming orthodoxy is seen in the following quotation:

> Who [Christ], by being called ‘Angel,’ clearly showed By Whom He published His words, and Who is the Existent [Yahweh], while by being addressed also as God, He showed His superiority over all things. For He Who is the God of all things that were made by Him, is the Angel of the God over all. \(^{26}\)

On the surface Eunomius seems to be asserting the deity of Christ, but he had no such intent. His purpose was exactly the opposite. Eunomius was aware that Moses on occasion used נגֶשׁ in a context that did not properly refer to God

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\(^{23}\) See also Hilary *De Trinitate* 4.25-29.

\(^{24}\) It is solely the context and an understanding of the function of the Son that suggests an identification of one as Christ. Moses makes no attempt to identify the persons. “It is *The Lord from the Lord*; Scripture makes no distinction, by difference of name, between Their natures, but discriminates between Themselves.” *Ibid.*, 4.29.

\(^{25}\) Schaff observes that Eunomius “taught that the Son was of a different essence (ἐτέροούσιος), and even unlike the Father (ἄνωμοιος), and created out of nothing (ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων).” *HCC*, 3:637.

\(^{26}\) Gregory of Nyssa *Against Eunomius* 11.3.
himself.\textsuperscript{27} One example is when God informed Moses, “See, I have made thee a god (אלהים) to Pharaoh” (Ex 7:1). Eunomius argued that in the same way the Angel of Yahweh may be said to be “God.”\textsuperscript{28}

Attempting to expose this exegetical sleight of hand, Gregory categorically rejected Eunomius’s assertion that Christ (i.e., the Angel of Yahweh) could be a finite angel. He argued that the author of Hebrews in his first chapter asserts the superiority of the Son over the angels, which contradicts such a notion.\textsuperscript{29} Instead, echoing the thoughts of others before him, Gregory argued that the title *Angel of Yahweh* was intended to convey a distinction between the persons of the Trinity and that it points to the unique function of the Son as the ‘Messenger’ of the Father.\textsuperscript{30} As such, argued Gregory, the title *Angel* functions much in the same way that New Testament titles for Christ do. The New Testament writers used terms such as *Word*, *Seal*, and *Image* to describe Christ, which like the term *Angel* demonstrate a distinction between the Father and the Son and explain his function in relation to the Father.\textsuperscript{31}

\textsuperscript{27} For example, אלהים is used in reference to Moses (Ex 7:1) and human judges (Ex 21:6).

\textsuperscript{28} Gregory uses the term “Existent” to denote the divine name. “He Who sent Moses was the Existent [God] Himself, but He by Whom He sent and spake was the Angel of the Existent, and the God of all else.” Gregory of Nyssa *Against Eunomius* 11.3.

\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., 11.3.

\textsuperscript{30} “For we too say plainly, that the prophet, wishing to make manifest to men the mystery concerning Christ, called the Self-Existant ‘Angel,’ that the meaning of the words might not be referred to the Father, as it would have been if the title of ‘Existent’ [Yahweh] alone had been found throughout the discourse . . . . We affirm that the true Word that was in the beginning, when He announces the will of His own Father, is styled ‘Angel’ (or ‘Messenger’), a title given to Him on account of the operation of conveying the message.” Ibid., 11.3.

\textsuperscript{31} Gregory’s suggestion that this title is similar to these New Testament titles of Christ is a unique contribution to the discussion of this doctrine. He explains further, “For as the ‘Angel’ (or ‘Messenger’) gives information from someone, even so the Word reveals the thought within, the Seal shows by Its own stamp the original mould, and the Image by Itself interprets the beauty
Ambrose of Milan (A.D. 340-397)

The widespread effects of the Arian heresy are evident from the existence of so many defenses against it. Another contributor was Ambrose of Milan, who composed several works defending Christianity after the Emperor Gratian requested his assistance. Ambrose viewed the preincarnate Christ as interacting personally with his people before he came in the flesh. Christ was, according to Ambrose, “offended by Adam, seen by Abraham, [and] worshipped by Jacob.”

He likewise was the “man” who wrestled with Jacob at the brook Jabbok (Gen 32). Moses saw Christ when he encountered the Angel of Yahweh at the burning bush (Ex 3-4), and Christ was also the member of the Trinity who gave the Law at Mount Sinai (Ex 19-23). In addition, Ambrose taught that the prophets following Moses also wrote of the appearances of Christ. Joshua met Christ as the “leader of the heavenly host” near Jericho (Joshua 5:13), and the three Hebrew children saw him in the fiery furnace (Dan 3).

Although he provided nothing new in his interpretation of the Angel of Yahweh, Ambrose’s Ante-Nicene view of the doctrine does establish the timing of that whereof it is the image, so that in their signification all these terms are equivalent to one another.”

32 Ambrose Of the Holy Spirit 2.8.71-72.

33 Ambrose shows no hesitance in asserting that Jacob saw the face of God. “Is there greater wisdom than holy Jacob’s, who saw God face to face and won a blessing?” Ambrose Duties of the Clergy 25.120.

34 Ambrose also notes that Stephen refers to the Angel of Yahweh in his address to the Sanhedrin (Acts 7:30-38). Ambrose Of the Christian Faith 1.13.83.

35 Ambrose Of the Christian Faith 5.10.126.

36 Ambrose emphasizes that the Son took the form of angels when he appeared. Speaking of the three Hebrew children, he notes, “For with them there was One in the form of an angel, comforting them, to the end that in the number of the Trinity one Supreme Power might be praised. God was praised, the Son of God was seen in God’s angel, holy and spiritual grace spake in the children.” Ibid., 1.13.79. See also Ibid., 1.4.33.
of a major shift in the doctrine. The greatest of all the Latin church fathers, Augustine of Hippo became the first orthodox teacher of the church in its early history to reject a Christological interpretation of the Angel of Yahweh.

Augustine of Hippo (A.D. 354-430)

The views of Augustine on theophany and the Angel of Yahweh are expressed most completely in his celebrated work *On the Trinity*, which was the result of his own mature reflection and thought. Although his major concern is the Trinity, Augustine provided one of the most thorough treatments of theophanic passages in the Pentateuch. In addition, he wrote in detail on some of the most significant theological difficulties related to subject of theophany, demonstrating an earnest effort to wrestle with the complexities of the doctrine.

Augustine’s fundamental objection to the Christological interpretation of the Angel of Yahweh rested on his understanding of God’s invisibility. Earlier writers had argued based on the prologue to John’s Gospel (i.e., John 1:18) that Christ was the only member of the Trinity who could be seen. Augustine’s

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37 Ambrose emphatically denies that the Father ever appeared to any man. “For the Father did not appear to Abraham, nor did Abraham wash the feet of God the Father, but the feet of Him in Whom is the image of the man that shall be. Moreover, the Son of God saith, ‘Abraham saw my day, and rejoiced.’ It is He, therefore, who sware by Himself, [and] Whom Abraham saw.” Ambrose *Of the Holy Spirit* 1.4.55.

38 Richard Hadden, the translator of *On the Trinity*, suggests that in spite of the efforts that he had put into the work, Augustine’s correspondence indicates that he was still hesitant to publish it late in his life because he thought it to be an insufficient treatment of the subject. Richard Hadden, Translator’s Preface to *On the Holy Trinity* (ed. Philip Schaff in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004]).

39 While invisibility is at the foundation of this issue, Augustine also appeals to the doctrine of God’s immutability. He observes, “God appeared again to Abraham at the oak of Mamre in three men, who it is not to be doubted were angels, although some think that one of them was Christ, and assert that he was visible before he put on flesh. Now it belongs to the divine power, and invisible, incorporeal, and incommutable nature, without changing itself at all, to appear even to mortal men, not by what it is, but by what is subject to it.” Augustine *City of God* 16.29.
contention, on the other hand, was that invisibility applied to all the members of the Trinity. Two of the texts on which his argument rests are 1 Timothy 1:17 and 1 Timothy 6:16-17. These two passages, according to Augustine, indicate that invisibility and immortality are attributes of God in his triune nature, and it is an error to suggest that these verses refer to the Father alone. Christ, therefore, is invisible like the Father, and to identify him as the Angel of Yahweh who was visible in the days of the Old Testament is to fail to take this doctrine into account.

Augustine’s view militates against those of the earlier church fathers such as Irenaeus, who found biblical support for identifying Christ as the visible Angel of Yahweh in the prologue to John’s Gospel (i.e., John 1:18). Augustine instead maintained that God used a visible creature, an angelic mediator, to reveal his presence. The following quotation demonstrates his view:

> Let us, who deny that God, whether the Father, or the Son, or the Holy Spirit, ever appeared to bodily eyes, unless through the corporeal creature made subject to His own power; let us, I say—ready to be corrected, if we are reproved in a fraternal and upright spirit, ready to be so, even if carped at by an enemy, so that he speak the truth—in catholic peace and with peaceful study inquire, whether God indiscriminately appeared to our fathers before Christ came in the flesh, or whether it was any one person of the Trinity, or whether severally, as it were by turns.  


41 Unfortunately, Augustine does not refer to John 1:18 in On the Trinity.

42 Augustine On the Trinity 2.9.15. The statement “unless through the corporeal creature made subject to His own power” exhibits this a priori principle that the theophanies were made possible only through a “corporeal creature.” Augustine’s reference to being “ready to be corrected” in this statement does not apply to this principle, but rather what comes afterward. He is suggesting his willingness to examine the Old Testament theophanies in search of the member of the Trinity who is appearing through an angel.
Augustine’s insistence on the invisibility of God is by no means insignificant, and his logic inevitably leads to a difficulty in interpreting Old Testament theophanies. If the doctrine of invisibility is pressed to an extreme, it takes away the doctrine of theophany altogether. Moreover, if God is seen only through a “corporeal creature made subject to Him,” it can hardly be said that he ever appeared at all. Thus Jacob was mistaken when he claimed to have seen God face to face (Gen 32:30), and Moses was wrong to hide his eyes because “he was afraid to look upon God” (Ex 3:6).

Augustine’s assertion that those who saw a theophany saw merely an angelic mediator revealing God’s presence does not exclude God’s real involvement in theophanic revelation. In fact, he leaves open the possibility that any one or all the members of the Trinity could appear through a finite angel. He additionally suggests that though Scripture does not always provide the detail necessary to identify the particular member of the Trinity appearing through the angel, certain passages limit the possibilities. For instance, only the Son and the Spirit could have possibly appeared to Moses through the angel at the burning bush (Ex 3-4), because the term angel used in the passage applies not only to the finite angel but also the divine Messenger who is speaking through the angel. This eliminates the Father, according to Augustine, because the term angel is never used of him in Scripture, whereas the Son and the Spirit are both said to have been “sent” (John 6:29; John 14:26).

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43 Ibid., 14.24. The phrase “corporeal creature made subject to Him” is Augustine’s typical way of expressing the process by which God revealed himself. Similar phraseology appears in On the Trinity 2.15.25 and 2.17.32.

44 Augustine On the Trinity 2.13.23. Augustine’s reasoning on this point is unclear, mainly because he seems to confuse the finite angel and the God who he says appeared in the angel. His reasoning on this passage follows: “It is not sufficiently apparent which person of the Trinity that the angel bare, if he was one of the rest of the angels, and whether any person, and
A further objection to the Christological interpretation of the Angel of Yahweh had to do with the significance of the incarnation. Augustine objected to the idea that Christ appeared before he came in the flesh. Quoting Galatians 4:4, Augustine asks, “But if the Son was manifested by them [earlier appearances], why is He said to be sent long after, when He was made of a woman?” Thus his objection is grounded in his understanding of the incarnation as a momentous event involving an unprecedented sending of Christ from the Father.

Augustine’s rejection of the traditional Christological interpretation of the Angel of Yahweh provided the early church with a distinct alternative to the prevailing view of theophany and the Angel of Yahweh. His primary objections, moreover, provided orthodox theological grounds for doing so. His insistence on God’s invisible nature would find no opposition among those who called themselves orthodox, nor would he find resistance in his high view of the incarnation. He additionally maintained the possibility that any one or all of the persons of the Trinity could have appeared through the angelic mediator, which preserved the fundamental fact that God had indeed revealed himself to men.

Not rather that of the Trinity itself. But if the creature was assumed for the purpose at hand, whereby both to appear to human eyes, and to sound in human ears, and to be called the Angel of the Lord, and the Lord, and God; then God cannot here be understood to be the Father, but either the Son or the Holy Spirit. Although I cannot call to mind the Holy Spirit is elsewhere called an angel, which yet may be understood from His work; for it is said of Him, ‘And He will show you things to come;’ and ‘angel’ in Greek is certainly equivalent to ‘messenger’ in Latin: but we read most evidently of the Lord Jesus Christ in the prophet, that He is called ‘the Angel of Great Counsel,’ while both the Holy Spirit and the Son of God is God and Lord of the Angels.”

45 Augustine On the Trinity 2.7.12.

46 Augustine was probably not familiar with the views of earlier church fathers, and thus the term rejection may be too strong. The tone of his discussion in On the Trinity, in particular, suggests that he was writing with the views of heretics in mind (perhaps the Arians) and not those of other orthodox men. Augustine charges those who regarded the Son to be visible before the incarnation with having a “carnal mind,” “more audacity than religion,” and a “dull heart.” Ibid., 2.8.14.
Summary and Conclusion

Although most of the church fathers following the Council of Nicea in A.D. 325 maintained the traditional Christological interpretation of the Angel of Yahweh, there were two significant men whose views led toward an entirely different understanding of the doctrine. Athanasius, on the one hand, proposed that sometimes a finite angel (i.e., the Angel of Yahweh) served as an angelic mediator between the Son of God and the recipient of the revelation. This understanding of the Angel of Yahweh, moreover, did not exclude the idea that God himself sometimes appeared to men.

Augustine, on the other hand, objected to the idea that God ever appeared at all. He maintained that the invisible nature of God precluded the idea that any human being could see his essence. Consequently, he argued that God always employed a “corporeal creature” (i.e., angelic mediator) when he revealed himself in theophany. He also objected to any appearance of Christ before Bethlehem because he considered the incarnation to be an unprecedented event in the course of God’s revelation to mankind. Any preincarnate appearance of Christ would seriously undermine the momentous nature of Christ’s coming in the flesh. Due to these fundamental theological considerations Augustine made a clear break with those who interpreted the Angel of Yahweh Christologically. In so doing he provided an alternative yet orthodox view to the one that had prevailed for three centuries.
CHAPTER 3

A SURVEY OF THE HISTORICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE ANGEL OF YAHWEH FROM THE MEDIEVAL PERIOD TO THE PRESENT

The preceding survey demonstrates that the Angel of Yahweh was viewed by orthodox Christianity in two primary ways. They either regarded the Angel of Yahweh as a divine mediator between God and man or an angelic mediator between God and man. The former was the prevailing view of orthodoxy in the Ante-Nicene period, while the latter was the prevailing view of the unbelieving Jews and the Arians, as well as the views of some orthodox interpreters in the Post-Nicene period, most notably Augustine.¹ Augustine’s view of the Angel of Yahweh, moreover, seems to have been the view that prevailed during the medieval period and into the Middle Ages.

The Medieval Period and the Middle Ages (787-1517)

The 13th-century scholastic Thomas Aquinas indicates his Augustinian view of the Angel of Yahweh in his massive Summa Theologica when addressing the question of God’s invisibility. Aquinas writes, “So when Jacob says, ‘I have

seen God face to face,’ this does not mean the Divine essence, but some figure representing God.”

This obviously is in harmony with Augustine’s view. It is interesting to note, however, that Aquinas did view the appearances of the Angel of Yahweh to be preparatory for the incarnation of Christ. This suggestion is found in an oblique reference to the Angel of Yahweh in his discussion of the angels:

That angels assumed bodies under the Old Law was a figurative indication that the Word of God would take a human body; because all the apparitions in the Old Testament were ordained to that one whereby the Son of God appeared in the flesh.

Philip Schaff says of Aquinas, “He was in full sympathy with the hierarchical system and the theology of the medieval church and at no point out of accord with them.” His view on the Angel of Yahweh, therefore, may be viewed as typical of this time period. He and the other Scholastic theologians, focusing as they did on harmonizing reason and philosophy with Scripture, evidently had little time for such biblical theological questions. Hence there was

2 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Question 12, Article 11, Reply to Objection 1; available from http://www.ccel.org/a/aquinas/summa; Internet; accessed 03/22/08.

3 Henry Liddon also suggested that regardless of which view is taken, the doctrine of the Angel of Yahweh acts as a “preparatory service” for the incarnation. He argues, “Whether in them [the appearances of the Angel of the Lord] the Word or Son actually appeared, or whether God made a created angel the absolutely perfect exponent of His Thought and Will, do they not point in either case to a purpose in the Divine Mind which would only be realized when man had been admitted to a nearer and more palpable contact with God than was possible under the Patriarchal or Jewish dispensations? Do they not suggest, as their natural climax and explanation, some Personal, Self-unveiling of God before the eyes of His creatures?” *The Divinity of Our Lord*, 59.

4 Thomas Aquinas’s Augustinian view is evident from Question 15, Article 2, Reply to Objection 1 in *Summa Theologica*, available from http://www.ccel.org/a/aquinas/summa; Internet; accessed 03/22/08.

little discussion on the subject, and no substantial suggested variation from the Augustinian view in this time period.

*The Reformation to the End of the 18th Century*

The Reformation brought many changes to professing Christianity, including a renewed interest and study of the Scriptures. The return to the Scriptures consequently renewed focus on the subject of the Angel of Yahweh, and many of the Reformers adopted the Ante-Nicene view. So widespread was the acceptance of the Ante-Nicene view that in the 19th century Charles Hodge wrote that it had been “universally adopted in the Church, at least since the Reformation.”⁶ This is likely accurate, so long as he meant the Protestant church.

**Protestantism**

The most prominent Protestant figures of the Reformation and the theological traditions that followed them held the view of the Ante-Nicene fathers regarding the Angel of Yahweh. John Calvin clearly taught the Ante-Nicene view in his writings, including his monumental *Institutes of the Christian Religion*.⁷ His commentaries likewise demonstrate a fully developed understanding of the identity between Christ and the Angel of Yahweh.⁸

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Commenting on the appearance of three “men” in Genesis 18, Calvin argues that it was Christ and two angels: “Christ, who is the living image of the Father, often appeared to others under the form of an angel, while at the same time, he yet had angels of whom He was the Head, for His attendants.”⁹ Calvin likewise identifies Christ as the “Angel who redeemed [Jacob] from all evil” in Genesis 48:15-16:

It is necessary that Christ should here be meant, who does not bear in vain the title of Angel, because He had become the perpetual mediator. And Paul testifies that he was the leader and guide of the journey of his ancient people (1 Corinthians 10:4). He had not yet indeed been sent by the Father, but because He was always the bond and connection between God and man, and because God formally manifested himself in no other way than through Him, he is properly called the Angel.¹⁰

Although a fuller examination of Calvin’s interpretation demonstrates an understanding of the Angel of Yahweh that is in full accord with that of the Ante-Nicene fathers, his view like many others allowed for a generic understanding of the designation Angel of Yahweh. In other words, the designation Angel of Yahweh may refer to a finite angel.¹¹

The Reformed tradition which has followed Calvin customarily follows his interpretation. Richard Muller argues that although there are differences of opinion among Reformed interpreters of the 16th to the 18th centuries regarding which Angel of Yahweh passages to apply to Christ, there is a distinct continuity

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¹⁰ The continuation of Calvin’s thought includes his defense of Christ’s taking the form and not the nature of angels, in accord with the teaching of Hebrews 2:16. Ibid., 733.

¹¹ Calvin’s Ante-Nicene view of the Angel of Yahweh may be seen in Gen 18, Josh 5:13-15, Hos 12:4-5, Zech 3:1-10, 12:10, and Mal 3:1, but he inconsistently applied it even in Genesis (e.g., see Gen 16, 22). Ibid., 300-307; 414-416.
between their teachings and Calvin’s. The Reformed theological tradition of the present day, moreover, also follows Calvin’s understanding.

Martin Luther also held the Ante-Nicene view of the Angel of Yahweh, although his interpretation did not demand that the designation Angel of Yahweh always refer to a single personality. A survey of Luther’s Lectures on Genesis shows that he believed that the Angel of Yahweh who appeared to Hagar at Beersheba was created (Gen 16) but that Christ wrestled with Jacob at the Jabbok ford (Gen 32). He likewise viewed the Angel of Yahweh who spoke to Abraham at Mount Moriah as finite, but the Angel-Redeemer to whom Jacob addressed his prayer was the Son of God (Gen 48:15-16). Thus though Luther held the Ante-Nicene view of the Angel of Yahweh, he also viewed the designation Angel of Yahweh as a generic designation that may be determined by the context.

Luther’s Ante-Nicene view has also continued within the Lutheran tradition. One 17th-century Lutheran writer named Calovius went so far as to suggest that the Ante-Nicene view of the Angel of Yahweh was the only

12 Richard A. Muller, Post Reformation Reformed Dogmatics (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 314-316.


14 Luther begins his exegesis of Genesis 32 with the statement, "This passage is regarded by all as among the most obscure of the whole Old Testament." Martin Luther, The Works of Martin Luther, 6 vols., ed. by Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis: Concordia, 1964), 6: 130.

15 Luther notes, "But our opinion is this, that the wrestler is the Lord of glory, God Himself, or God’s Son, who was to become incarnate and who appeared and spoke to the fathers." Ibid., 130.
orthodox position. In the present day, however, the Lutheran tradition accepts both the Ante-Nicene and Augustinian position.

Other later Protestant traditions have also followed the Ante-Nicene view. A survey of John Wesley’s comments on the Scriptures demonstrates such a view, as do the Methodist systematic theologies. Wesley’s note on Gen 22:11 says, “The Angel of the Lord - That is, God himself, the eternal Word, the Angel of the covenant, who was to be the great Redeemer and Comforter.” An early Methodist leader and systematic theologian named Richard Watson likewise agreed with this identification. Watson categorized the Angel of Yahweh under the heading of the Trinity in his Theological Institutes, and he argued strongly for a Christological interpretation of the Old Testament. Concluding his argument that identified Christ as the Jehovah of the Old Testament is the following summary:


We trace the manifestations of the same person from Adam to Abraham; from Abraham to Moses; from Moses to the prophets; from the prophets to Jesus. Under every manifestation he has appeared in the form of God, never thinking it robbery to be equal with God. ‘Dressed in the appropriate robes of God’s state, wearing God’s crown, and wielding God’s sceptre,’ he has ever received Divine homage and honour. No name is given to the Angel Jehovah, which is not given to Jehovah Jesus; no attribute is ascribed to the one, which is not ascribed to the other; the worship which was paid to the one by patriarchs and prophets, was paid to the other by evangelists and apostles; and the Scriptures declare them to be the same august person, — the image of the Invisible, whom no man can see and live; — the Redeeming Angel, the Redeeming Kinsman, and the Redeeming God. ¹⁹

Independents such as Congregationalists and Baptists likewise shared the Ante-Nicene view of the Angel of Yahweh. Although a complete list of such groups is beyond the scope of the present purpose, two prominent individuals will suffice as representatives of the entire group. ²⁰ The New England Congregationalist Jonathan Edwards’s view of the Angel of Yahweh is evident from his Notes on the Bible in addition to his well-known History of the Work of Redemption. Describing the redemption of Israel out of Egypt, Edwards argues,

This [redemption] was by Jesus Christ, for it was wrought by him who appeared to Moses in the bush; the person that sent Moses to redeem that people. But that was Christ, as is evident, because he is called the Angel of the Lord. ²¹

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¹⁹ Richard Watson, Theological Institutes: or, a View of the Evidences, Doctrines, Morals, and Institutions of Christianity (New York: Hunt & Eaton; Cincinnati: Cranston & Stowe, 1889); available from http://wesley.nnu.edu/ welsyean_theology/watson/index.htm; Internet; Accessed 03/11/08.

²⁰ One additional proponent of the Ante-Nicene view in the 19th and 20th century is the theological journal Bibliotheca Sacra, previously known as Biblical Repertory and Theological Review. BibSac has consistently published articles from an Ante-Nicene standpoint throughout its history.

Edwards also taught that Christ was the Angel whom God sent before Israel into the Promised Land (Ex 23:20), viewing the statement made of the Angel in Exodus 23:21, “My name is in him,” as an evidence for the Ante-Nicene view. British Baptist theologian John Gill, Edwards’s contemporary on the other side of the Atlantic, wrote similarly of the Angel of Yahweh,

Now we are told that God spake to Moses, and said, "I am the Lord”, or Jehovah; by which name he was not known to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; that is, not by that only, or that was not so fully made known to them, as it had been to Moses, and to the Israelites by him, (Ex. 6:2, 3, 3:14) which person that appeared to Moses, and said those words, is called the Angel of the Lord, (Ex. 3:2) not a created angel, (Ex. 3:6) but an uncreated one; and must be understood, not of God the Father, who is never called an angel; but of the Son of God, the Angel of his presence, who brought the children of Israel out of Egypt, went before them, and led them through the Red Sea, and wilderness, to the land of Canaan, (Ex 3:8, 13:21, 14:19, 23:20; Isa. 63:9) he, whom the Israelites tempted in the wilderness, is expressly called Jehovah, (Ex 17:7) and nothing is more evident than that this Person was Christ.  

The preceding survey of the various Protestant theological traditions following the Reformation to the end of the 18th century indicates a widespread acceptance of the Christological interpretation of the Angel of Yahweh.  

expressly concerning Christ, who is called the Angel of the Lord, ‘My Name is in him,’ and therefore he requires the children of Israel to obey his voice.” Jonathan Edwards, “Notes on the Bible,” note 479 on Isa 42:8, in The Works of Jonathan Edwards, 762. Edwards’ brief statement on the appearance of the Angel to Jacob at Jabbok (Gen 32) also demonstrates his concern to guard the significance of the incarnation. He observes, “Christ appeared to him in the form of that nature which He was afterward to receive in a personal union with His divine nature.” Jonathan Edwards, “The History of the Work of Redemption” in The Works of Jonathan Edwards, 545.


Although there are some exceptions, conservative and orthodox Protestant theologians have maintained the Ante-Nicene view to the present time. A major influence in this direction in
views of Roman Catholicism, however, continued to maintain the views of Augustine and Aquinas.

Roman Catholicism

The Roman Catholic Church’s view of the Angel of Yahweh remained largely static during the time of the Reformation. Thomas Aquinas’s adoption of the Augustinian view of the Angel likely influenced Roman Catholicism in this direction. In addition, the Church officially endorsed Aquinas’s *Summa Theologica* at the Council of Trent in the middle of the 16th century as an official formulation of its theology. In so doing, the Church essentially endorsed the Augustinian view. Such a tacit endorsement of Aquinas’s view of the Angel of Yahweh did not render the Ante-Nicene view heretical, but it did place further weight on the Augustinian side.

Other factors were likely involved as well. One is that the doctrinal controversies of the Reformation had little to do with theology proper. Soteriology was at the center of the doctrinal controversy during the Reformation, and Augustine had long before settled the Angel’s identity. The Trinitarian position of the Roman Catholic Church, moreover, was also generally taken for granted. The basic agreement between Protestants and Roman Catholics on the doctrine of the Trinity led to no debate or formal discussion of the matter, and the doctrine was assumed because it was never challenged.\(^{24}\)

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24 W. G. T. Shedd suggests, in fact, that the doctrine of the Trinity was the sole point of fundamental agreement between Protestants and Catholics. Shedd lists three reasons for the Catholic church’s adoption of the Trinitarian position of the early church: “It adopts the trinitarian symbols of the Ancient Church, not so much from any vital interest in them, as because they have come down from the past, and there is no motive for alteration, and no intellectual adventurousness prompting to the formation of new theories.” *A History of Christian Doctrine*, vol. 1 (New York: Scribner and Sons, 1864; reprint, Wipf & Stock, 1999), 378.
Thus the historical connection between the doctrine of the Angel of Yahweh and the Trinity (i.e., Christ’s deity) was rarely if ever a subject of theological debate. The Roman Catholic Church has certainly been aware of the position of the Ante-Nicene fathers, and the view has never been declared heretical. Later Roman Catholic theologians have freely suggested the view as a possible explanation for the Scriptural evidence, and some have even published a defense of the view without censure. Nevertheless, Roman Catholicism has tended to hold the Augustinian view from the time of the Reformation to the present. The current *Catechism of the Catholic Church* reflects the Augustinian view in the following statement about angels:

> Angels have been present since creation and throughout the history of salvation, announcing this salvation from afar or near and serving the accomplishment of the divine plan: they closed the earthly paradise; protected Lot; saved Hagar and her child; stayed Abraham’s hand; communicated the law by their ministry; led the People of God; announced births and callings; and assisted the prophets, just to cite a few examples.

This statement obviously refers to angels in addition to the Angel of Yahweh. However, the mention of an angel who “saved Hagar and her child” and “stayed Abraham’s hand” indicates passages which refer to the Angel of Yahweh.

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Early 19th Century to the Present

Until the 19th century the most common place to find a presentation of the doctrine of the Angel of Yahweh was within the field of systematic theology. Systematic theologians typically categorized the doctrine in a number of ways, but it could be found most often under the doctrine of the Trinity and/or the deity of Christ. As such the doctrine of the Angel of Yahweh served as an Old Testament foundation of what some might call New Testament doctrines. A development took place late in the 18th century within the study of theology, however, that created an entirely new venue for discussion for the doctrine.

J. P. Gabler’s distinction between systematic and biblical theology in the late 18th century in an address at the University of Altdorf is often regarded as the inauguration of the modern field of biblical theology. This distinction led naturally to a division between Old and New Testament theology, now known as the disciplines of Old and New Testament Theology. The development of Old Testament theology in particular is of obvious significance for the doctrine of the Angel of Yahweh. Old Testament theologians began to explore the doctrine and its relationship to the Old Testament in a way different from the discussions of

27 Systematic theologians may also categorize the doctrine under the heading of angels. Such categorization usually reflects the Augustinian view, but not always. Modern systematic theologian Wayne Grudem leans toward the Ante-Nicene interpretation of the Angel of Yahweh although he places the doctrine in a section on angels. Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology (Grand Rapids: Zondervan 1994), 229, 401.

28 Robert D. Bell summarizes the difference between systematic and biblical theology in the following statement: “The Biblical theologian compares what the Bible says in one place with what it says in another place. He interprets verses in light of other verses on the same subject. He also analyzes and summarizes these truths. The systematic theologian then takes the same material and presents it to his students or readers, but he goes further. Since there are various doctrinal questions which the Bible does not address directly, the systematic theologian attempts to answer these questions on the basis of careful conclusions drawn from Biblical theology.” Robert D. Bell, “Introduction: What is Biblical Theology?” Biblical Viewpoint (BV) 15 (November 1981), 80-83.
systematic theology. The format of discussion was no longer connected with discussions of the Trinity or the deity of Christ, but rather the subject of God’s revelation of himself. Nevertheless, the inclusion of the Angel of Yahweh as a separate study within Old Testament theology was not immediate.

The work of one theologian in particular firmly established the doctrine of the Angel of Yahweh as an important feature of Old Testament theology. While not everyone agreed with E. W. Hengstenberg’s view of the Angel of Yahweh in his impressive Christology of the Old Testament, his work nevertheless influenced later writers to at least discuss the doctrine. Originally published in the mid-1800s, Hengstenberg’s work had the broad purpose of systematizing Old Testament evidence on the Messiah. This task included an investigation of Messianic prophecies as well as, in his view, the Angel of Yahweh. In spite of the fact that Hengstenberg did not attempt a comprehensive treatment of the Angel of Yahweh, his exegesis of Old Testament passages relating to the Angel of Yahweh still proved to be foundational for a biblical theological study of the doctrine.

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29 In a sense this development freed the doctrine of the Angel of Yahweh from the primary considerations of systematic theology.


31 Hengstenberg admits that his purpose is to examine only the “principal passages” and the “most important materials” relating to the Angel of Yahweh. See the chapter “The Angel of the Lord in the Pentateuch, and the Book of Joshua” in volume one and Appendix III, “The Divinity of the Messiah in the Old Testament,” in volume four. E. W. Hengstenberg, Christology of the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1956).

32 Hengstenberg maintained that Old Testament revelation did not reveal the identity between the Angel of Yahweh and Christ until the prophet Malachi. E. W. Hengstenberg, Christology of the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1956), 1:130.
Those who followed Hengstenberg in the 19th and 20th century subsequently provided additional groundwork toward a biblical theology of the Angel of Yahweh, each summarizing the doctrine as a part of a larger work on Old Testament theology. Those who discussed the Angel of Yahweh at some length in such works include A. B. Davidson, W. Eichrodt, P. Heinisch, P. Van Imschoot, E. Jacob, G. A. F. Knight, G. F. Oehler, J. Barton Payne, Gerhard Von Rad, Geerhardus Vos, and Th. C. Vriezen. Each of these writers, however, like Hengstenberg, also had a larger purpose in view and consequently treated the doctrine summarily. Other attempts at explicating the doctrine of the Angel of Yahweh either have been fraught with the unbiblical assumptions associated with the documentary theory (JEDP) or for some reason have been truncated.


34 Six works that may be classified as biblical theological works contributing to this subject include Joseph A. Barbel’s *Christos Angelos*, W.G. Heidt’s *Angelology of the Old Testament*, Jeffrey J. Niehaus’s *God at Sinai*, James A. Borland’s *Christ in the Old Testament*, John Kenneth Kuntz’s *The Self Revelation of God*, and Jorg Jeremias’s *Theophanie*. The limitations of these works have been discussed in the prospectus above. More detail, however, of two of these works is pertinent to the present point. Roman Catholic W. G. Heidt wrote significantly on the biblical theology of the Angel of Yahweh in his *Angelology of the Old Testament*, yet his examination had a broader purpose in connection with angels. In addition, his list of “pertinent passages” leaves out a number of important texts (e.g., Gen 32:33ff. [MT], 2 Sam 24, 1 Chron 21, Hos 12:4-6, and Zech 3:1-10). George Heidt, *Angelology of the Old Testament*, 96-97. James Borland’s *Christ in the Old Testament: Old Testament Appearances of Christ in Human Form* may also be categorized as a biblical theological work as his exegesis of relevant passages is very helpful. His primary focus nevertheless is on the appearances of the Angel of Yahweh in passages that indicate human form.
Summary

The doctrine of the Angel of Yahweh received little attention in the medieval period and the Middle Ages. The doctrine is nevertheless briefly referred to within the writings of scholastic Thomas Aquinas, who held an Augustinian view of the Angel of Yahweh. The return to the Scriptures during the period of the Reformation, however, coincided with a return by the majority of Protestant traditions to the Ante-Nicene view. The development of the discipline of biblical theology in the 18th century, more particularly Old Testament theology, then provided a new venue for theological discussion of the doctrine. This development subsequently led to an investigation of the doctrine in its own right and not in connection with other doctrines per se. The inclusion of the doctrine of the Angel of Yahweh in later biblical theological works was due largely to the work of E.W. Hengstenberg. Many of these 19th- and 20th-century Old Testament theologians provided summary statements of the doctrine within their works on Old Testament theology.

Conclusion

Unfortunately the summary treatment of the doctrine of the Angel of Yahweh has never led to a complete biblical theological treatment of the doctrine. Although a number of monographs have been written on the subject of theophany and Christophany, a comprehensive biblical theological presentation of the doctrine of the Angel of Yahweh has yet to be seen. This lack of a

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35 The lack of a complete foundation has to do with a failure to examine and interrelate passages that refer to the Angel of Yahweh where the Angel is not mentioned by name as well as a frequent denial of the presence of the Angel of Yahweh in the later Old Testament prophets. Such denials are unfortunately more often asserted than proven. Van Imersfoot argues that Zechariah is unique among the later prophets in its reference to the Angel of Yahweh: “It must be noted that the angel of Yahweh is never mentioned in the prophetic books, except that of Zacharias [Zechariah]; in the post-exilic books this angel no longer plays the role he played in the
complete foundation for the doctrine results further in at least two problems. First, a complete body of biblical data forming the foundation for a biblical theology of the Angel of Yahweh has not been fully collected, particularly with regard to the latter portions of the Old Testament. It is true that summary treatment of the doctrine of the Angel of Yahweh has brought to light some of the most salient biblical evidence and “pertinent passages” related to the doctrine, but the remaining biblical data will serve to fill in the contour of the doctrine.  

The lack of a biblical theological foundation results in a second problem that impacts other areas of theology. Without a fully developed biblical theology, the doctrine of the Angel of Yahweh is destined to continue as a subject of theological discussion that is often strangely categorized and that ultimately leads to no end. The subject has not yet been fully incorporated within Christological studies, and some systematic theological organizations of the doctrine continue to waver indefinitely among various opinions.  


36 Many writers suggest that later Old Testament passages containing the phrase Angel of Yahweh do not apply to the doctrine of the Angel of Yahweh. Some of these disputed Angel of Yahweh passages include 2 Sam 24; 1 Chron 21; 2 Chron 3:1; Isa 6:1ff.; Jer 31:3; Ezek 1:26ff.; Dan 3:24ff.; Dan 7:9ff.; 8:15-16; 10:5-7; Zech 1:8; 2:1-5; 3:1.  

37 The fact that Wayne Grudem and Millard Erickson, two modern systematic theologians, categorize the doctrine of the Angel of Yahweh under the heading of angels and then conclude that the Angel of Yahweh is not really a created angel reflects the need for a greater biblical theological foundation for this doctrine. Grudem briefly refers to the doctrine in his discussion of the Trinity, and he seems to tentatively hold the Ante-Nicene view. Millard Erickson, on the other hand, treats the doctrine in a section called “difficult terms” and then steers away from either the Ante-Nicene or the Augustinian view. Erickson suggests instead that the “most adequate” explanation is that the Angel of Yahweh is “God himself temporarily visible in a humanlike form.” Erickson gives no further explanation, and he never again refers to it substantially. See Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan 1994), 229, 401; Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1983), 442-443.
that the doctrine of the Angel of Yahweh is fraught with a lack of “consensus”
and “difficulties” may also serve to marginalize the doctrine.\(^{38}\)

Solving this problem of a lack of biblical theological foundation requires
further examination of the biblical data. If it can be demonstrated that a broader
body of biblical theological data exists, the systematic discussions of the doctrine
will be enabled to achieve more precision. As Millard Erickson observed in his
systematic theology, “Biblical theology is the raw material, as it were, with which
systematic theology works.”\(^{39}\) E. W. Hengstenberg, moreover, calls the doctrine
of the Angel of Yahweh the “theological foundation and groundwork” of
Christology.\(^{40}\) If biblical theology, therefore, strengthens its foundation,
systematic discussions of the doctrine will be strengthened as well.

Prospectus

The following chapters proceed with a primary objective of adding to the
foundation of biblical theology related to the Angel of Yahweh by attempting to
go significantly beyond a summary of the doctrine. This endeavor will include an
exegetical investigation of the appearances of the Angel of Yahweh, but it will
also include appearances of the Angel of Yahweh within visions and dreams as
well as propositional statements about the Angel. Since biblical theology
involves the historical circumstances within which revelation occurred,

\(^{38}\) J. C. Motyer, moreover, concludes his discussion of theophany with the following
statement: “Various interpretations [of the Angel of the Lord] have been suggested, including an
appearance of God himself, an appearance of a messenger or one of God’s many angels, and an
appearance of the preincarnate Christ. Each interpretation has difficulties, and there is no
consensus.” “Theophany,” *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology (EDT)*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker,
2001), 1190-91.

\(^{39}\) Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 25.

\(^{40}\) Hengstenberg, *Christology*, 1:116.
moreover, this task also includes an examination of attendant historical circumstances of the appearances of the Angel of Yahweh and the subsequent significance attached to the locations where the Angel appeared. Finally, since biblical theology is broader than Old Testament theology, the following chapters give attention to the New Testament evidence regarding the Angel of Yahweh as well.
E. W. Hengstenberg said, “Wherever appearances of Jehovah are mentioned, we must conceive of them as effected by the mediation of His Angel.”\(^1\) By such a standard all of the theophanies of Genesis would be appearances of the Angel of Yahweh, including those in the ante-diluvian period. However, the record of God’s revelation to man from the time of Adam until the time of Abraham does not always indicate the agent or form of divine revelation.\(^2\) The narrative of man’s fall in Genesis 3, for instance, indicates that Adam and Eve hid from the “presence of the LORD” after hearing the “sound of the LORD God walking in the garden” (3:8-20). Although this may sound like the language of theophany, the conversation that follows between Adam, Eve and

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\(^1\) Ernst Wilhelm Hengstenberg, *Christology of the Old Testament*, 4 vols., trans. Theod. Meyer and James Martin (Reprint of the British edition printed 1872-78; Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1956), 1:119. In spite of this suggestion, Hengstenberg and others inconsistently apply it. Consistent application of this principle would view all of the theophanic revelation of Genesis and other Old Testament books as being mediated by the Angel of Yahweh. James Borland approaches such consistency when he says, “The human-form theophany seems to have been God’s characteristic manner of revealing Himself in the early days of man’s sojourn on the earth.” He thus suggests that theophanic passages earlier in Genesis could be interpreted as “human-form theophanies.” See James A. Borland, *Christ in the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1978; reprint, Ross-Shire, Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 2001), 73. To Borland’s list of passages could be added the theophanies of the “Word of Yahweh” such as Genesis 15 and Jeremiah 1 if identity is to be made between the “Word of Yahweh” and the “Angel of Yahweh.”

\(^2\) The form of the revelation includes the manner and agency by which God revealed himself to man, whereas the content of the theophany is the propositional truth revealed to man (e.g., Abrahamic covenant).
Yahweh contains no indication of what Adam and Eve saw as they talked to God. The same observation may be made of God’s conversation with Cain when He refused his offering (Gen 4:6-7), God’s confrontation of Cain after the murder of Abel (Gen 4:9-16), and God’s interaction with Noah and his sons (Gen 6-9). Nearer to the language of theophany is the account of God’s inspection of Babel, when Moses writes that Yahweh descended to earth to inspect the tower being constructed (Gen 11:5-7). In most of these early cases when God is said to have held conversations with individuals, however, the biblical record focuses primarily on the content of the revelation rather than its form.

In contrast with his portrayal of God’s earliest revelation to man, Moses frequently provides much more detail as he describes divine revelation in the period of the patriarchs. In addition to recording the content of divine revelation, Moses often details the exact form of the revelation (i.e., theophany, vision, dream, etc.). In addition Moses describes the agent of revelation—the Angel of Yahweh. The following chart categorizes each revelation within this time period.

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3 God’s instructions to build the ark and his covenant with Noah and his sons following the flood also does not place an emphasis upon the form of the revelation but upon the content of the revelation itself (Gen 9:8-17).

4 Geerhardus Vos suggests that there is within the book of Genesis, in fact, an observable increase in detail of the form of theophanies. He suggests that whereas the content of the earliest theophanic revelation was of fundamental importance and consequently the primary focus of the narratives, the later theophanic narratives emphasize both the content of the revelation as well as the form. Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; reprint, Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1996), 69. While Vos’s point may be generally true, one would expect more detail in the theophanies to Isaac since there is significant detail given regarding the theophanies to Abraham. This is not the case, however, as less detail is given to the form of Yahweh’s appearances to Isaac (Gen 26:2-6; 26:24-25).
Table 1. Divine Revelation in the Patriarchal Period

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Human Recipient(s)</th>
<th>Name or Title(s) of God revealed</th>
<th>Type of Revelation</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gen 12:1-3 (Acts 7:2-4)</td>
<td>Abram</td>
<td>Yahweh (God of glory)</td>
<td>Visible/Audible theophany</td>
<td>Ur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen 12:6-8</td>
<td>Abram</td>
<td>Yahweh</td>
<td>Visible/Audible theophany</td>
<td>Shechem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen 13:14-17</td>
<td>Abram</td>
<td>Yahweh</td>
<td>Audible theophany</td>
<td>Near Bethel and Ai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen 15</td>
<td>Abram</td>
<td>Yahweh, Word of Yahweh</td>
<td>Theophanic Vision/Dream</td>
<td>Hebron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen 16:7-14</td>
<td>Hagar</td>
<td>Yahweh, Elohim, Angel of Yahweh</td>
<td>Visible/Audible theophany</td>
<td>Beer-Lahai-roi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen 17:1-22</td>
<td>Abram</td>
<td>Yahweh, Elohim, El Shaddai</td>
<td>Visible/Audible theophany</td>
<td>Hebron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen 18:19</td>
<td>Abraham, Sarah, Lot?</td>
<td>Yahweh, Adonai</td>
<td>Visible/Audible theophany</td>
<td>Hebron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen 20:3-7</td>
<td>Abimelech</td>
<td>Elohim</td>
<td>Theophanic Dream</td>
<td>Gerar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen 21:12-13</td>
<td>Abraham</td>
<td>Elohim</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Beersheba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen 21:17-18</td>
<td>Hagar, Ishmael</td>
<td>Elohim, Angel of Elohim</td>
<td>Audible/Visible?</td>
<td>Wilderness of Beersheba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen 22:1-2</td>
<td>Abraham</td>
<td>Elohim</td>
<td>Audible</td>
<td>Land of the Philistines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen 25:22-23</td>
<td>Rebekah</td>
<td>Yahweh</td>
<td>Audible</td>
<td>Beer-Lahai-roi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen 26:1-6</td>
<td>Isaac</td>
<td>Yahweh</td>
<td>Visible/Audible</td>
<td>Gerar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen 26:24</td>
<td>Isaac</td>
<td>Yahweh, Elohim</td>
<td>Visible/Audible</td>
<td>Beersheba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen 28:11-22</td>
<td>Jacob</td>
<td>Yahweh, Elohim</td>
<td>Dream</td>
<td>Luz/Bethel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen 31:3-13</td>
<td>Jacob</td>
<td>Yahweh, El Angel of Elohim</td>
<td>Visible/Audible Dream</td>
<td>Haran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen 31:24</td>
<td>Laban</td>
<td>Elohim</td>
<td>Audible Dream</td>
<td>Hills of Gilead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen 32:24-30</td>
<td>Jacob</td>
<td>Elohim</td>
<td>Visible/Audible/Tactile</td>
<td>Jabbok ford</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen 35:1</td>
<td>Jacob</td>
<td>Elohim</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Shechem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen 35:9-13</td>
<td>Jacob</td>
<td>Elohim, El Shaddai</td>
<td>Visible/Audible</td>
<td>Bethel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen 37:5-8</td>
<td>Joseph</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Dream</td>
<td>Canaan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen 37:9-11</td>
<td>Joseph</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Dream</td>
<td>Canaan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen 40:5-19</td>
<td>Cupbearer/Baker</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Dream</td>
<td>Egypt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen 41:1-32</td>
<td>Pharoah</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Dream</td>
<td>Egypt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen 46:1-4</td>
<td>Jacob</td>
<td>El, Elohim</td>
<td>Theophanic night visions</td>
<td>Beersheba</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Angel of Yahweh appears to Hagar (Genesis 16:7-14)

The first appearance of the designation Angel of Yahweh (משלייה יָהֵה) in Scripture is found in the context of Hagar’s flight from Abram’s wife Sarai.⁵

Hagar’s open disrespect for Sarai after Hagar conceived Abram’s child evoked Sarai’s anger, and after Sarai dealt harshly with her, Hagar ran away from Canaan, where they were living (Gen 16:7). Finding her southwest of Canaan in the wilderness on the way to Shur, the Angel of Yahweh finds Hagar by a spring of water (Gen 16:7).⁶ As he speaks to Hagar, the Angel of Yahweh reveals his

⁵ In Genesis the word מַלְאָךְ refers to angelic messengers (Gen 19:1, 15; 28:12; 32:1-2 [MT]), human messengers (Gen 32:3, 7), and the Angel of Yahweh (Gen 16:7,9,10,11; 21:17; 22:11, 15; 24:7, 40; 31:11; 48:16). The term מַלְאָךְ occurs 213 times throughout the Old Testament, and it is commonly translated “angel,” “messenger,” or “ambassador.” It is roughly the equivalent of the term ἀγγέλος as it is used in the Septuagint and the New Testament. The NAU also translates מַלְאָך as “envoy” (Ezek 17:15). The word angel in the English language is primarily understood as a spirit being belonging to a class of spirit beings created by God with high intelligence and that are immaterial in nature. In terms of biblical usage, the most common idea associated with the term מַלְאָך is a person who is sent to communicate a message on behalf of a superior. The “messengers” (מַלְאָכִים) that Jacob sent to Esau upon Jacob’s return from Haran had a message for Esau (Gen 32:3; see also Num 20:14; 22:5; 24:12; Deut 2:26ff.; Jdg 6:35; 7:24; 9:31; 1 Sam 6:21; 11:3). The word מַלְאָך, however, may also refer to an “angel,” i.e., a spiritual being created by God (e.g., 1 Kgs 13:18; Job 4:18; Psa 78:49; 91:11; 103:20; 104:4; 148:2). Nevertheless the usage of the Hebrew term מַלְאָך has a breadth of meaning that is not captured in English by either the word messenger or angel. Andrew Bowling confirms this when he says, “‘Messenger’ is an inadequate term for the range of tasks carried out by the OT mal’ak.” Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, R. Laird Harris, ed. Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 464. Some instances of the word מַלְאָך in the Old Testament clearly do not denote nor imply any communication from the sender of the מַלְאָך. For instance, מַלְאָך is the term used to describe the spies that Israel sent to Jericho (Jos 6:17,25) as well as the men sent by Joshua to find the items that Achan had stolen (Jos 7:22). The men who were sent to spy on David at the house of his daughter Michal to take his life in the morning were likewise called מַלְאָכִים (1 Sam 19:11). The writer of Samuel also uses the word to describe the men that Hiram sent to David with supplies for building (2 Sam 5:11). Hiram’s men were not sent with a message for David but rather to build him a house (1 Chron 14:1). Such cases illustrate that the word מַלְאָך does not always imply a message. It rather denotes an agent, or one who acts in behalf of or represents another person.

⁶ The proper English translation of the phrase מַלְאָך יָהֵה is “the Angel of Yahweh,” not “an angel of Yahweh.” William Graham MacDonald argues that the Hebrew phrase מַלְאָך יָהֵה may be translated either way. William G. MacDonald, “Christology and ‘the Angel of the Lord,’” Current Issues in Biblical and Patristic Interpretation, Gerald F. Hawthorne, ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 330. Geerhardus Vos observes, however, such a translation is impossible. He aptly observes, “The Hebrew has a way of saying ‘an Angel of Jehovah’. All that is necessary is to insert the preposition lamed between Angel and Jehovah: ‘an Angel to Jehovah’. If the
intimate knowledge of her, calling her by name and identifying her mistress. He asks her, “Hagar, Sarai’s maid, where have you come from and where are you going?” (Gen 16:8a). After Hagar admits she is fleeing from Sarai, the Angel of Yahweh commands her to return and submit herself to Sarai’s authority (Gen 16:9b). As the narrative continues, moreover, the Angel of Yahweh demonstrates that he knows much more about her than just her temporal circumstances.

In addition to his knowledge of her relationship with Sarai, the Angel of Yahweh prophesies concerning her future. He promises to give her innumerable descendants: “I will greatly multiply your descendants so that they will be too many to count” (Gen 16:10). He also indicates that she has conceived a child and that the child she is carrying is a boy. The boy is to be named Ishmael, meaning “God has heard,” because God had heard her affliction (Gen 16:11). In addition, the Angel of Yahweh describes Ishmael’s character and future as a nomad who will oppose even his own brothers (Gen 16:12).

intention had been to keep God and the creature apart, those interested in this would never have allowed the Angel to speak like Jehovah, for this would have obscured the very fact desired to bring out.” Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1975), 73.


8 This is a remarkable statement because the Angel of Yahweh does not use the prophetic formula as he does in Genesis 22:16.

9 At the end of Genesis 16:12 the Hebrew phrase יְשַׁעַר הָגָר לְךָ לְךָ לְךָ לְךָ לְךָ לְךָ לְךָ לְךָ לְךָ לְךָ לְךָ לְךָ לְךָ לְךָ לְךָ לְךָ לְךָ לְךָ לְךָ לְךָ לְךָ לְךָ לְךָ L

8 This is a remarkable statement because the Angel of Yahweh does not use the prophetic formula as he does in Genesis 22:16.

9 At the end of Genesis 16:12 the Hebrew phrase יְשַׁעַר הָגָר L does not indicate Ishmael’s close proximity to his brothers but rather his antagonism toward them (v.12b). Victor Hamilton cites Exodus 20:3 and Deuteronomy 21:16 as occurrences of similar phrase where the sense is personal opposition rather than location. The Angel’s final prophecy regarding Ishmael thus concludes with a statement about Ishmael’s adversarial character as one who will “live in hostility toward all his brothers” (Gen 16:12b, NIV). Victor Hamilton, *Genesis*, 1:455.
Hagar’s first response to these prophecies is to ascribe a name to the Angel of Yahweh. As Moses records the name he writes, “Then she called the name of the LORD who spoke to her, ‘You are a God who sees’” (Gen 16:13). The name itself is remarkable, but so is Moses’ narration. Until this point in the narrative Moses has identified the one appearing to Hagar four times as the Angel of Yahweh (Gen 16:7, 9, 10, 11). By identifying the one appearing as Yahweh, Moses asserts the divine identity of the Angel of Yahweh. In addition, he records Hagar’s name for the one appearing to her as **El Roi** (אֵל רוֹי), “the God who sees” (Gen 16:13).

The name **El**, which means “Mighty One” (אֵל), is the oldest name for God in Scripture, and it is frequently translated “God” in the Old Testament.\(^\text{10}\) The latter portion of the name, in addition, is the Hebrew noun **yair** (יָרֵי), meaning “seeing.”\(^\text{11}\) Hagar thus calls the one speaking to her the “Mighty One who sees.”

Her explanation for the name follows: “Have I also here seen Him who sees me?” (Gen 16:13, NKJ).\(^\text{12}\) Another translation of this sentence is offered by Victor

\(^\text{10}\) G. F. Oehler says that the ancient origin of the name **El** (אֵל) is evident from its incorporation into the names of men in the earliest genealogies in Scripture (e.g., Abel). *Theology of the Old Testament*, ed. George E. Day (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1873; reprint, Minneapolis: Klock and Klock, 1973), 87.

\(^\text{11}\) According to *BDB*, the phrase **yair** (יָרֵי) emphasizes the fact that God sees, not that he is seen. Hagar’s statement seems to suggest either possibility. The name of the location emphasizes that God sees, however, not that Hagar has seen him. Francis Brown, *S.R. Driver and Charles A. Briggs, The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon (BDB)* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1906; reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2000), 909.

\(^\text{12}\) An alternative rendering suggests another reason for Hagar’s surprise, “Have I even remained alive here after seeing Him?” (Gen 16:13, NAU). Her surprise that she is still alive after seeing God harmonizes well with the response of others who were recipients of theophany (e.g., Jdg 6:22-23; 13:22). However, the translation “remained alive” does not find a substantial basis in the Hebrew text. E. W. Hengstenberg’s translation is closer: “Do I now still see after my seeing?” He says of this translation, “’Do I see’ is equivalent to, ’Do I live,’ because death threatened, as it were to enter through the eyes.” He also says, “Hagar must have been convinced that she had seen God without the mediation of a created angel; for, otherwise, she could not have wondered that her life was preserved. Man, entangled by the visible world, is terrified when he comes in
Hamilton: “Have I really seen the back of him who sees me?” His translation is based on the use of יָרֵאָ as a substantive, which he admits is rare. However, the same form is found in another theophanic context, when Moses is permitted a sight of God’s “back” (y�ָרֵאָ) at Sinai (Ex 33:23). The other possibility is that the word יָרֵאָ is a preposition, in which case the translation would be, “Have I really looked upon the one who sees me?” In either case Hagar is surprised to see God and that he sees her.

The conclusion of the narrative records the commemorative name for the location of this theophany as Beer-Lahai-Roi, which is “the well of the one who lives and sees me.” Differing from El Roi (אל רֶוִי), the commemorative name retains the reference to divine seeing (רֶוִי) while adding the “Living One” (יָשׁוֹן) and omitting the name El (אל). His nature as the “Living One” does not refer simply to his possession of life but his nature as the God who lives in contrast to contact with the invisible world, even with angels. (Compare Dan viii. 17, 18; Luke ii.9). But this terror rises to fear of death only when a man comes in contact with the Lord Himself.”

Hengstenberg, Christology, 1:117.

13 Hamilton, Genesis, 1:455.

14 The thought of God’s “back” is suggested by Exodus 33:23, where his “back” is contrasted with his “face.” Later in Genesis Jacob names the place at the Jabbok ford “Peniel,” which means, “face of God.” What Hagar saw is not clear, but it is clear that she saw someone and named him El Roi. Whether she saw a human form like Abraham or Jacob is not evident. James A. Borland classifies this passage as one in which human form is not indicated. James A. Borland, Christ in the OT, 80.

15 Hamilton, Genesis, 1:457.

16 In Genesis and the Old Testament, places are named for the significance of what happened or an appearance of God. The naming of this well in itself points to this passage as a theophany. Names are given to locations on the basis of a significant event that took place there. This is a common feature of theophanic revelation. Altars and locations are given names when God appears. Abraham named Mount Moriah, where the Angel of Yahweh spoke to him, “Yahweh provides,” and Jacob named Luz, where God appeared to him in a dream, “the house of God.” Here too, though Hagar herself may have not given the name, the place is given a name to commemorate what happened here.
Thus the name reveals God’s power, his identity as the true and living God, and his omniscience as the one who sees.¹⁸

A number of conclusions emerge from this first narrative in which the Angel of Yahweh appears. First, the Angel of Yahweh is explicitly identified as God by Hagar herself as the recipient of the theophany and by Moses as the narrator.¹⁹ Hagar calls him El-Roi, the “God who sees me,” and Moses refers to him as Yahweh (Gen 16:13). One may infer his deity as well from the memorial name given to the location: Beer-Lahai-Roi, “the well of the one who lives and

¹⁷ Oehler says that this name does not have to do with God’s “powers of physical life” but rather his identity as the “Living God” in contrast to the “gods of the heathen” which do not live at all or interact with mankind. *Theology of the Old Testament*, 101. The term living God is used only once in the Pentateuch in Deuteronomy 5:26, but it is used numerous times later in Scripture (Deut 5:26; Jos 3:10; 1 Sam 17:26, 36; 2 Ki 19:4, 16; Ps 42:2; 84:2; Isa 37:4, 17; Jer 10:10; 23:36; Dan 6:20, 26; Hos 1:10; Matt 16:16; 26:63; Acts 14:15; Rom 9:26; 2 Co 3:3; 6:16; 1 Tim 3:15; 4:10; Heb 3:12; 9:14; 10:31; 12:22; Rev 7:2). God obviously may be seen as the source of life in the account of creation, but this is the earliest reference to him where he is called the “Living One.” Hamilton observes regarding the latter portion of the commemorative name,

The name focuses on the fact that God showed himself to her. She does not call it ‘the well belonging to the One whom I have seen.’ Hagar is the object, not the subject. In effect, then, Beer-Lahai-Roi focuses on the graciousness of the God who manifested himself to a pregnant woman in the wilderness, rather than on any special status accorded to Hagar. Hamilton, 1:457.

¹⁸ The fact that Isaac began living at Beer-Lahai-Roi over fifty years later is evidence of the importance ascribed to this location (Gen 24:62; 25:11).

¹⁹ An important observation that may be made at this point is that the term משליח does not denote nature. This fact may be inferred from fact that the Angel of Yahweh is God, but it also becomes evident by contrasting the occurrences of the term in Genesis 32. On his return from Haran Jacob meets the “messengers” or “angels” of God משליחים (Gen 32:1, Gen 32:2, MT). Jacob’s response to the angels and his naming of the place “Mahanaim” or “two camps” indicates that these are created, finite spirits sent from God, apparently sent for the purpose of communicating God’s protection of him and his family. However, immediately following this incident Jacob sends “messengers” משליחים ahead of him with a message for Esau (Gen 32:4, MT; Gen 32:3 NAU). The difference in nature between the two groups of “messengers” is indicated not by the term משליח but rather by the genitive משליח in context. However, much later in the Old Testament the very same phrase messengers of God refers to human messengers (2 Chron 36:15, 16).
sees me.” Beer-Lahai-Roi is one of several locations in Genesis given a name after God appeared.

Another indication of the Angel of Yahweh’s deity is his power to give and multiply life. Speaking in first person, the Angel of Yahweh promises Hagar, “I will greatly multiply your descendants” (Gen 16:10, NAU). Such a promise is appropriate only for God himself to make, as other passages in Genesis demonstrate (Gen 13:16; 17:2; 20; 22:17; Gen 26:4, 24). In the following theophany of Genesis 17, in fact, God Almighty appears to Abraham and gives him a promise in almost exactly the same words. He says, “As for Ishmael, I have heard you; behold, I will bless him, and will make him fruitful and will multiply him exceedingly” (v. 20a).

In addition to the Angel of Yahweh’s deity, this narrative also reveals his connection to the covenant. Although the immediate context does not directly mention the Abrahamic covenant, it is clear within the broader context of Genesis that the reason for the Angel’s appearance to Hagar is God’s covenant with Abraham (Gen 21:13; Gen 12:2; 15:4-5). Hagar had conceived Abram’s child, and God had already promised to bless Abram’s descendants. Thus the

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21 According to Genesis 12 and 15 God informed Abram that he was going to bless him with innumerable physical descendants (Gen 15:4-5; Gen 12:2). However, Abram did not fully know or believe God’s plan for Sarai’s involvement when he chose to marry Hagar. In spite of this poor choice, God informs Abram later. Abram learned that Ishmael too was included in the promise that had been revealed to him in Genesis 15:5 (Gen 17:15-21). That is the implication of the Angel of Yahweh’s promise to Hagar, “I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude” (Gen 16:10, KJV). The Angel of Yahweh thus confirms the promise that God had made to Abram because she is now the bearer of Abram’s seed (Gen 15). The repetition and expansion of this promise is made to Abraham himself in Genesis 17:20, “And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation.”
Angel of Yahweh’s appearance to Hagar evidences Yahweh’s concern for his promises.

A final observation about the Angel of Yahweh in Genesis 16 is his function as prophet. Later in the Old Testament, human prophets delivered messages from God to his people. In Genesis the Angel of Yahweh performs this function, however, and in so doing he sets a pattern for the ministry of later prophets.

*Yahweh appears to Abraham and Sarah (Genesis 18-19)*

Although the designation *Angel of Yahweh* is not mentioned again until Genesis 22, the theophany of Genesis 18-19 bears a resemblance to other appearances of the Angel of Yahweh. As Yahweh appears to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre, Abraham is sitting at his tent door in the heat of the day (v. 1). Abraham looks up, and he sees three “men” (יְשֵׁתִים) standing opposite him (vv. 1-

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22 Abraham was a prophet according to Genesis 20:7. Isaac and Jacob may have been “prophets” as well according to Psalm 109:9-15. God, however, sent the Angel of Yahweh to prophesy to these prophets.

23 Meredith Kline aptly identifies the Angel of Yahweh as the “paradigmatic prophet” and the “archetype of the prophets,” and “the original of all the prophet-messengers.” He also argues that the role of the Angel of Yahweh as prophet is clearest later in the Old Testament. “Perhaps the Angel’s identity as a prophet figure—as the divine paradigm prophet of whom the other prophets were human images—comes into its sharpest focus in a series of passages in the Book of Judges where he is depicted as messenger of the covenant engaged in that prophetic function so prominent in the Old Testament, the prosecution of Yahweh’s covenant lawsuit against Israel.” Meredith G. Kline, *Images of the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980; Reprint, Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1999), 75, 78-79.


Rising from his seat, Abraham goes out to meet them, bowing to them and addressing one of them as “my Lord” and calling himself his servant. He insists that they stay for a while and rest (v. 3-5). Abraham then graciously entertains his guests, offering them a place to take shade and wash their feet, as well as a meal (v. 5). Abraham hurriedly prepares them a meal upon their acceptance of his offer (v. 6-8), and when he returns with it, all of them (including Yahweh!) eat (v. 8).

After the meal the guests ask Abraham where Sarah is, and Abraham replies that she is in the tent nearby (v. 9). Yahweh then says to Abraham, “I will surely return to you at this time next year; and behold, Sarah your wife will have a son” (v. 10; Gen 21:1). The revelation of Isaac’s birth is not new to Abraham, as Yahweh had already revealed to Abraham that Isaac would be born, but the detail of the timing is new. Sarah laughs inwardly at the thought that she will bear a child, and Yahweh confronts Abraham for her response:

26 The term פְּרֵיָה, the plural of פְּרֶה, indicates not nature but external form. The same term is applied to the “Angel of Yahweh” as he appeared to Manoah and his wife (Jdg 13:20). James Borland suggests that the term פְּרֶה, had it been used in the place of פְּרֶה, would have indicated humanity. Borland, Christ in the Old Testament, 68. See also R.B. Girdlestone, Synonyms of the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983; reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), 59-69.

27 Gordon Wenham refers to Abraham’s reference to one of them as יֵדָעַת as an “unwitting double entendre.” Gordon Wenham, Word Biblical Commentary: Genesis 16-50 (Dallas: Word, 1994), 46. Of course it is also possible that Abraham knew who had come to his tent. The same exact form occurs in Genesis 15:2 and 15:8, when Abraham obviously does know to whom he is speaking. In Genesis 18 Abraham also refers to himself as the servant of the one that he addressed (דַּבָּר, v.3), but he also extends this humble assessment of himself before all three guests later (דַּבָּר, v.5). Nevertheless, the fact that he called himself the servant of all three likewise does not preclude his acknowledging one above the others.

28 The use of the name Sarah instead of Sarai in this context recalls the theophany of Genesis 17. Yahweh had revealed to Abraham that her name would be changed to Sarah because she would be the mother of many nations (Gen 17:1,17; Gen 18:1; Gen 21:5).

29 The Hebrew phrase פָּרָא פָּדָה is used in Elisha’s promise of a son to the Shunammite who had provided a room for him (2 Kgs 4:16-17). The time of life is the normal time of gestation.
“Why did Sarah laugh, saying, ‘Shall I indeed bear a child, when I am so old?’” (Gen 18:13). This divine confrontation suggests either that Abraham had not communicated the content of the previous theophany to Sarah (Gen 17) or that she had not believed him. Yahweh thus confronts Abraham about Sarah’s unbelief so that Abraham and Sarah will believe God’s promise in relation to his covenant.

Clearly distinguishing Yahweh from the other two “men,” Moses now identifies the one who is speaking as Yahweh. He writes, “And the LORD said to Abraham, “Is anything too difficult for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, at this time next year, and Sarah will have a son” (Gen 18:14). The question in verse 14 implies that Abraham himself doubts the promise of God, and Sarah’s laughter at the thought that she would have a child suggests that she too did not yet believe the promise. A further evidence of her unbelief is her denial that she had laughed, but Yahweh responds to this falsehood by confronting her directly, “No, but you did laugh” (Gen 18:15).

As Yahweh and his angels rise to go toward Sodom, Abraham walks with them on their way. As they walk together, Yahweh speaks first in a divine soliloquy, suggesting to Abraham that one of his purposes in appearing to Abraham is the situation in Sodom where Lot resides. He says,

30 The question “Is anything too difficult for the LORD?” is thus an expression of his reliable character rather than his omnipotence. Layton Talbert has observed, “The point is the absolute trustworthiness of everything God says, not only because He is powerful enough to do it, but also because His internal nature and His immutable character make it unthinkable and impossible for Him not to do it . . . if He has said it.” Emphasis original. Layton Talbert, Not By Chance (Greenville, SC: BJU Press, 2001), 16.

31 Leupold says, “It seems best to assume that this soliloquy of Yahweh was spoken softly yet audibly. It was truly a soliloquy. It was just as certainly intended for Abraham’s ears. Here, certainly, in a most definite sense Abraham is treated as a trusted friend and initiated into the counsels of God.” H.C. Leupold, Exposition of Genesis, Vol. 1 (Columbus, OH: 1942; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1971), 544. Hamilton, on the other hand, says that this is not a soliloquy
The LORD said, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, since Abraham will surely become a great and mighty nation, and in him all the nations of the earth will be blessed? For I have chosen him, so that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that the LORD may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him.” (Gen 18:17-20)

In the latter portion of this soliloquy, Yahweh who speaks refers to Yahweh in third person, saying that Yahweh will bring upon Abraham what he had spoken about him (v. 20).

Yahweh informs him that a cry has come up to heaven concerning the sins of Sodom, and he has come down to inspect the situation (v. 20-21). After the “men” accompanying Yahweh head toward Sodom, Abraham intercedes for Sodom to Yahweh (v. 23).

Abraham speaks to Yahweh in verses 23-33, appealing humbly and persistently that Yahweh will demonstrate his justice by preserving the righteous souls within Sodom. Abraham’s appeal is epitomized by the statement of verse 25, “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” Yahweh responds affirmatively but a statement that took into account Abraham’s response to Yahweh’s judgment. “Later in the narrative Abraham will raise the issue of whether God is always and consistently just. Almost in anticipation of that interrogation, seemingly almost on the defensive, Yahweh informs Abraham not only of Sodom’s state but of his intention to buttress that observation with a fact finding mission. Thus, already Yahweh dilutes some of Abraham’s concerns by letting the patriarch in on the thoroughness of his analysis of the situation at the two cities.” Victor Hamilton, Genesis, 2:20.

32 Some have taken verse 21 as implying divine ignorance: “I will go down now, and see if they have done entirely according to its outcry, which has come to Me; and if not, I will know” (Gen 18:21). John Frame, however, suggests that it is an anthropomorphism which is appropriate to the context. “In the theophanic context of this passage, there are good reasons for taking the text anthropomorphically. When God appears as a man, he has special reason to describe his knowledge in human terms.” John Frame, The Doctrine of God (Philipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2002), 496.

33 The face-to-face nature of Abraham’s intercession with Yahweh for Sodom is indicated by three statements. As the men left, Abraham was “still standing before the LORD” (v. 22), and then “Abraham came near” (v.23). Furthermore, Moses concludes the scene with the statement, “And the LORD went His way, when He had finished speaking to Abraham, and Abraham returned to his place” (v.33, ESV).
to each of Abraham’s requests, conceding ultimately that he will not destroy Sodom if even ten righteous people are found within it (v. 32). Once Abraham finishes his intercession, Abraham returns to his tent, and Yahweh departs for Sodom (Gen 18:33; see v. 21).

The events recorded in Genesis 19:1-16 demonstrate Sodom’s utter corruption and wickedness, and the angels consequently inform Lot that Yahweh sent them to destroy the city (Gen 19:13). In the morning the angels bring Lot and his family to the limits of the city, and one of them instructs Lot to escape for his life by fleeing to the mountains. Objecting to this command, Lot responds, “O no, my lords!”  He asks to go to the city of Zoar instead, and the one he is speaking to grants his request. Because of this request, the city of Zoar remarkably escapes the judgment that would have fallen upon it (vv. 21-22a). Yahweh appears in the next scene as he brings judgment upon the cities.

Moses writes, “Then the LORD rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven” (Gen 19:24). The unusual double use of the Divine name “the LORD rained . . . from the LORD” may emphasize that God himself sends the judgment. However, the double use may

34 The Hebrew phrase אליֲבַי לְדוֹאָא is translated “Oh no, my lords!” (ESV, NAU), “No, Lord!” (NIV, margin), and “Oh not so, my Lord!” (KJV). The context itself, combined with the pointing of the Hebrew word אליֲבַי in verse 18, makes the translation difficult. It is unclear whether Yahweh has rejoined his angels at this point, in part because of the sparing of Zoar at Lot’s request. Gordon Wenham comments, “Whether the narrative is suggesting that the LORD has now rejoined the angels outside the city, or whether Lot is just being very polite is obscure. Could he really know who he was talking to in the gloom before sunrise? The mystery is probably deliberate.” Gordon Wenham, *Word Biblical Commentary: Genesis 16-50*, (Dallas: Word, 1994), 59.

35 It is not clear whether the messengers had the authority to spare the city, or whether sparing the city is the prerogative of Yahweh alone. It is possible that Yahweh has joined the messengers, and that he himself is answering Lot’s request.

36 Gordon Wenham argues, “The narrator stresses that ‘it was from the LORD.’” *Genesis 16-50*, 59.
also indicate two persons named Yahweh. The very fact that Yahweh had said to Abraham that he would go down to Sodom implies his position on earth as he calls down judgment upon Sodom.

The following observations suggest that the person called Yahweh in Genesis 18-19 is the Angel of Yahweh. The first is the form of Yahweh’s appearance as a man (Gen 18:2). When Yahweh appears to Abraham at his tent, he looks like any other traveler and exhibits the characteristics of a man. He has his feet washed (Gen 18:4-5), eats Abraham’s food (Gen 18:8), and receives the hospitality of Abraham and Sarah (Gen 18:9-15). Later in Scripture the Angel of Yahweh appears in human form, and he is explicitly called the Angel of Yahweh and Yahweh in the context (Jdg 6:11ff.; Jdg 13:1ff.).

A second indication that Yahweh who appears to Abraham is the Angel of Yahweh is his ministry as prophet. In this respect the parallels between this appearance and the Angel of Yahweh’s appearance to Hagar are remarkable. On both occasions Yahweh appears and prophesies regarding the birth of a son. Both sons are also directly associated with the covenant God made with Abraham. In addition, Yahweh is not strictly informing Abraham and Sarah but confronting them about their unbelief. Yahweh confronts Abraham about Sarah’s unbelief in particular about promise of the child and calls Sarah to believe in the

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37 A distinction between persons both named Yahweh is implied in Yahweh’s statement about the Angel of the Covenant in Exodus 23, “My name is in Him” (Ex 23:21). Justin Martyr suggested that this passage proves a distinction between the persons of the Godhead as well as their united will in the destruction of the city. Dialogue with Trypho 54. H.C. Leupold asserts that failing to see an implication of the Trinity in this passage is “devaluing the statement of the text.” Exposition of Genesis, 1:570.

38 James Borland’s distinction between the terms ἄν(ή)ρ and ἄν(ή)ρ bears upon this passage as well as others where Yahweh appears in the form of a man. He writes, “ἄν(ή)ρ (‘ish) is used in this manner in Daniel 9:21, 10:5; 12:6-7; and Zechariah 1:8, where the word is applied to beings who appear to be human, yet who are not necessarily partakers of human nature.” Emphasis original. Borland, Christ in the Old Testament, 70.
promise of the covenant that he made to Abraham (Gen 18:12-15). Later in the chapter, Yahweh also prophesies to Abraham regarding the destruction of Sodom (Gen 18:17-21).

A third indication that the one who appears here is the Angel of Yahweh is his third-person reference to Yahweh in Genesis 18:19 and the narrator’s double use of the Divine name in Genesis 19:24. The latter passage in particular demonstrates a distinction between persons named Yahweh, and in the context of Genesis the Angel of Yahweh is the most logical explanation for two divine persons named Yahweh.

The preceding observations lead toward the conclusion that the one appearing to Abraham and bringing destruction on Sodom is indeed the Angel of Yahweh. If this conclusion is correct, two additional observations may be made about the Angel of Yahweh. First, the Angel of Yahweh receives Abraham’s request as God. Abraham intercedes with him for Sodom (Gen 18:22), and he asks that he will spare the righteous within the city (Gen 18:25). His authority to answer Abraham’s request is evident each time as he repeatedly promises not destroy the city if he found enough righteous within it.

A second conclusion regarding the Angel of Yahweh is that he functions as Judge. Abraham called him the “Judge of all the earth,” and he specifically

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39 Hilary of Poitiers said that the person of the Godhead appearing in this passage may be identified by means of his function. The One acting in judgment upon these cities, he argued, must be the Son of God, because judgment is properly the function of the Son alone. Hilary argued that “the Father has given all judgment to the Son” (John 5:22, 27, emphasis added) and that this function is exclusively his in the Old Testament as well as the New Testament. De Trinitate 4.25-29. Other passages that point to Christ’s unique function as judge include Acts 10:42 and 17:31. Hilary particularly emphasized that Christ was acting in the judgment of Sodom, but Abraham’s question in Genesis 18 also directly points to this function. Yahweh who appeared to him was the “Judge of all the earth” (Gen 18:25). Genesis 18:17 says, “And the LORD said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?” In the context what Yahweh is about to do is to personally inspect the cities and judge them accordingly.
says that he came to observe Sodom directly (Gen 18:17-21). Although the scene in Sodom depicts two angels in the first part of the chapter (19:1-16), Genesis 19:24 suggests that the Angel of Yahweh is calling down fire and brimstone from Yahweh in heaven (Gen 19:24). The Angel of Yahweh had thus seen the evidence in Sodom and began to execute his judgment.

The Angel of God appears to Hagar and Ishmael (Genesis 21:14-21)

The next appearance of the Angel of Yahweh takes place in Genesis 21, when he comes to Hagar in the wilderness of Beersheba after she and Ishmael were sent away by Abraham (Gen 21:14). After Ishmael mistreats Isaac on the day he is weaned, Sarah insists that Hagar and Ishmael be sent away. Abraham complies with this request, sending them away with water and food (Gen 21:14). As Hagar and Ishmael wander in the wilderness of Beersheba, they soon use up the water and food. The situation becomes so desperate that Hagar lays Ishmael down under a bush to die with a prayer: “Let me not see the death of the child” (Gen 21:16). Removing herself some distance away from the child, Hagar lifts up her voice and weeps (21:16).

Even though the narrative says that it is Hagar who lifts up her voice and cries, Moses indicates that God hears the boy Ishmael (Gen 21:17). God’s hearing of Ishmael’s cry is thus an affirmation of the truth expressed in Ishmael’s name: “God has heard.”  The Angel of Yahweh had given Hagar the name Ishmael for her son some fifteen years earlier, and Abraham named the child in obedience to the Angel’s direction (Gen 16:11, 15-16). However, on that occasion the Angel of

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A difference between this theophany and the theophany of Genesis 16 is that Hagar saw the Angel of Yahweh in Genesis 16, but she did not see him in Genesis 21. Rather Hagar hears him speak “from heaven” (Gen 21:17). This lack of any reference to seeing God underscores the emphasis in the narrative on God’s hearing. The only reference to what Hagar sees in the passage is when God opens her eyes to see the well of water (v.19).
Yahweh had commanded her to name the child Ishmael because God had heard her affliction (Gen 16:11). On this occasion Moses writes that God hears the child. Following the indication that God hears Ishmael, the Angel of God (i.e., Angel of Yahweh) speaks to Hagar from heaven, “Do not fear, for God has heard the voice of the lad where he is” (Gen 21:17). The Angel’s command to not fear and his assurance that he has heard the voice of the boy thus quell Hagar’s fear that Ishmael will die. He also commands Hagar to lift up Ishmael and hold him, because he will make Ishmael a great nation (v. 18). Reminiscent of the Angel of Yahweh’s promise to Hagar to multiply her seed exceedingly (Gen 16:10), the Angel of God makes this promise in first-person language. Following this promise God opens Hagar’s eyes and points her to a well of water, where she fills her vessel and gives Ishmael to drink so that his life is sustained.

This narrative emphasizes and develops the theology of the Angel of Yahweh in several ways. First, the Angel’s prophetic function is seen here as he

41 In the Scriptures Yahweh sometimes speaks from heaven to show his transcendence. Exodus 20:22 says, “Thus thou shalt say unto the children of Israel, Ye have seen that I have talked with you from heaven” (KJV). He then issues a prohibition of idolatry immediately following this reminder that he spoke from heaven, “Ye shall not make with me gods of silver, neither shall ye make unto you gods of gold” (Ex 20:22-23, KJV). Victor Hamilton argues that the purpose of the Angel’s speaking from heaven is to contrast the intimacy that God had had with Abraham but that he now withholds from Hagar. “God hears, but the messenger of God speaks, and from heaven at that. šāmayim [heaven] is God’s abode, which he shares with his messenger. Hagar does not have as intimate a revelation from God as does Abraham. God speaks with Abraham, but the messenger from heaven speaks with Hagar.” Hamilton Genesis, 2:84. This argument, however, breaks down in the light of the next chapter as the Angel of Yahweh speaks from heaven to Abraham and affirms the covenant with a Divine oath.

42 While Abraham was certainly aware of this promise for Ishmael’s descendants (Gen 17:20), it is not stated that Hagar was aware of it. The force of God’s argument that motivated Hagar to take up Ishmael from the place where she had left him is in the promise that he had given her. Not only was he going to multiply his descendants, but he had even greater plans, “Up! Lift up the boy, and hold him fast with your hand, for I will make him into a great nation” (Gen 21:18, ESV). Wenham notes, “For Hagar, this last promise may have been a fresh revelation, for although such an assurance has twice been given to Abraham, this is the first time it is given to Hagar.” Genesis 16-50, 87.
reveals God’s concern for Hagar and Ishmael. He first says to Hagar that God has heard the voice of the lad (Gen 21:17). He thus speaks on behalf of another divine person. In addition the Angel promises to make Ishmael a great nation (Gen 21:18). Such predictions are a distinctive element of biblical prophecy.

Another emphasis within this passage is the Angel’s identity as God. Although he speaks in third person of God in verse 17, the Angel of God speaks in first person when he promises to make great nation of Ishmael (Gen 21:18). This promise is almost an exact repetition of what God Almighty said to Abraham in a previous theophany (Gen 17:1-22; Gen 12:2; 46:3). Yahweh says to Abraham concerning Ishmael,

As for Ishmael, I have heard you; behold, I will bless him, and will make him fruitful and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall become the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. (Gen 17:20)

Thus what God Almighty had said in first person to Abraham, the Angel of God now says in first person to Hagar. This fact certainly points to the identity of the Angel of God as God Almighty, but it also directly links the titles Angel of Yahweh and Angel of God. In Genesis 17:20 Yahweh says that he would multiply Ishmael’s seed exceedingly, which is the exact promise of Genesis 16:10 made by the Angel of Yahweh to Hagar. The Angel of God is thus Yahweh, the Angel of Yahweh, and God Almighty.  

43 One suggestion for the difference in the titles is the difference in posture God takes toward her as she and her son have left Abraham’s household. C. F. Keil comments, “It was Elohim, not Jehovah, who heard the voice of the boy, and appeared as the angel of Elohim, not of Jehovah (as in ch. 16:7), because, when Ishmael and Hagar had been dismissed from Abraham’s house, they were removed from the superintendence and care of the covenant God to the guidance and providence of God the ruler of nations.” C. F. Keil & Franz Delitzsch, Commentary on the Old Testament: The Pentateuch, trans. James Martin (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1866; reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2001), 157. Keil’s explanation corresponds to G. F. Oehler’s distinction between Yahweh and Elohim. “In general, all universally cosmical action of God, going out toward the heathen as well as toward Israel in the preservation of the world, is traced to El and Elohim; to Jehovah, on the other hand, is traced every divine act which is connected with the
In addition to the Angel of Yahweh’s identity as God and his function as prophet, this passage also emphasizes his power. The Angel’s personal promise to make Ishmael a great nation (Gen 21:18) is directly parallel with the promise Yahweh gave to Abraham before he entered the Promised Land (Gen 12:2) and Jacob as he was leaving it for Egypt (Gen 46:3; see also Ex 32:10). This promise to make Ishmael a great nation indicates power not only to produce life but also to build a nation. Victor Hamilton notes that while the word *people* indicates “centripetal unity and cohesiveness,” the word *nation* is “linked with government and territory.”

By this promise, therefore, the Angel of Yahweh shows his capability as a builder of nations, possessing the same power as God. The clear implication for the parallel passages, in addition, is that the promises made to Abraham and Jacob were made by the Angel of Yahweh, though he is not mentioned explicitly in Genesis 12:2 or Genesis 46:3.

**The Angel of Yahweh appears to Abraham and Isaac (Genesis 22:1-18)**

Over a decade passed between the appearance of the Angel of Yahweh to Hagar and Ishmael in the wilderness of Beersheba and his appearance to Abraham and Isaac on Mount Moriah. Ishmael’s departure had left Isaac as the only heir in Abraham’s household, and Yahweh tests Abraham by commanding him to offer Isaac as a burnt offering (Gen 22:2). After journeying for several days to the mountains of Moriah, Abraham takes Isaac up to the mountain and builds

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44 *Genesis*, 1:372.
an altar (v. 9). After binding Isaac and laying him on the altar, Abraham raises the knife to kill his son in obedience to God. At the very moment that Abraham raises the knife, the Angel of Yahweh calls his name twice from heaven, stopping the sacrifice (Gen 22:11). The Angel of Yahweh says to him, “Now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me” (Gen 22:12). Although the Angel speaks of God in the third person, he also claims that Abraham had not withheld his son from him (Gen 22:12). Thus he claims that Abraham was sacrificing Isaac to him!

Noticing a ram caught in a thicket behind him, Abraham sacrifices it in the place of his son (Gen 22:13-14). Once the sacrifice is offered, furthermore, he memorializes the location by calling it “Jehovah-Jireh” (יהוה-יהור). Moses gives the explanation for the name in the latter portion of the verse: “On the mountain where Jehovah appears.” What is unusual about the explanation is that the verb in the latter part of the verse is passive (יהוה-יהור), whereas the name Abraham

45 Vos says, “Altars were frequently built in places of theophany, indicating a consciousness that the place had in some sense become the seat of God’s presence. The patriarchs returned to these places, to call there upon the name of God. [Gen. 13:4; 35:1-7].” Geerhardus Vos, Biblical Theology, 70. As Vos later notes, places existed where an altar was built and no theophany was recorded, and places existed where a theophany occurred and no record exists of an altar built. Places where a theophany is recorded and an altar is built include Shechem (Gen 12:7), Beersheba (Gen 26:23-25), and Bethel (Gen 35:7). The only altar mentioned previous to this period in Scripture was Noah’s, which he built after the flood (Gen 8:20). However, the altar became a common feature of worship during the patriarchal period (Gen 12:7, 8; 13:18; 22:9; 26:25; 33:20; 35:7).

46 C. F. Keil’s translation. Keil says that translating the latter part of the verse with the word provide is incorrect because the verb יָאָס is a Niphal. He argues, “The name יָאָס, composed of the Hophal partic. of יָאָס and the divine name יָיִים, an abbreviation of ויָיָה (lit., “the shown of Jehovah,” equivalent to the manifestation of Jehovah), is no doubt used proleptically in v.2, and given to the mountain upon which the sacrifice was to be made, with direct reference to this event and the appearance of Jehovah to Abraham there. This is confirmed by v.14, where the name is connected with the event, and explained in the fuller expression Jehovah-jireh. On the ground of this passage the mountain upon which Solomon built the temple is called יָאָס with reference to the appearance of the angel of the Lord to David on that mountain at the threshingfloor of Araunah (2 Sam 24:16, 17), the old name being revived by this appearance.” C. F. Keil & Franz Delitzsch, Pentateuch, 160.
gave in the former part is active (רָאָה). Collating the two statements, the sense is: “Yahweh will see in the mountain where Yahweh appears.” In other words, Yahweh will provide where Yahweh lets himself be seen.

Following Abraham’s sacrifice of the ram, the Angel of Yahweh speaks again from heaven, revealing an oath Yahweh has taken because of Abraham’s obedience (Gen 22:15). He says to Abraham,

   By Myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son, indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed 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. (Gen 22:16-18)

The Angel of Yahweh announces the oath but credits it to another divine person named Yahweh when he says, “declares the LORD” (רָאָה). Thus the divine person taking the oath is distinct from the Angel who announces it.

The content of the divine oath amplifies and expands on promises Yahweh had made previously to Abraham. Reaffirming his initial promises to Abraham, Yahweh promises to bless him greatly and multiply his seed (Gen 22:17; Gen 16:10; 17:2). A new promise is that Abraham’s seed would possess the gate of their enemies, which indicates both dominion over their enemies as well as possession of their lands (Gen 22:18). Finally, Yahweh promises to bless all the

47 Victor Hamilton comments, “The use of the active and passive of ra’a may be deliberate, and if so, we should be hesitant about excising it. God not only sees and provides for the needs of His servants but also shows himself to his servants. Elohim is no anonymous philanthropist.” Victor Hamilton, NICOT: The Book of Genesis, Vol. 2, 114-115.

48 This phrase is unique in Genesis and appears only one other time in the Law (Num 14:28). It is usually translated “declares the LORD” or “saith the LORD” in Scripture, and it appears quite frequently in the Old Testament prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Out of its 377 occurrences in the Old Testament, 255 are found in the prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel.
nations of the earth through him because he has obeyed Yahweh’s voice (Gen 22:18; Gen 12:3).

Several elements in this account further develop the doctrine of the Angel of Yahweh. The first of these is the Angel of Yahweh’s identity as God. His deity is evident first in his exercise of divine prerogative as he stops the sacrifice that God has commanded (Gen 22:11-12). The Angel also claims that Abraham had not withheld his son from him (Gen 22:12). The substitution of the ram as an offering, furthermore, indicates that Abraham still offered a sacrifice. If the Angel claimed that Abraham had offered Isaac to him, then by implication the ram was offered to him as well (Gen 22:13). A final indication of the Angel’s deity is in the explanation of the commemorative name for the place: Jehovah-Jireh. One translation of this phrase is “the LORD will see” (KJV, margin). However, Keil and Delitzsch translate the phrase, “Yahweh will see in the mountain where Yahweh appears” (Gen 22:14). The explanation indicates that Yahweh himself appeared, and thus the Angel of Yahweh who appeared must be Yahweh.

A second emphasis in this passage regarding the Angel of Yahweh is his function as divine prophet. Similar to his assurance to Hagar that God had heard the voice of Ishmael, the Angel of Yahweh speaks of God in third person: “Now I know that you fear God” (Gen 22:12). The second time the Angel calls from heaven, he announces the oath of Yahweh to bless Abraham (Gen 22:16-18). The fact that this is not his oath but another’s is evident from the phrase declares the LORD.49

49 Israel’s prophets often used this phrase as they announced Yahweh’s decisive judgments. The phrase “calls special attention to the origin and authority of what is said.” TWOT, 1272.
A final emphasis in this account is the Angel’s relationship to the covenant God had made with Abraham. It is apparent from this narrative that Yahweh intended to test Abraham and then bless him if he obeyed by certifying the covenant with a divine oath. After Abraham demonstrates his full commitment to Yahweh, the Angel of Yahweh appears to deliver the oath. As with his appearances to Hagar in Genesis 18 and Abraham and Sarah in Genesis 18, the Angel of Yahweh thus appears with a mission directly related to the covenant.

The Angel who went before Abraham’s servant (Genesis 24:7, 40)

For Yahweh’s covenant promises to be fulfilled for Abraham, Abraham’s son must also have a child. Concerned that Isaac’s wife not be an idolatrous Canaanite, Abraham sends his servant to look for a bride for Isaac in Haran. As he sends his servant off, he promises him, “The LORD, the God of heaven . . . He will send His angel before you, and you will take a wife for my son from there” (Gen 24:7). Once the servant arrives in Haran and meets Rebekah and her family, he recounts Abraham’s promise: “He [Abraham] said to me, ‘The LORD, before whom I have walked, will send His angel with you to make your journey successful’” (Gen 24:40).

Because the context of this passage does not seem to present any clear signs that this is the divine Angel of Yahweh, some have taken it to indicate a finite angel. Nevertheless, the broader context of the Pentateuch suggests

50 E. W. Hengstenberg, for instance, suggests that the angel in this passage probably refers to “an ideal person.” He suggests that the term would not refer to a particular personality (i.e., the Angel of Yahweh) but rather a finite angel who is sent from Yahweh to assist Abraham’s servant in finding a bride for Isaac. Thus the promise of the angel is a general promise. Hengstenberg suggests the same interpretation for the angel described in Psalm 34:8, 2 Samuel 24:16, and 2 Kings 19:35. Christology, 4:255.
another possibility. The closest parallel to Abraham’s promise to his servant regarding the aid of the Yahweh’s angel is the promise that Yahweh made to Israel at Mount Sinai regarding the divine Angel of Yahweh: “Behold, I am going to send an angel before you to guard you along the way and to bring you into the place which I have prepared” (Ex 23:20). Victor Hamilton notes,

The use of *malʾāk* in [Gen] 24:7 as one whom God will send before Abraham’s servant as the latter sets out on his mission is the closest parallel in Genesis to the vanguard motif in Exodus, i.e., the pillar of cloud and fire as an expression of the divine guidance and presence.

In the same way, Abraham promises that Yahweh’s *yāhāl* would go with his servant to help him accomplish his task (Gen 24:40).

A further observation suggests the significance of what Abraham’s servant is doing for him. Finding a bride for Isaac is inextricably connected with all of the promises of a seed for Abraham (e.g., Gen 22:17-18). Thus the securing of a bride for Isaac and the expectation of offspring from that relationship are essential to the fulfillment of covenant promises that God had made to Abraham. Because of the importance of the servant’s task to the covenant, therefore, it is probable that the Angel of Yahweh himself ensured its success.

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51 Hengstenberg comments on this passage, “It is impossible that the name of God could be communicated to any other, Is. xlii. 8. The name of God can dwell in Him only, who is originally of the same nature as God.” *Ibid.*, 1:127.


53 The Hiphil verb יְלָכָה used by the servant of Abraham here is often translated “to prosper” or “to make successful.” Used exclusively of divine activity in Genesis, this verb is something that only Yahweh does (Gen 24:21, 40, 42, 56; 39:2, 3, 23).
The God of Bethel and the Angel of God (Genesis 28:10-22; Genesis 31:11-13)

As the narrative of Genesis continues to unfold, Isaac’s son Jacob becomes the focus of attention as the recipient of the covenant. God’s first revelation to him in the dream theophany of Genesis 28 reveals the covenant promises to him as he is about to leave the Promised Land. Although the dream theophany does not contain an explicit mention of the Angel of Yahweh, the broader context of Genesis shows that the Angel of Yahweh was the one who appeared to Jacob in this pivotal event of his life.

As Jacob leaves his father’s house in Beersheba for Haran, he spends the night in Luz in Canaan. As he sleeps, Yahweh appears to him in a dream, standing at the top of a ladder to heaven while angels ascend and descend upon the ladder (Gen 28:12). Reaffirming the promises he had previously made to Isaac and Abraham, Yahweh assures Jacob that he would receive the land of Canaan and numerous descendants, and that his seed would be a blessing to the whole earth (Gen 28:13-14). In addition Yahweh promises his presence and protection to Jacob in all of his journeys (Gen 28:15).

Awaking in fear at the dream, Jacob exclaims, “How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven” (Gen 28:17). He then consecrates the place as a sanctuary for Yahweh; Jacob calls it “Bethel” (בֵית אֵל), the “house of God.” In addition he memorializes the
place by setting up a pillar and pouring oil on it (Gen 28:18). \(^\text{56}\) Lastly Jacob makes a vow to Yahweh, promising that if God will keep his promises, he will designate Bethel as a place of worship to Yahweh and give a tenth of all that he receives from God (Gen 14:20).

Following this dream, Jacob continues on his way and comes to the house of Laban, his mother’s brother. The time that passes between his dream theophany at Bethel and God’s next revelation to him is about twenty years. During that time Jacob works for Laban, acquiring Laban’s two daughters and their two handmaids as his wives, fathering eleven sons, and gathering much wealth (Gen 29-30). Near the end of Jacob’s time with Laban, Yahweh commands Jacob to return to the land of his fathers (Gen 31:3). Although this command is not explained in terms of a theophany, it is apparent from Jacob’s later explanation that it was the Angel of God in a dream who commanded him to leave. \(^\text{57}\) Recounting the dream to Rachel and Leah, Jacob says,

> Then the angel of God said to me in the dream, “Jacob,” and I said, “Here I am.” He said, “Lift up now your eyes and see that all the male goats which are mating are striped, speckled, and mottled; for I have seen all

\(^\text{56}\) The pillar that Jacob builds here is a memorial of the event that happened here. Jacob sets up pillar memorials as reminder of boundaries (Gen 31:46, 51-52), theophanies (Gen 35:12-13), and tombs of loved ones (Gen 35:20).

\(^\text{57}\) David L. Cooper makes the following point about the title Angel of God: “Since מְאָנֵגֵל ה’ may take the article, the sacred writers could, by prefixing it, make a phrase definite regardless of whether the preceding genitive was singular or plural. Since מְאָנֵגֵל ה’ can take the article, and since it was used by the sacred writers with both מְאָנֵגֵל ה’ and מְאָנֵגְלֵי ה’ מְאָנָנֵגֵלָנֵיו ה’ מְאָנָנֵגְלָנֵיו מְאָנָנֵגְלָיו מְאָנָנָנֵגְלָנֵיו מְאָנָנָנָנֵגְלָנֵיו מְאָנָn

that Laban has been doing to you. I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a pillar, where you made a vow to Me; now arise, leave this land, and return to the land of your birth.” (Gen 31:11-13)

The most striking aspect of this revelation is the Angel’s claim, “I am the God of Bethel” (v. 13). Such a statement obviously precludes the thought that this could be a created angel, but it reveals much more. The Angel’s claim to be the God of Bethel indicates that he was standing at the top of the ladder in Jacob’s dream. Furthermore, the self-identification of Yahweh at Bethel must also apply to the Angel of God. At Bethel Yahweh said, “I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac” (Gen 28:13a). Abraham and Isaac, therefore, both worshipped the Angel of God (Gen 12:7; 15:1; 17:1; 18:1; 26:1-6, 24).

The context of Genesis 31 reveals at least two other aspects of the divine character of the Angel of God. In the context Jacob has just become aware of the attitude of Laban’s sons and Laban toward him, and he later refers to the entire

58 George Bush says on this statement, “It is scarcely conceivable that such language should ever have proceeded from the lips of a created being.” Notes on Genesis, 2:141. William Graham MacDonald, however, argues for an Augustinian interpretation of the Angel of Yahweh (i.e., created, finite angel) and the Angel of God. He suggests that created angels who speak in this way “must not be regarded as strange.” MacDonald’s argument is based on Aubrey Johnson’s The One and the Many in the Israelite Conception of God (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1961), 29-37. In particular, MacDonald rests his argument on the notion that the personality of the master in a master-servant relationship extends to the servant. Thus a created, finite angel can speak as God insofar as his presence represents God’s presence. However, an angel representing and speaking for God is one thing. A finite angel claiming to be God is entirely different. The phenomenon that Johnson describes does not account for such a possibility, nor does he explain Genesis 31:11-13 in his brief work. For an attempted response to William G. MacDonald’s views, see Robert Brian Merrill, The Identity of the Angel of the Lord in the Old Testament: A Critical Evaluation of William Graham MacDonald’s View, Multnomah, 1984.

59 This point must not be pressed too hard, as Genesis 19:24 distinguishes between two persons named Yahweh.
circumstance as a time of affliction (Gen 31:1-2, 42). The command of the Angel of God to Jacob to return to his father’s country thus comes at a very poignant moment. Jacob has been wronged by Laban numerous times, and the Angel says to him, “Lift up now your eyes and see that all the male goats which are mating are striped, speckled, and mottled; for I have seen all that Laban has been doing to you” (Gen 31:12b).

The instruction to lift up his eyes and see the goats is an indication that Jacob is not only listening in his dream but he is also seeing pictorial communication from God. The Angel of God is thus communicating pictorially and verbally to Jacob’s mind, and as he does he shows Jacob that he has blessed him with wealth to replace what Laban took from him. This judgment, furthermore, is the judgment of the Angel of God himself. It is the Angel of God who has seen what Laban has done, and it is the Angel of God who sees the injustice and repays Jacob. Thus the Angel of God functions as judge.

The conclusions to be drawn about the Angel of God from these passages are several. The first is that sometimes the text says that God spoke to a person, but later in Scripture it is evident that the Angel of God was the one who appeared. In Genesis 31:3 Moses writes that Yahweh spoke to Jacob. However, Jacob’s explanation of the revelation to his wives indicates that Yahweh who spoke to him is the Angel of God (Gen 31:10-13).

60 Jacob later describes this circumstance as “affliction” (Genesis 31:42). Both of the times of the Angel’s appearance to Hagar were in times of personal crisis and “affliction.” The Angel of Yahweh likewise appeared to Moses in the burning bush at a time when his people were in “affliction” (Ex 3:7).

61 This judgment is parallel to Genesis 19:24 in that it implies that the one acting is the “Judge of all the earth” (John 5:26-27).
A second conclusion from this passage regarding the Angel of God is his identity as God. The text states that Yahweh spoke to Jacob to tell him to return to the land (Gen 31:3), but as Jacob relates this revelation to his wives, he tells them it was a dream where the Angel of God appeared to him (Gen 31:10-13). By implication the Angel of God is himself Yahweh. This becomes even clearer when the Angel of God himself claims to be God by direct statement: “I am the God of Bethel” (v. 31). It follows that all of the promises at Bethel came from the Angel of God. Thus it is the Angel of God who promised to give Jacob the land, to bless the whole earth through Jacob’s seed, and to protect and be with him (Gen 28:13-15). Furthermore, the vow that Jacob made was a vow to the Angel of God. The Angel affirms that Jacob’s vow to God was to him (Gen 31:13; Gen 28:20-22).

An additional indication of the deity of the Angel of God is his power to communicate directly to Jacob’s mind by means of both pictorial and verbal revelation.⁶² Although Jacob did not see or hear anything by physical means, the Angel of God was nevertheless communicating to him by means of the images he presented to Jacob in his dream (e.g., the animals) and by means of the words he spoke (Gen 31:10-13).

_The Divine Wrestler at Jabbok (Genesis 32:24-32; 32:25-32, MT)_

As the theophanies of Genesis 28 and 31 demonstrate, the absence of the designation _Angel of Yahweh_ in a narrative does not mean that he is not present. The Jabbok theophany in Genesis 32 likewise contains no explicit reference to the

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⁶² Finite angels in the New Testament appeared in dreams as well, but the primary means of communicating was verbal (Matt 1:20; 2:12, 22, etc.). Presenting revelation pictorially to man’s mind is an additional aspect of the Angel of Yahweh’s supernatural power.
Angel of Yahweh, yet the reader of Genesis may suspect that Jacob is wrestling with him.⁶³

As Jacob obeys the command of Yahweh to return to the Promised Land, he learns of Esau’s coming to meet him with 400 men. Because of this ominous news, Jacob prays for God to preserve his life (32:11). After sending his family across the Jabbok ahead of him by night, Jacob is left alone and suddenly begins wrestling with a “man” (Gen 32:24). Seeing that he is not prevailing against Jacob, the “man” touches the hollow of Jacob’s thigh, dislocating Jacob’s hip.⁶⁴ Nevertheless, Jacob continues to wrestle in spite of the pain.

The struggle comes to a critical point as the “man” asks Jacob, “Let me go, for the dawn is breaking” (32:26, v. 27, MT]). The reason for this request is not immediately apparent. Vos suggests that God often appeared in the night to conceal the encounter from other men.⁶⁵ Thus the reason for the request could be to keep anyone in Jacob’s company from seeing the encounter. Another suggestion is that Jacob’s opponent is interested in Jacob’s safety. H.C. Leupold says that if Jacob actually saw the face of the one with whom he was wrestling, he would die.⁶⁶ Leupold’s argument seems to agree with the sense of Genesis 32:30 (v. 31, MT): “So Jacob named the place Peniel, for he said, ‘For I have seen

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⁶³ Hosea confirms that Jacob is wrestling with the Angel as he writes centuries later to the Northern Kingdom of Israel (Hos 12:2-6).

⁶⁴ The term מַעְלֶה in context could indicate a blow that caused Jacob’s injury (2 Sam 7:14), which would display significant strength. The term may also simply indicate a “touch” (Jdg 6:21; Isa 6:7; Jer 1:9). Gordon Wenham says, “A touch that dislocates indicates an opponent with superhuman power.” Genesis 16-50, 296.

⁶⁵ Biblical Theology, 70. While concealing himself may have been his purpose on some occasions, the theophany at Mamre suggests otherwise. Yahweh appeared to Abraham at Mamre in the heat of the day (Gen 18:1ff.).

⁶⁶ To support this argument, Leupold uses Exodus 33:20, “You cannot see my face, for no man can see me and live” (NAU). Exposition of Genesis, 2:878.
the face of God, yet my life has been preserved.’” Jacob would have died had God not graciously preserved his life.

Jacob refuses to let the “man” go, insisting, “I will not let you go unless you bless me” (Gen 32:26; v. 27, MT). The “man” then responds by asking for Jacob’s name, and upon hearing it changes Jacob’s name to Israel.67 His explanation for the change follows: “You have striven with God and with men and have prevailed” (Gen 32:28; v. 29, MT). Thus Jacob’s new name Israel means “one who strives with El.” The name not only signifies Jacob’s character but also identifies the one with whom he wrestled.68

After his name is changed to Israel, Jacob asks for the name of his opponent (Jdg 13:18). Mysteriously refusing this request, the “man” grants Jacob’s previous request for a blessing (v. 29 [v.30, MT]). The refusal of the “man” to give his name provokes Jacob to identify his opponent.69 He thus

67 This request does not indicate a lack of awareness but rather as George Bush suggests an emphasis upon the meaning of the name Jacob. He comments, “He put the question in order to instruct Jacob respecting the signification of his present name, and to lead him to reflect upon the occasion of its being given to him.” Notes on Genesis, 2:173. See also Hamilton, Genesis, 2:333. Some early church fathers such as Clement of Alexandria followed the interpretation of the Jewish philosopher Philo on the significance of the name Israel. Philo broke down the name into three parts: “lae ha’r’ vyai. This he translated as “the man seeing God.” Philo, On Abraham (http://www.earlyjewishwritings.com/text/philo/book22.html). Accessed 3/17/08. This is an interesting play on Jacob’s statement in verse 30 [v.31, MT], “I have seen God.” Nevertheless Philo’s explanation is incorrect. The correct understanding of this name derives from the Angel’s explanation. The explanation in verse 28 [v.29, MT] precludes such an interpretation. The etymology is related to the verb "ירש", which means “to persist or prevail.”

68 Within the context of Genesis, Jacob has prevailed over Laban by gaining considerable wealth from him, and he is about to meet Esau, over whom he prevailed by taking his birthright and blessing. Furthermore Jacob prevailed upon God in this scene by obtaining a blessing from him.

69 Victor Hamilton suggests that the effect produced by the refusal caused him to understand the identity of the one speaking to him. Genesis, 2:336. The same effect is produced on another occasion as the Angel of Yahweh appears to Manoah and his wife (Judges 13). When Manoah asks for the name of the Angel of Yahweh, the Angel asks him, “Why do you ask my name, seeing it is wonderful?” The refusal on that occasion as well provoked Manoah and his wife to conclude that they had seen God.
names the location Peniel, meaning the “Face of El,” giving the reason: “I have seen God [גֵּד] face to face, yet my life has been preserved” (v. 30, v. 31, MT). The latter statement “Yet my life has been preserved” (v. 30, v. 31, MT) expresses Jacob’s relief that God could have taken his life but did not.

Elements of the Jabbok theophany remind the reader of previous theophanies in Genesis. These include the appearance of Yahweh in the form of a man (Gen 18:1ff.), the change of a patriarch’s name to reflect God’s blessing and promise (Gen 17:5), surprise and fear at seeing God (Gen 16:13; Gen 32:30), and the memorializing of the location with a name (Gen 16:14; 22:14).

Two conclusions emerge from this passage about the Angel of Yahweh. By not including the designation Angel of Yahweh in this narrative, Moses places a strong emphasis on the divine identity of the one who appears to Jacob. Both the meaning of Jacob’s new name Israel as “one who strives with God” as well as Jacob’s claim to have seen God face to face indicate the deity of the wrestler. His deity is likewise indicated by the memorial name Peniel, “the face of El.”

70 The prophet Hosea identifies this theophany as mediated by the Angel whose name is Yahweh (Hosea 12:3-6), and Elijah says that the Word of Yahweh was the one who changed Jacob’s name (1 Kgs 18:31). 1 Kings 18:31 says, “Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the LORD came, saying, ‘Israel shall be your name’” (1 Kgs 18:31, ESV). The phrase “to whom the word of the LORD came” could refer to an abstract “word of Yahweh.” However, the “word of Yahweh” is not mentioned in Genesis in connection with the events at Peniel. Jacob’s name, moreover, is not changed by an abstraction, but by a personal Being. This is another occasion when the “Word of Yahweh” refers to a personal Being (Jer 1:4-9; 1 Sam 3:21). See Charles Gieschen, “The Real Presence of the Son Before Christ: A New Approach to Old Testament Christology,” (a paper presented at the Concordia Theological Seminary Symposia on exegetical and confessional theology, Fort Wayne, Indiana, 21 January 2003); available from http://www.ctsfw.edu/events/symposia/papers/sym2003gieschen.pdf; Internet; accessed 7/15/08. See also Appendix A, “Theophany and the Angel of Yahweh.”

71 The word translated “man” in this passage is always בָּשָׁם and not בָּשָׁם.

72 In addition to these direct indications of deity is the divine wrestler’s authority over Jacob to change his name. In Genesis 17 God Almighty had changed Abram and Sarai’s name to
A second conclusion arising from this account is that the one who appears to Jacob reveals the face of God. After Jacob’s encounter with the divine wrestler, he says, “I have seen God face to face” and names the place Peniel (Gen 32:30). Jacob’s statement does not demand that his physical eyes actually beheld God’s face. Since the entire encounter takes place before dawn, it is possible that Jacob did not actually see the face of the one wrestling with him. Genesis 32:31 says that the sun did not rise until he crossed over Penuel (i.e., the more common name of Peniel) and the encounter was over. Samuel Terrien writes that the idiom face to face (בֵּית חֲדָשׁ֑וֹן) refers “to the direct, nonmediated (i.e., immediate) character of a manifestation of presence. It describes a ‘person-to-person’ encounter, without the help of an intermediary.”

To this point in Genesis, the Angel of Yahweh has appeared and spoken of God in the third person several times (Gen 16:11; 21:17; 22:12, 16). In the narrative of the theophany at Mamre, furthermore, Yahweh appears to Abraham and speaks in the third person of Yahweh (Gen 18:14, 19). Here in Genesis 32:28, the divine wrestler speaks of God in the third person when he says to Jacob: “Your name shall be no longer Jacob but Israel; for you have striven with God and with men and have prevailed” (Gen 32:28). Comparing this manner of speaking with each of these previous theophanies, it is evident that the one reflect his promise to them, and here God changes Jacob’s name to Israel to reflect his change in character and identify himself as the one with whom Jacob wrestles (Gen 32:28).

73 This passage is one of several that show to indicate that God makes certain exceptions to the principle stated to Moses in Exodus 33:20, “You cannot see my face, for no man can see me and live.” Manoah and his wife did see the face of the Angel of Yahweh, who is also called God in Judges 13:22. Manoah’s wife describes the countenance of the Angel of Yahweh (i.e., God) as “very terrible” or “very fearful” (Jdg 13:6).

74 Samuel Terrien, Elusive Presence (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), 91. Terrien’s analysis is correct. Moses says that God spoke to Israel “face to face” (בֵּית חֲדָשׁ֑וֹן) but they did not see any form (Deut 4:12; 5:4). However, this fact does not preclude the possibility that Jacob could see his face. Manoah and his wife did (Jdg 13).
whom Jacob calls God on this occasion is the Angel of Yahweh. Yet the emphasis of this passage is not that this is the Angel of Yahweh but that he is God and reveals the face of God.\textsuperscript{75}

\textit{God Almighty appears to Jacob at Bethel (Genesis 35:1-13)}

After Jacob returned to the land of Canaan, God told him to return to Bethel in order to live there and build an altar to God, who had appeared to him there (Gen 35:1).\textsuperscript{76} In the context of Genesis, the God who appeared to him is the Angel of God, who identified himself as the “God of Bethel” when he appeared to Jacob in Haran (Gen 31:13). In obedience to God, Jacob commands his family to repent of their idolatry and join him as he goes to Bethel to build an altar to God (Gen 35:2-3). Upon his arrival in Bethel, Jacob builds the altar and renames the place \textit{El-Bethel}, meaning “God of the house of God.”\textsuperscript{77}

Following Jacob’s obedience, Moses writes that God appeared to him “again after he came from Paddan-aram, and blessed him” (v. 9).\textsuperscript{78} The word

\textsuperscript{75} Oehler defines the “face of God” as God’s “\textit{coming down into the sphere of the created, whereby He can be brought within the immediate knowledge of man.}” Emphasis original. \textit{Theology of the Old Testament}, 128. J. Barton Payne similarly identifies it as God’s “theophanic presence.” \textit{The Theology of the Older Testament}, 169. Isaiah’s identification of the Angel of his Presence (or Angel of his face) in Isaiah 63:9 certainly fits the revelation in this passage of Scripture (also Ex 33:2, 14).

\textsuperscript{76} The altar is built and the place is named El-Bethel because God revealed himself there (Gen 35:7). The verb translated “appeared” in verse 7 in the KJV is not the more common niphal of the verb פָּרָה but rather the niphal of הבין, which means “to uncover.” The NAU, NIV, and the ESV all translate the verb “reveal” instead of “appear.” The only other occasion that the word is used in Genesis is when Noah acts indiscreetly by “uncovering” himself in his tent (Gen 9:21).

\textsuperscript{77} George Bush says of Jacob’s renaming of Bethel, “He bestowed again the name of Bethel as a memorial of his faith and gratitude, and with a design to have the appellation perpetuated to the latest generation.” \textit{Notes on Genesis}, 2:205. C. F. Keil makes a similar point: “The remembrance of this appearance Jacob transmitted to his descendants by erecting a memorial stone, which he not only anointed with oil like the former one in ch. 28:17, but consecrated by a drink-offering and by the renewal of the name Bethel.” \textit{Pentateuch}, 204.

\textsuperscript{78} The Peniel theophany explains the immediate focus on Jacob’s name in this theophany, as well as the lack of any explanation for the name.
again in verse 9 refers to the theophany at Peniel, where God wrestled with Jacob and changed his name to Israel. God immediately reaffirms this change: “Your name is Jacob; You shall no longer be called Jacob, But Israel shall be your name.” (Gen 35:10). By reminding Jacob that his name is now Israel, God calls him to live in the light of the meaning of his new name. Jacob is to act no longer as a deceiver but as a prince of God.

In addition to reaffirming Jacob’s new name, God also reaffirms his covenant with Jacob. He prefaces these promises, furthermore, with the words, “I am God Almighty” (Gen 35:11; Gen 17:1). By giving this name Yahweh reveals to Jacob his might and power by which he will accomplish all that he promises to do. He also says to Jacob,

Be fruitful and multiply; A nation and a company of nations shall come from you, And kings shall come forth from you. The land which I gave to Abraham and Isaac, I will give it to you, And I will give the land to your descendants after you (Gen 35:11-12).

Similar to Yahweh’s promises to Abraham, God Almighty promises Jacob that kings and nations (peoples) would come from him (Gen 17). Following this reaffirmation of the covenant, God “went up from [Jacob] in the place where He had spoken with him” (v. 13; Gen 17:22). This statement indicates that God appeared directly to him, not in a vision or dream.

In commemoration of God’s appearance, Jacob consecrates another pillar (Gen 28:18) by anointing it with oil and offering a drink offering to God. By anointing the pillar Jacob consecrates the location as a place of worship, the

79 The verb translated “went up” (הלע) is found in another theophanic context in Genesis 17:22, “When He had finished talking with him, God went up from Abraham” (ESV). It does not indicate immediate disappearance but rather an upward departure or ascent. In Genesis it describes smoke ascending toward heaven (Gen 19:28) or angels ascending into heaven (Gen 28:12).
“house of God.” The drink offering, however, is Jacob’s consecration of himself to God.  

80 The drink offering (ιν,) is a “specialized form” of the meal offering. Its significance, according to Payne, points to the “living obedience” of the offerer (2 Tim 4:6). It thus contrasts with a bloody sacrifice. J. Barton Payne, Theology of the Older Testament, 386.

81 Jacob recalls this occasion as he is about to bless Joseph’s sons, “God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me, and said to me, ‘Behold, I will make you fruitful and multiply you, and I will make of you a company of peoples and will give this land to your offspring after you for an everlasting possession’” (Gen 48:3-4).
12). If the God of Bethel is God Almighty, then the Angel of Yahweh must be identified as God Almighty. 

*Jacob prays to the Redeeming Angel (Genesis 48:15-16)*

The last reference to the Angel of Yahweh in Genesis is found in Jacob’s blessing of his grandsons Ephraim and Manasseh. In the context Jacob is sick, and Joseph goes to meet him with his sons so that Jacob may bless them before he dies. As Jacob blesses Joseph and his sons, he says,

The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day, the angel who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; And may my name live on in them, And the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; And may they grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth (Gen 48:15-16).

Jacob’s opening phrase identifies God as the God of the patriarchs: “The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked” (Gen 48:15a). The theophanic context of Genesis 17 provides the closest linguistic parallel to Jacob’s statement, “Now when Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, ‘I am God Almighty; Walk before Me, and be blameless’” (v. 1, NAU). The idea of walking before God means to live in allegiance to God. Thus Jacob begins his prayer by acknowledging that Abraham and Isaac actively devoted themselves to God. Jacob also

82 Moses later records God as saying that this was the primary revelatory name of the patriarchal period, “I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as God Almighty, but by My name, LORD, I did not make Myself known to them” (Ex 6:3). With regard to the use of this verse by the JEDP theorists, see Gleason Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago: Moody, 1964), 130-31. See chapter 8 of the same work for an able refutation of the JEDP theory.

83 A confirmation of this identification may be found in Genesis 48:3, where Jacob recounts Yahweh’s appearance to him at Bethel.

acknowledges God’s blessing to him: “The God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day” (v. 15b). In this statement Jacob describes how God had faithfully cared for him personally. The Hebrew word הַשֵּׁבֵית, meaning “to shepherd” is an active participle, which indicates that God continually provided for Jacob and protected him (Gen 49:24; Zech 13:7). Jacob’s testimony, furthermore, is that God had done so throughout his entire life.

In his final address, Jacob names the Angel specifically and equates the Angel and God (48:15-16). The parallelism in his prayer is as follows: “The God . . . the God . . . The Angel . . . bless the lads.” He also describes the Angel as one who had “redeemed” or “rescued” him from all evil. The Hebrew word הָעֵד appears only here in Genesis, but later in the Old Testament it describes his rescue of Israel out of Egypt (Ex 6:6; 15:13). Jacob says that he was rescued or redeemed “from all evil,” indicating that the Angel delivered him from adversity. Genesis records the adversity that he faced when he was with and left Laban. The Angel of God, of course, told Jacob that he had seen all that Laban had done to him and had given him the wealth in spite of it (Gen 31:12). It

85 E. W. Hengstenberg argues that this passage precludes the idea of an impersonal angel or a “divine emanation.” He writes, “By the Angel, we cannot here understand a divine emanation and messenger, because no permanent character belongs to such; while here the whole sum of the preservations of Jacob, and of the blessings upon Ephraim and Manasseh, is derived from the Angel.” Christology, 1:125. Oehler describes such a view, “The Malakh is nothing hypostatical [i.e., not a personal being], but only an unsubstantial manifestation of God; a momentary descent into visibility; a mission of God (here מָלָךְ is taken in its original abstract meaning), which again returns into the Divine Being” (emphasis original). Theology of the Old Testament, 133.

86 Gordon Wenham suggests that הָעֵד could also be translated “rescuer.” He writes, “The rescuer’ was usually the nearest male relative, whose responsibility was to bail someone out if he fell into debt or slavery (Lev 25:22-26, 48-49) or to avenge his death in the case of murder (Num 35:12).” Genesis 16-50, 465.

87 The word בֵּית may refer to moral evil (Gen 6:5), but it may also refer to events that are “bad” from the standpoint of the one who experiences them (Amos 3:6).
is also possible that the Angel of God delivered Jacob from Laban by appearing to Laban in his dream to warn him not to do anything to Jacob (Gen 31:24).

The Angel of Yahweh also delivered Jacob from Esau when Jacob reentered the Promised Land (Gen 32-33). Jacob earnestly sought the blessing of the Angel of Yahweh at the Jabbok, and the Angel blessed him by protecting him from Esau (Gen 32:26-28). The Angel thus proved to be a present and constant aid to Jacob throughout his life, just as Jacob says in his prayer. Confident in the one who had delivered him on these occasions, Jacob invokes the blessing of the Redeeming Angel upon the sons of Joseph.

A final aspect of Jacob’s prayer in Genesis 48 is the request he makes for Joseph’s sons. After mentioning God and the redeeming Angel in his address, Jacob then asks for a blessing for his grandsons. However, the word bless (יָרָא) is a singular Piel verb, not plural (v. 15). Thus Jacob is praying directly to the divine redeeming Angel and seeking his favor upon his grandsons.

Two conclusions emerge from the prayer of Jacob to the Angel. First, this prayer clearly identifies the redeeming Angel as God. The parallelism in the prayer between God and Angel identify him as such, as does the fact that prayer...
is offered to him (Gen 48:15-16). Second, Jacob’s prayer also identifies the Angel as a distinct personality who shepherded him throughout his life and who received worship from Abraham and Isaac. Thus the Angel is the God of the patriarchs.

Conclusion

The biblical theological data of Genesis demonstrates that the Angel of Yahweh is indeed the God of the patriarchs. The indications of deity are present whenever he is, and he himself claims to be God (Gen 31:11-13; Gen 28). In the last theophany at Bethel, he is revealed as God Almighty (Gen 35:11; Gen 17:1; 28:3; 43:14; 48:3; 49:25), and Jacob prays to him for a blessing on his grandsons (Gen 48:15-16). At the same time, the biblical data of Genesis indicates that the Angel of Yahweh is in some way distinct from God, because he speaks in third person of Yahweh and God.
The time that passed between the last theophanic revelation in the patriarchal period (Gen 46:1-4) and the first theophanic revelation in the period of the Exodus (Ex 3:2ff.) was over four hundred years. If theophanic revelation took place during that period, no record of it exists in the biblical text. Between the time that Jacob arrived in Egypt and the time of Moses’ call, the nation grew from seventy (Ex 1:5) to a large nation of people, enough for Moses to say that the land of Egypt was filled with them (Ex 1:7). The emergence of a king who did not know Joseph brought slavery and suffering to the children of Israel, and their cries for help were heard by God (2:23-25). In response to their cries, the Angel of Yahweh appears to deliver them from their oppressors (Ex 3-4).

*The Angel of Yahweh appears to Moses in the burning bush (Exodus 3:1-4:17)*

The reappearance of the Angel of Yahweh in the period of the Exodus is directly related to the covenant made with the patriarchs (Ex 2:24).¹ Just before the Angel appears, the text states that God heard the cry of the children of Israel under bondage and remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob

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¹ Each appearance of the Angel within the patriarchal period involved some aspect of covenant revelation, either initial revelation or some confirmation. In the Exodus, however, the Angel of Yahweh acts in faithfulness to covenant promises (e.g., Gen 15:13-14). The promises made regarding a return to the Promised Land (Gen 12:7; 28:13-14), the deliverance of Abraham’s descendants from a foreign taskmaster (Gen 15:13), and God’s judgment on Egypt all verge upon fulfillment (Gen 15:14).
(Ex 2:24-25). The remembrance of the covenant thus provides the impetus for the calling of Moses to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt (3:1-4:17).²

Moses’ awareness of the Angel of Yahweh’s presence was not immediate. The bush that was burning but not being consumed caught his attention, and he went toward it to investigate (Ex 3:2b). Recalling the incident and writing of it later, Moses says that the Angel of Yahweh appeared to him “in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush” (Ex 3:2).³ The Hebrew phrase וַאֲשֶׁר מֵאֵשׁ מִכְלַלְתָּה, translated “in a flame of fire,” may be understood either that the Angel of Yahweh appeared within the flame of fire or that he appeared as a flame of fire.⁴ The former

² J. Kenneth Kuntz says that this theophany has an element of “spontaneity” on the part of God. “Neither from the point of view of God nor of man is direct theophanic meeting here presented as the object of careful, long-range planning.” J. Kenneth Kuntz, The Self-Revelation of God (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967), 141. However, the context of the present pericope suggests otherwise. This theophany comes as a direct response to cries of his covenant people, with whom he had established a relationship hundreds of years before (Ex 2:24-25). Furthermore, this theophany occurs within the time frame God specified in the Abrahamic covenant (Ex 15:14ff.).

³ The designation הָעֵדֶן מַעֲרָבָה never appears again throughout the rest of the pericope, nor does it occur again within the entire book of Exodus. After introducing the הָעֵדֶן מַעֲרָבָה Moses shifts to using either Yahweh or Elohim to refer to the Angel of Yahweh through the rest of the narrative. The singular use of the designation thus serves the reader as a reminder of a familiar person rather than an introduction of a new one. In other words, Moses assumes a canonical context in which the reader is already familiar with the Angel of Yahweh. For contrast, one might compare the fourfold repetition of הָעֵדֶן מַעֲרָבָה when it is introduced in a relatively small passage (Gen 16:7-10).

⁴ Keil and Delitzsch hold the view that the flame itself was the form of the Angel of Yahweh. C. F. Keil and Franz Delitzsch, Commentary on the Old Testament: The Pentateuch, trans. James Martin (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1866; reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2001), 121. On only one occasion in Genesis is fire associated with God’s theophanic presence. As God makes a covenant with Abraham, a flaming torch passes between the parts of the sacrifice (Gen 15:17). The presence of fire at this theophany in Exodus foreshadows future theophanies, such as the pillar of fire that led the children of Israel (Ex 13:21). Fire is also present when God is present at Sinai. After arriving at Sinai, the children of Israel see Yahweh descend upon the mountain in devouring fire (Ex 19:18). Later Moses describes what Israel saw after the elders of Israel joined him in the mount: “Now the appearance of the glory of the LORD was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel” (Ex 24:17, ESV). Finally, the connection between fire and the theophanic presence of Yahweh is found in the very last verse of Exodus: “For throughout all their journeys, the cloud of the LORD was on the tabernacle by day, and there was fire in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel” (Ex 40:38, NAU).
conception is probably better, since fire is an associated element of theophany rather than the theophany itself.⁵

As Moses sees and approaches the burning bush, “Yahweh” sees his action and “Elohim” calls his name twice out of the midst of the bush and instructs him not to come any closer (Ex 3:4-5). God then commands Moses to take off his shoes so he will not profane the holy ground on which he stands (v.4).⁶ Then the Angel of Yahweh reveals his identity to Moses in terms of his historical relationship with his people: “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” (Ex 3:6).⁷ The Angel also announces his awareness of his people’s suffering in Egypt and states that he has heard their cries to him (3:7, 9).⁸ Finally, he announces that he has come down (from heaven) to accomplish his redemptive purpose of bringing Israel into the Promised Land in keeping with his covenant (3:8; cf. Gen 15:18-21). It is this

⁵ The fact that Moses gives no description beyond the fire probably indicates that no form was visible on this occasion. Sometimes the Angel of Yahweh did display visible form in the patriarchal period (e.g., Gen 18, 32), but here no form is mentioned. Cassuto emphasizes the lack of any reference to the form of God: “The Biblical text here and in the continuation of the narrative is meticulously careful to avoid referring to any likeness whatsoever, except the burning bush.” Umberto Cassuto, A Commentary on the Book of Exodus, trans. Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1967), 31. God’s reference to his own form is found in Numbers 12:8, where Yahweh declares to Aaron and Miriam that Moses “beholds the form of the Lord.” Moses also says to Israel on a later occasion that they saw no form as Yahweh spoke to them from the top of Sinai out of the midst of a fire (Deut 4:12). These statements suggest God’s purposeful revealing or concealing of his form.

⁶ The command “Do not come near here” is given for Moses’ safety (v.4, NAU). To approach God or to look at him is to put oneself in grave danger. God’s instruction to Moses to warn the people not to come close to Mount Sinai or gaze into the cloud was given for the same reason (Ex 19:21).

⁷ God revealed himself to Isaac as the God of Abraham his father (Gen 26:24) and to Jacob as the God of Abraham and Isaac (Gen 28:13).

⁸ The Angel’s response to those in affliction may also be seen in the lives of Hagar and Jacob (Gen 16:7ff.; Gen 31:12).
purpose that brings the Angel of Yahweh to call Moses to go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt (3:10).

Moses’ first response to the Angel’s call is to protest by means of his own insignificance (3:11). The Angel of Yahweh answers by promising his presence with Moses and providing him with a “sign” (תְּמַן) of God’s presence with him. The sign he gives to Moses is that Moses will return to the very mountain where he is standing to worship God (3:12). This sign would not be realized until following the accomplishment of the mission, and as such it demanded at the very outset of his mission that he exercise faith.

With the promise of this sign, Moses seems to move toward accepting the task, and in anticipation of the people’s inquiry for God’s name, he asks the Angel of Yahweh for his name. The Angel of Yahweh answers, “I AM WHO I AM” (Ex 3:14) (יִהְיֶה הִיָּה הִיָּה). He then directs Moses to communicate the

9 The Hebrew word תְּמַן, translated “token” or “sign,” is used three times in this passage (3:1-4:17). A תְּמַן is a supernatural event or act by which God provides an additional witness to the truthfulness of what he is saying. The future confirmation sign given here to Moses (i.e., the return to worship at this mountain with the nation of Israel) is not immediate, nor does it seem to be supernatural. However, to take a nation of slaves from their Egyptian masters and to bring them to the very mountain where Moses sees the burning bush is nothing short of a miracle.

10 Although no reason is given for Moses’ question in the context, George Bush suggests that each new leader of God’s people would be invested with a new revelation about God in order to give greater weight to his authority, just as Abraham received a revelation of the name יְהֹוָה when God revealed himself to him (Gen 17:1). Notes on Exodus (New York: M.H. Newman, 1843; reprint, Grand Rapids, Kregel, 1993), 50. Another possible reason for Moses’ request for God’s name is the idolatry of the nation of Israel in Egypt. The Angel’s reference to Moses’ own father on this occasion (“I am the God of your father,” v.6) indicates that not all of the Israelites were ignorant of the one true God. However, Joshua makes a clear reference to their idolatry when he says to the children of Israel in the Promised Land many years later, “Put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD” (Joshua 24:14b, NAU). Some of the Israelites in Egypt had lost knowledge of God.

11 This unusual and grammatically difficult phrase begins with a first person personal verb and is separated from the predicate with the preposition רֶבְע. The last word of the phrase is exactly the same in form as the verb but instead functions as a predicate. The preposition רֶבְע in the middle of the phrase is a preposition that may also function as a simple connector between the verb and the predicate. BDB, 81. The latter use (simple connector) is preferable in this case,
name “I AM” to the people of Israel. Lest the people think that this is other than the same God who appeared to the patriarchs, however, the Angel of Yahweh continues by equating the name “I AM” directly with the name “Yahweh,” the God of the patriarchs (3:15). Furthermore, the Angel says that this name is to be the name by which he is to be remembered (ךְָרֵא בָּהָם) throughout all generations (3:15; cf. Isa 26:8).

As the Angel of Yahweh further explains how Moses is to proceed once he arrives in Egypt, he instructs Moses to go first to the elders of Israel and inform them of what had been revealed to him (3:16-17). He then foretells the resistance of the King of Egypt and of the fact that he himself would strike Egypt with

Since the word יְהֹוָה is the subject of last sentence of the verse, “Thus shall you say to the sons of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you’” (3:14, NAU).

12 יְהֹוָה, as the name of God, occurs only one other time in the Old Testament (Hosea 1:9). Four different suggestions for the significance of the name include God’s inscrutability, God’s existence, God’s presence with his people, and God’s self-determination and faithfulness. Geerhardus Vos, Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1975), 117-119. Each of these interpretations finds a basis in etymological or contextual considerations or a combination of the two. Etymological considerations include the relationship of יְהֹוָה to יְהֹוָה, a verb denoting existence, and the close relationship between both of these words to the Divine Name יְהֹוָה. Thus the meaning of the verb carries the most weight in determining the significance to the name. When Yahweh refers to himself as יְהֹוָה, “I AM,” he thus asserts his own self-existence. George Bush follows this line of reasoning when he says that the whole phrase in verse 14 indicates the “underived, eternal, and unchangeable existence of the great Being to whom it is applied.” Notes on Exodus, 50. Keil and Delitzsch, on the other hand, say that the particular emphasis is on God’s freedom. The “I AM,” according to them,” is “the absolute God of the fathers, acting with unfettered liberty and self-dependence.” Pentateuch, 287. However, the best suggestion is Payne’s, who says based on the context that the phrase יְהֹוָה יְהֹוָה should be translated “I am present is what I am.” Citing the promise of the previous verse, “Certainly I will be with you” (Ex 3:12a), Payne says that the “redemptive requirement of that moment in 1447 B.C. was for a God who would be present to visit and deliver the enslaved Israelites from Egypt.” J. Barton Payne, Theology of the Older Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1962), 148.

13 The Hebrew word יֵצַו appears here with the first person pronominal suffix, and it is translated in various ways, including “my memorial” (KJV), “my memorial-name” (NAU), and “name by which I am to be remembered” (NIV). This name is again directly connected to the Angel of Yahweh in Hosea when he says of Jacob, “In the womb he took his brother by the heel, and in his manhood he strove with God. He strove with the angel and prevailed; he wept and sought his favor. He met God at Bethel, and there God spoke with us—the LORD, the God of hosts, the LORD is his memorial name” (Hos 12:4, 5, ESV).
“wonders” (חכמה) so that the king of Egypt would let Israel go (3:18-20). In spite of this strong assurance of the Angel’s aid, Moses objects again to going by suggesting that Israel might reject him (4:1), directly contradicting the Angel’s statement, “They will listen to your voice” (Ex 3:18, ESV). The Angel of Yahweh graciously responds to Moses’ objection by investing him with three miraculous signs to prove his authenticity to Israel (4:2-9).

Moses stubbornly continues to resist the call of the Angel by claiming to have poor speaking ability (4:10). The Angel of Yahweh responds by asking three rhetorical questions: “Who has made man’s mouth? Or who makes him mute or deaf, or seeing or blind? Is it not I, the LORD?” (Ex 4:11, NAU). This question serves first as a rebuke to Moses’ claim, but it also indicates two other things about the Angel of Yahweh. First, the Angel here directly identifies himself as Yahweh: “Is it not I, the LORD?” (v.11). Second, the Angel of Yahweh claims that he not only created man’s mouth but also endows him with the ability to use it (Ex 4:12). Thus the Angel of Yahweh is asserting his identity as the sovereign Creator.

Even though all of Moses’ objections are answered, Moses continues resisting by cautiously asking the Angel of Yahweh that someone else be sent in his place (4:12). This resistance stirs divine anger, and the Angel of Yahweh tersely rebukes Moses and informs him that his brother Aaron will be his

14 The word חכמה is often used synonymously with the word conveying speech (Ex 7:3,9; Deut 4:34; 6:22; 7:19; 13:2-3; 26:8; 28:46; 29:2; 34:11).

15 This is the first time in Scripture when a man is vested with supernatural power. Moses is given ability to turn his staff into a serpent (4:2-5), to turn his hand from clean to leprous or leprous to clean by putting it into his cloak (4:6-7), and to turn water from the Nile into blood. This third sign, though not illustrated immediately as the other two, was provided in case the Israelites failed to believe the first two. Later Yahweh instructed Moses to perform these same miraculous signs in the presence of Pharoah (Ex 4:21).
(Moses’) “prophet” to the people (4:16; cf. Ex 7:1). At this Moses no longer protests, and he leaves to get his family and go back to Egypt in obedience to the command (4:20).

Several conclusions may be drawn about the Angel of Yahweh from this event. First, the record of Moses’ call shows that the Angel of Yahweh is God. Moses as the narrator not only calls him Yahweh and God throughout Exodus 3 and 4 (e.g., v.4, 6, 7, 11, 13, 14, 15, passim), but the Angel himself reveals his own name as “I AM” (יְהֹוָה) as the name of the God of the children of Israel (Ex 3:14-15). The name I AM is also directly parallel with the name Yahweh, the memorial name that God had commanded Israel to remember him by throughout their generations (Ex 3:15). Such direct association between the name of the Angel (“I AM”) and the divine name is not incidental but purposeful.

A second indication from this passage confirms the deity of the Angel of Yahweh. The Angel of Yahweh warns Moses, “Do not come near; take your

16 Exodus 7:1 says that Aaron would be Moses’ prophet and that he (Moses) would be like God to Pharaoh.

17 The narrative in Exodus 4 continues by describing the events in Moses’ life following the theophany at the burning bush and his return to Egypt. The additional instructions from Yahweh in verses 21-23 refer directly to the burning bush incident and must be the very same speaker—the Angel of Yahweh. Yahweh’s meeting with Moses at an inn on the way to Egypt to kill him for not circumcising his son (Ex 4:24-26) is very similar to the Angel of Yahweh’s meeting with Balaam (cf. Num 22:21ff.). In fact, in the Septuagint translation of verse 26b the translators replace the name Yahweh with the phrase ἄγγελος κυρίου, the Angel of Yahweh! The LXX reads, “συνήντησεν αὐτῷ ἄγγελος κυρίου καὶ ἔζητει αὐτὸν ἀποκτείναι.” LXX Septuaginta, ed. Alfred Rahlfs (Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt / Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1935), 92.

18 Moses’ communication of this name to the children of Israel resulted in a widespread knowledge of the name. It is this widespread knowledge that increases the force of Hosea’s prophetic word in Hosea 1:9. Literally translated, the Hebrew phrase יַעֲרָבִי ḫוּדָא נַעֲרָבִי could be rendered “I am not I AM for you.” This is essentially a reversal of what he had promised here in Exodus 3:14. It is the same widespread knowledge of this name that explains why the Jews immediately were going to stone Jesus when he applied the name to himself in John 8:58. Jesus said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I AM” (NAU, emphasis added; Jn 8:24).
sandles off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground” (3:5, ESV). The ground on which Moses is standing is holy because of the presence of the Angel of Yahweh. The Angel of Yahweh is thus asserting his own holiness by this command to Moses. Such a command would be inappropriate for anyone other than God.

The Angel of Yahweh also displays his supernatural and sovereign power. The manner of his appearance is in itself supernatural—a bush that is burning but is not consumed (3:2-3). In addition the Angel of Yahweh demonstrates his power and sovereignty by providing Moses with supernatural signs to perform (Ex 4:2-9). The supernatural and sovereign power of the Angel, moreover, is evident not only from the signs but also from his ability to transfer that power to another. The signs indicate the power to create (turning a wooden rod to a serpent and back again), power over disease (turning Moses’ hand leprous and back again), and power over nature (turning the Nile to blood). His creative ability is further indicated by his claim to have created man’s mouth (Ex 4:11). His sovereignty is indicated as well as he claims to give man the ability to use his senses of sight and hearing, and his speech (Ex 4:11). Two final illustrations of the Angel’s sovereignty and supernatural power include his promise to strike Egypt with wonders (Ex 3:20) and his promise to grant the Israelites favor in the sight of the Egyptians (Ex 3:21).

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19 Later in Exodus God gives a similar command to Moses when he tells him to set limits around Mount Sinai so that the people do not get too close (Ex 19:12; Josh 5:15).

20 In Exodus 4:21 Yahweh instructs Moses further, “When you go back to Egypt see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders which I have put in your power; but I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go.” The miraculous signs served thus as authentication of Moses before Israel and Pharaoh.
A final conclusion drawn from this passage is that the Angel of Yahweh is revealed to be the God of the Exodus. It is the Angel of Yahweh who comes in faithfulness to the covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to bring them out of Egypt and into the Promised Land (Ex 3:10), and it is Angel of Yahweh who calls, sends, and invests Moses with power for his mission. The Angel of Yahweh himself promises to strike Egypt with wonders (3:20), and it is the Angel of Yahweh who will grant Israel favor from the Egyptians when they leave (3:21). Such actions on the part of the Angel of Yahweh evidence his leadership and administration of the Exodus.

*The Angel of God in the Shekinah Cloud at the Red Sea (Exodus 14:19-31)*

Following the plague of the firstborn in Egypt and Pharaoh’s command to let the people go, the people left Egypt with Yahweh leading them on their way in the Shekinah cloud, which transitioned between a pillar of cloud during the day and a pillar of fire at night (Ex 13:21). As Pharaoh and the Egyptian army approach the children of Israel from behind, Moses writes that the “Angel of God” (הַנַּחַל יְהֹוָה) is the one who was going before them as their divine

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21 The cloudy pillar and fiery pillar, which G. F. Oehler defines as the “continuous localization of the divine presence” or the Shekinah, is distinct from other theophanic revelation in that it remained within sight of the people by day and night. These were not mere symbols that God was somehow mystically with them. Rather, the text here and on other occasions indicates that the localized presence of Yahweh was in the Shekinah cloud (Ex 13:21). This does not mean that Israel actually saw Yahweh. The cloud and the fire functioned as a revelation of Yahweh’s presence while at the same time concealing his glory from sight. The Shekinah was visible to the people of Israel throughout the Exodus (Ex 13:22; Num 9:15-22; Num 14:14; Deut 1:32, 33; 31:15). The final time it is mentioned in the Pentateuch is when Yahweh descends in the cloud on the Tabernacle to meet with Moses (Deut 31:15). G. F. Oehler suggests on the basis of the presence of the cherubim that the Shekinah was present first in the Garden of Eden (Gen 3:24). Oehler, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 137.
vanguard (Ex 14:19-20). To hinder the Egyptian advance, the Angel of God repositioned himself behind the people of Israel.

Coinciding with the repositioning of the Angel of God to be the Divine Rearward was the movement of the Shekinah cloud, which then began to serve a dual purpose (Ex 14:19). The Shekinah cloud became a visual barrier to the Egyptians, making it impossible for them to see the Israelites through the night. For the Israelites on the other side, the Shekinah cloud provided light by its fire, enabling them to see in their night crossing of the Red Sea (Ex 14:20).

The Egyptian pursuit was further hindered in the morning watch when Yahweh looked down through the Shekinah cloud at the advancing Egyptian army and “troubled” them (Ex 14:24). In the resulting panic the Egyptians recognized that Yahweh himself was fighting for the Israelites (Ex 14:25). In addition, he further disabled them by causing their chariot wheels to swerve and fall off. In spite of this divine resistance, the Egyptian pursuit continued right into the basin of the Red Sea, and upon Yahweh’s command Moses raised his hand over the sea and the sea covered and destroyed the Egyptian army.

Several points emerge from this account. The first is that the Angel of God is identified as Yahweh. When the Shekinah cloud is first mentioned, it is Yahweh himself who goes before the people in the cloud (Gen 13:20-21). The phrase ָּיֶלֶךְ הַגֵּד (Angel of God) is identical with the designation ָּיֶלֶךְ יְהֹウェָה (Angel of Yahweh). The designation ָּיֶלֶךְ הַגֵּד appears only one other time in the Pentateuch (Gen 31:11). As Jacob relates his theophanic dream to his wives, he quotes the Angel of God, who identifies himself as the God of Bethel. The phrase occurs four other times in Scripture (Jdg 6:20, 13:6, 9; 2 Sam 14:20).

23 The Hebrew verb ָּתִית, translated “trouble,” “destroy,” or “bring into confusion,” occurs thirteen times in the Old Testament, often with God or Yahweh as the subject (Ex 23:27; Deut 2:15; Jos 10:10; Judg 4:15; 1 Sam 7:10; Psa 18:15, 144:6). In Isaiah 28:28 it describes what happens to grain when the threshing wheel runs over it. Yahweh brings the Egyptians into confusion by simply looking at them through the cloud.
second time the Shekinah cloud is mentioned it is the Angel of God who had been going before them in the cloud (Gen 14:19-20). The third time it is once again Yahweh who looks down through the cloud upon the Egyptians (Gen 14:24). The alternation of terms is not meant to confuse but to confirm the identity of the Angel of God as Yahweh himself. The Angel of God, who is also the Angel of Yahweh, is rightly identified as Yahweh himself (cf. Gen 31:11-13; Gen 28:12ff.).

A second conclusion from this passage is that the Angel of God inhabits the Shekinah cloud. The text indicates that when he moves, the Shekinah cloud moves with him (Ex 14:19-20). This phenomenon is a distinct advance in revelation:

During the earlier period when the kingdom offered in the Abrahamic promises was still abeyant, God appeared as the Angel, apart from the Glory phenomena. . . . God’s self-revelation to Israel in this age of exodus triumph and kingdom founding was still a revelation through the Angel, but now the Angel appeared in union with the Spirit-Presence, in the more public and continuous and awesome epiphany of the Glory-cloud.  

The advance in revelation is that through the cloud God presents himself in a continuous and very visible way to all of the covenant people. This does not mean that he himself is necessarily seen. Rather, the cloud serves to conceal the sight of his glory. This contrasts with his appearances in the patriarchal period, when no cloud or concealing was present.

A further conclusion may be made as well from the presence of the Angel of God in the Shekinah cloud. If the Angel inhabits the cloud, then the presence of the cloud indicates the presence of the Angel of God/Angel of Yahweh, even

when the Angel of Yahweh is not specifically mentioned.\textsuperscript{25} This means, of course, that on other occasions when Yahweh descends in the cloud to speak to Moses, it is the Angel of Yahweh who speaks to him (cf. Ex 33:9). The chart below identifies all of the theophanies of Exodus including those in which the Shekinah cloud and Yahweh appear in union.\textsuperscript{26}

**Table 2. Theophanic Revelation and the Shekinah Cloud in Exodus**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exodus Text</th>
<th>Recipient(s)</th>
<th>Name or Title(s) of God in context</th>
<th>Type of Theophany</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3:1-4:17</td>
<td>Moses</td>
<td>Angel of Yahweh, I AM, Yahweh, Elohim</td>
<td>visible/audible “burning bush”</td>
<td>Horeb (Sinai)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:24-26</td>
<td>Moses</td>
<td>Yahweh</td>
<td>visible/audible</td>
<td>On the way to Egypt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13:20-21</td>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>Yahweh</td>
<td>visible (cloud)</td>
<td>Leaving Egypt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14:19-20</td>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>The Angel of Elohim</td>
<td>visible (cloud)</td>
<td>Red Sea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14:24</td>
<td>Egyptians</td>
<td>Yahweh</td>
<td>visible (cloud)</td>
<td>Red Sea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16:10</td>
<td>Israel, Moses</td>
<td>Glory of Yahweh, Yahweh</td>
<td>visible (cloud)/audible (to Moses only)</td>
<td>Wilderness of Sin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17:6</td>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>Yahweh</td>
<td>visible (cloud)</td>
<td>Horeb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19:3-6</td>
<td>Moses</td>
<td>Yahweh</td>
<td>audible (cloud)</td>
<td>Mount Sinai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19:8-13</td>
<td>Moses</td>
<td>Yahweh</td>
<td>visible (cloud)</td>
<td>Mount Sinai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19:17-24\textsuperscript{27}</td>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>Yahweh</td>
<td>visible (cloud) /audible</td>
<td>Mount Sinai</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{25} The designations Angel of God and Angel of Yahweh are no longer used in Exodus, but there are numerous references to Yahweh’s presence in the cloud in Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

\textsuperscript{26} The same phenomenon may be observed in Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. When Yahweh appears and speaks to Moses, the cloud appears. In Leviticus Yahweh says that he will appear in the cloud above the mercy seat (Lev 16:2, 13). In Numbers 9 Moses describes how Israel responded to the movement of the cloud over the tabernacle. If it stayed over the tabernacle, they camped. If it moved, they followed it (Num 9:15-22). See also Numbers 10:11-12, 34; 11:25; 12:5-10; 14:13-14; 16:42-50; Deuteronomy 31:15.

\textsuperscript{27} Deuteronomy 4:12-15 explicitly says that they saw no form (יִתְנָה) at Sinai. The context of Deuteronomy 4 indicates that God did not allow them to see him to guard them from idolatry.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exodus Text</th>
<th>Recipient(s)</th>
<th>Name or Title(s) of God in context</th>
<th>Type of Theophany</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20:1-18</td>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>Yahweh</td>
<td>visible (cloud-fire)/audible</td>
<td>Mount Sinai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20:21-24:2</td>
<td>Moses, Aaron</td>
<td>Yahweh</td>
<td>visible (cloud)/audible</td>
<td>Mount Sinai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24:9-12</td>
<td>Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, elders of Israel</td>
<td>God of Israel</td>
<td>visible (form: “under His feet”)</td>
<td>Mount Sinai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24:15-31:17</td>
<td>Moses, Joshua, Israel</td>
<td>Glory of Yahweh</td>
<td>visible (cloud)/audible</td>
<td>Mount Sinai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32:31-34</td>
<td>Moses</td>
<td>Yahweh</td>
<td>visible?/audible</td>
<td>Mount Sinai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33:7-11</td>
<td>Moses, Joshua</td>
<td>Yahweh</td>
<td>visible (cloud)/audible</td>
<td>Tent of Meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33:12-23</td>
<td>Moses</td>
<td>Yahweh</td>
<td>visible/audible</td>
<td>Tent of Meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex 34:5-28</td>
<td>Moses</td>
<td>Yahweh</td>
<td>visible (cloud)/audible (form: “hand,” “back”)</td>
<td>Mount Sinai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex 34:34-35</td>
<td>Moses</td>
<td>Yahweh</td>
<td>visible (cloud?)/audible</td>
<td>Tent of Meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex 40:1-15</td>
<td>Moses</td>
<td>Yahweh</td>
<td>visible (cloud?)/audible</td>
<td>Tent of Meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex 40:34-35</td>
<td>Israel, Moses</td>
<td>Glory of Yahweh</td>
<td>visible (cloud)/audible</td>
<td>Tabernacle (at Sinai)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex 40:36-38</td>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>Cloud of Yahweh</td>
<td>visible (cloud)</td>
<td>Tent of Meeting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Aid of the Covenant Angel promised to Israel (Exodus 23:20-23)

After the revelation of the Decalogue, Yahweh gave the children of Israel additional laws in the “book of the Covenant” (םסר עיסוי) (Ex 24:7). In the final section of the book of the Covenant, he instructs them concerning the conquest of the Promised Land. In the context of that discussion, Yahweh promises that he would provide “an angel” (שלום יואל) who will guide and protect them through the wilderness and bring them into the Promised Land. This promise, moreover,

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28 This passage explains how the cloud typically descended when Moses entered the Tent of Meeting. Thus it refers to Moses’ numerous meetings with Yahweh.

29 Exodus 40:36-38 is similar to Exodus 33:7-11 in that it explains the manner in which the cloud ascended and descended upon the Tent of Meeting/Tabernacle.

30 This promise of a guiding angel is very similar to the promise made by Abraham to his servant who went to look for a bride for the recipient of the heir of the covenant (cf. Gen 24:7; 24:40).
was accompanied by explicit instructions regarding their relationship to this angel.\textsuperscript{31} The children of Israel were to “pay careful attention to him and obey his voice” (Ex 23:21, ESV), and they were not to rebel against him. Moreover, the reasons for this strong warning include the fact that the angel would not pardon their transgressions. This, Yahweh says, is because “My name is in him” (Ex 23:21, ESV). Furthermore, obedience to the angel would result in Yahweh’s aid as they continued in their journey toward the Promised Land. He would become an enemy to their enemies and adversary to their adversaries, and he would bring them into the land and cut off their enemies (Ex 23:23).

Perhaps the most difficult aspect of this passage is the fact that the anarthrous substantive מֵלָאךְ \textsuperscript{32} used at the beginning of the description of the angel seems to suggest that the מֵלָאךְ described here is a created angel. Nevertheless, Vos asserts, “The entire tenor of this passage forbids our thinking that an ordinary angel is spoken of, although the text reads ‘an angel,’ not ‘the angel.’” Yahweh’s statement about the מֵלָאךְ in verse 21 in particular, “My name is in

\textsuperscript{31} The title “Angel of the Covenant,” while not used here in Exodus, is an appropriate designation for this Angel. God’s instruction regarding this angel comes in the book of the covenant (Ex 24:7), and he functions within the confines of a covenant relationship. Meredith Kline writes of this angel, “Like the prophets raised up after the order of Moses, the Angel had a covenantal mission—Malachi calls him ‘the Angel of the covenant’ (Mal 3:1) and Yahweh, speaking as Lord of the covenant in ‘the book of the covenant,’ calls him ‘my Angel’ (Ex 23:23).” \textit{Images of the Spirit}, 75.

\textsuperscript{32} \textit{Biblical Theology}, 107. While the Hebrew article is sometimes important in identifying the Angel of Yahweh/Angel of God, it cannot be the decisive factor. The Hebrew article is in fact never present when the designation מֵלָאךְ occurs. The definiteness of מֵלָאךְ is due to the proper name Yahweh which follows. Hengstenberg quotes Keil on the lack of the definite article in Exodus 23:20: “The angel is certainly also an angel. We have first of all a general term, and then a more particular description, from which we may see that it is not an ordinary angel that is spoken of, but one of exalted dignity and superior nature.” Emphasis original. \textit{Christology}, 4:254.
Him,” indicates that this is not a created angel. ³³ Such language indicates that the Angel himself bears Yahweh’s name and therefore is Yahweh. ³⁴

A further indication of the Angel’s identity in this brief passage about him is his prerogative to forgive sins, a right belonging to God alone (Ex 34:7; cf. Isa 43:25; Mark 2:7). God instructed the Israelites here that their primary responsibility toward the Angel was careful obedience (Ex 23:21). They were to be cautious before him (“beware of Him,” NAU) and obedient to him, and they were not by any means to rebel against him (Ex 23:21). The primary reason for these warnings is the fact that the Angel would not pardon their transgressions because he bears Yahweh’s name (Ex 23:21). ³⁵ In other words, to directly rebel against the Angel would be rebellion against Yahweh himself (Ex 23:21). Such an egregious sin would not be pardoned, nor would the Angel of Yahweh simply allow them to go their own way. They were his people, and as such they must serve him.

³³ George Bush translates this phrase literally, “My name is in the midst of Him.” Notes on Exodus, 351.

³⁴ This is a remarkable statement in view of the previous phrase, “I will send an angel before you.” Yahweh sends the Angel, yet the Angel bears the name Yahweh. This is yet another passage in which a plurality of persons within the Godhead may be legitimately inferred. Vos says of the phrase for My name is in Him, “Nothing short of identification can be meant by this, for it is stated as the ground why sin committed against this Name-bearing Angel will not be pardoned by Him.” Biblical Theology, 108.

³⁵ Joshua gives the same warning to the people in reference to God, “You are not able to serve the LORD, for he is a holy God. He is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions or your sins” (Josh 24:19, ESV). This is not to say that he is not a forgiving God, but rather that he would not forgive them if they positioned themselves in a continual rebellion against him. John Calvin says on Joshua 24:19, “And when it is said that he will not spare their wickedness, no general rule is laid down, but the discourse is directed, as often elsewhere, against their disobedient temper. It does not refer to faults in general, or to special faults, but is confined to gross denial of God.” John Calvin, Commentary on Joshua, trans. Henry Beveridge [CD-ROM] (Albany, OR: Books for the Ages, 1998), 173.
On the other hand, if Israel obeyed the Angel, they would enjoy his aid and guidance. Yahweh promises that as they obeyed, the Angel would become an enemy to their enemies and “trouble” those who troubled them (Ex 23:22). Moreover, the Angel would bring them safely into the Promised Land and destroy its wicked inhabitants (Ex 23:23).36

This final statement is closely parallel with the first announcement of the Angel of Yahweh as he appeared to Moses at the burning bush. The first announcement of the Angel of Yahweh to Moses included a personal promise to deliver them from the Egyptians and bring them into the Promised Land. The Angel of Yahweh says, “I have come down . . . to bring them up from that land to a good and spacious land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite” (Ex 3:8, NAU; cf. 3:16-17). Moses had heard this promise, and so had the people of Israel by this point. However, the presence of this gracious promise within the book of the covenant was to communicate God’s intent of fulfilling his promise to aid them in their journey and conquest of the land that he had promised to the patriarchs.

In conclusion, the only Angel who fits the description of the Covenant Angel in Exodus 23:20-23 is the Angel of Yahweh. The Angel of Yahweh, in fact, had already performed the function of the Covenant Angel at the Red Sea. He had also already proven himself to be the enemy of his people’s enemies (the Egyptians), and he had already demonstrated that the name Yahweh applied to him (Ex 4:11). The Angel of the Covenant is the Angel of Yahweh.

36 The force of the Hiphil verb הָדַקְתָּ is very strong. It means “to efface” or “annihilate,” and it is used synonymously with the verb שָׁמֵרָה in 1 Kings 13:34, which means “to exterminate.” BDB, 470.
God’s first response to the sin of the people of Israel at the base of Mount Sinai was a threat to destroy them. He also offered to make a great nation from Moses himself. Moses, however, interceded for the idolatrous nation, and Yahweh relented from his threat, ultimately for the sake of his own reputation (Ex 32:11-14). Following Moses’ rebuke of the people and the execution of some of the idolaters, Moses returned to Yahweh and asked for forgiveness (Ex 32:31-33). Yahweh granted Moses his request and told him, “But go now, lead the people where I told you. Behold, my angel shall go before you” (Ex 32:34, NAU). In effect this was a statement of forgiveness, since the command to lead the people who had sinned was a part of his instruction. In addition, Yahweh promises, “My angel [יהוה|] shall go before you” (Ex 32:34, ESV). This promise seems to be a reaffirmation of the promise to guide and protect Israel through the agency of the Name-bearing Angel (Ex 23:20-23). Nevertheless, this identification is not so simple in the light of the following context.

The problem with identifying the angel mentioned in Exodus 32:34 with the Name-bearing, Covenant Angel (23:20-23) is that Yahweh seems to distinguish the very same לאלהי from his own presence in chapter 33. He first says that he will send his angel before them (33:2), but in the next phrase he says that he will not go up in the midst of Israel because of their obstinate character (Ex 33:3, 5). It stands to reason that if the angel mentioned in 32:34 and 33:2 will go with Israel but the presence of God will not, then the said לאלהי cannot be the Name-bearing Angel promised in the book of the Covenant (Ex 23:20-23). If the Name-bearing Angel went with them, the presence of God would be with them as well.
One solution to this problem is to distinguish this מִלָּחַם in chapters 32-33 from the Name-bearing מִלָּחַם mentioned in the Book of the Covenant (Ex 23:20-23). Following this line of reasoning, Yahweh would be promising that a created angel would take the place of the divine Name-bearing Angel. To have a created מִלָּחַם as their guide would in effect be a consequence for their sin, as it would be a lesser privilege than having the Angel of Yahweh himself to guide them. Moreover, no contradiction would be presented in the context if an inferior angel is promised and Yahweh at the same time removes his presence from the midst of Israel (Ex 33:3).

Militating against this view is the fact that the promise of the Angel is stated almost exactly the same in Exodus 32:34 and Exodus 23:23: “My Angel shall go before you.” In addition, Yahweh’s command to Moses to go to the Promised Land and his assurance of the aid of the Angel seem to rest on Moses’ prior knowledge of the promise of the Name-bearing Angel in the Book of the Covenant (Ex 23:20-23). Such a distinction, therefore, between the מִלָּחַם mentioned in Exodus 23 and the one mentioned in Exodus 32 seems artificial at best. However, if this is the Name-bearing Angel, one must still reckon with Yahweh’s statement in chapter 33:2, “I will not go up among you.”

One possible explanation of this difficulty may be found by looking at exactly what Yahweh said regarding the מִלָּחַם in 32:34 and 33:2. Yahweh’s statement regarding the מִלָּחַם immediately follows Moses’ intercession for the people after they had sinned: “But now go, lead the people to the place about

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which I have spoken to you; behold, my angel shall go before you” (Ex 32:34, ESV). The latter part of this statement is exactly the same in Exodus 23:23 except for the order of the words. However, the second statement Yahweh makes regarding the מִלְךָ (Ex 33:2) is somewhat different from the promise of Exodus 23. In Exodus 23:20 Yahweh says, “Behold, I am going to send an angel before you to guard you along the way and to bring you into the place which I have prepared.” He also says, “For my Angel will go before you and bring you in to the land” (Ex 23:23, NAU). In Exodus 33:2, however, Yahweh says, “I will send an angel before you, and I will drive out the Canaanites, the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites” (ESV).

The difference between the two passages has to do with the locale of the מִלְךָ. The angel described in Exodus 33:2 is no longer with the people but ahead of them, acting on their behalf as he drives out the inhabitants of the land. In other words, in saying that God would send an angel before them, he is in effect saying that the מִלְךָ will not go with them. In that case, the result would be the same whether the angel were an inferior angel or the Angel of Yahweh. Israel had forfeited their privilege to have God’s presence with them.

A further explanation of the surrounding context is given by Meredith Kline, who says the key to understanding what is happening in Exodus 32 and 33 has to do with the distinction between the Shekinah cloud theophany and the

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38 In Exodus 32:34 the text reads as follows: מִלְךָ יְהוָה לְקַבֵּץ. In Exodus 23:23 the text reads as follows: מִלְךָ יְהוָה לְקַבֵּץ.

39 A parallel statement to this one is found in the promise that Yahweh made to send hornets before Israel into the land to drive out its inhabitants (Ex 23:28). The sending of hornets before them would be an entirely different thing from sending the hornets with them! This is not in any way to be construed that the מִלְךָ and the hornets have anything to do with one another.
Angel theophany. Kline suggests that Yahweh’s statement, “I will not go up in your midst” (Ex 33:2), refers directly to Yahweh’s threat to remove the Shekinah cloud theophany. By saying, “I will not go up in your midst,” Yahweh is effectively annulling this stated intention to dwell in the midst of Israel in the tabernacle by his continuously localized presence in the Shekinah cloud (Ex 25:8). The reason he gives for this decree, moreover, is a merciful one, “Should I go up in your midst for one moment, I would destroy you” (Ex 33:5, NAU). Indeed, the greatest danger that Israel faced was not from their enemies from without, but from their close proximity to the presence of God within their camp.

The explanation that immediately follows in the context of the promise of the Angel supports Kline’s distinction. Immediately after Yahweh’s threat to remove his presence from the midst of Israel (Ex 33:3), Moses explains his custom

40 “The basic issue then in the Exodus 32 and 33 negotiations was whether the Glory-Presence of God, the Shekinah cloud clearly visible to all far and wide, would continue with Israel or whether there would be a return to the more private mode of theophany in the form of more intermittent appearances of the Angel apart from the Glory.” Images of the Spirit, 73.

41 The Shekinah cloud theophany was different from the Angel theophany in its continual duration on the journey to the Promised Land and its visibility to the entire nation of Israel. The Shekinah cloud went before them as they journeyed and rested over the tabernacle in the very center of Israel’s camp when they were not moving (Ex 25:8, 40:33-38; Num 1:50-53, 9:15-23). The appearances of the Angel, on the other hand, were intermittent and usually privy only to Moses.

42 Following the ratification of the Covenant and the Covenant meal (Ex 24), Yahweh instructed Moses to build a sanctuary so that he could dwell with the people (Ex 25:8). The presence of the sanctuary in the midst of Israel was threatened, however, due to the incident of the golden calf. Thus after Moses’ intercession for the people, God announces that he would withdraw his presence from the midst of them so that they would not be destroyed (Ex 33:3, 5). (cf. Ex 25:8). That Israel had come to appreciate the Shekinah presence by this point is evident by their mourning (Ex 33:4, 6).

43 Umberto Cassuto paraphrases the passage, “If, now, I cause My Presence to dwell among you, your responsibility will be so much the greater and the punishment for your sins so much severer.” A Commentary on the Book of Exodus, 426-427.
of leaving Israel’s camp to speak to Yahweh at the tent of meeting (Ex 33:7-11). After setting up the tent of meeting, Moses would go out to meet with Yahweh at the tent. His entrance into the tent, moreover, corresponded with the descent of Yahweh in the Shekinah cloud, which would remain at the entrance to the tent as Moses spoke to Yahweh (Ex 33:9-10).

The verse immediately following the description of Moses’ custom records a conversation between Moses and Yahweh, which is, according to the context, taking place outside the camp of Israel at the tent of meeting. It is at the tent that Moses intercedes for Yahweh’s presence to go with Israel. Arguing on the basis of his personal relationship of favor with Yahweh (Ex 33:12) and the fact that the people of Israel were still his people (33:13), Moses intercedes for the favor of Yahweh (v.13). Yahweh answers his intercession with the promise, “My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest” (Ex 33:14, ESV). Thus the threats of 33:2-3 never came about, and Yahweh promises Moses that he would go with Israel in his public theophanic presence.

In conclusion, the twice-repeated promise of the Angel (Ex 32:34, 33:2-3) was Yahweh’s reaffirmation of the promise made regarding the Name-bearing, Covenant Angel (Ex 23:20-23) with one modification. The Name-bearing, Covenant Angel would go before Israel into the land to drive out its inhabitants rather than with them as they journeyed (Ex 32:34; 33:2). The reaffirmation coincided, moreover, with Yahweh’s threat to remove the more public theophanic revelation of the Shekinah cloud from their midst (cf. Ex 25:8). This

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44 The tent of meeting preceded the tabernacle, and the tabernacle assumed its name once it was built. The two names are combined in one phrase at the end of Exodus as “the tabernacle of the tent of meeting” (Ex 40:2; cf. 40:35).

45 The word, literally “My face,” is usually translated “My presence.” The Angel is later called “the Angel of His Presence” in Isaiah 63:9.
threat, however, was not carried out due to Moses’ intercession for Israel. In answer to Moses God once again promised his public presence in the theophanic Shekinah cloud (33:12-14).

*The Angel who brought Israel out of Egypt (Numbers 20:16)*

Another reference to the Angel of Yahweh is found on the lips of messengers that Moses sent to the king of Edom from their encampment of Israel at Kadesh (Num 20:16). Summarizing how the children of Israel had made it to the border of Edom after so many years, the messengers said, “But when we cried out to the LORD, he heard our voice and sent an angel and brought us out from Egypt; now behold, we are at Kadesh, a town on the edge of your territory” (Ex 20:16, NAU). In this brief statement the Israelite messengers summarize the entire deliverance from Egypt. More specifically, they credit their deliverance to a מַלֵאך who was sent from God.

The מַלֵאך in view in the statement of the messengers can be none other than the Angel of Yahweh, for no other Angel can properly be credited with redeeming Israel from Egypt. As Moses writes the story of the Exodus, in fact, he bookends his account with references to the Angel of Yahweh. He begins with his own call to service, which was initiated by the Angel of Yahweh (Ex 3-4), and

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46 Kline offers two reasons for Moses’ urgency here. “What Moses desired was the clearest possible assurance of the restoration of the covenant favor of God that had been forfeited in Israel’s breaking of the covenant in the matter of the golden calf. His concern was to secure certification of his own mediatorial vocation before the eyes of Israel and attestation of Israel’s election before the eyes of the Egyptians and other nations.” *Images of the Spirit*, 73.

47 George Heidt suggests two reasons that these messengers were inexplicit in their reference to the Angel of Yahweh: “Perhaps they purposely spoke vaguely since they were speaking to idolaters; perhaps the word alone was sufficient to convey the idea intended.” *Angelology*, 82.
he notes the critical actions of the Angel of God that secured Israel’s final deliverance from the Egyptian army (Ex 14).

An additional conclusion drawn from this brief reference to the Angel is that this reference indicates a widespread knowledge of the Angel within the nation of Israel. The fact that a reference to the Angel is coming from the mouth of Israelite messengers (Num 20:16) and not Moses himself indicates that common Israelites were also keenly aware of the Angel. Indeed, the messengers marked the fact that they themselves had cried out to Yahweh and that the Angel was sent in response to their cries (20:16). Such knowledge of the Angel may have come initially through Moses’ first communication to the elders of Israel upon his return from Midian (Ex 4:28-31). It may also have been due to their awareness of the Angel’s presence at the Red Sea (Ex 14:19). 48 However, when the Book of the Covenant was read in the hearing of the people at Sinai, they would have heard of the Name-bearing Covenant Angel (Ex 24:7; cf. Ex 23:20-23).

The Angel of Yahweh opposes Balak and Balaam (Numbers 22-24)

The incident involving Balaam the son of Beor and the Angel of Yahweh described in Numbers 22-24 provides a unique look into the ministry of the Angel of the Covenant as he defended Israel against its enemies. God had promised in the Book of the Covenant that the Name-bearing Angel would oppose the enemies of Israel (Ex 23:20-23), though he did not describe what form that opposition would take. Unlike the incident involving the Egyptians at the Red Sea, Moab threatened Israel by acting covertly and with unconventional means. The Angel of Yahweh personally and directly opposed Moab’s plan and

48 Because the account in Exodus is written from the standpoint of one who had interacted with the Angel of Yahweh personally (Moses), it is not always possible to ascertain the level of Israel’s awareness of the Angel’s protection.
commandeered the operation in such a way that the attempt to curse Israel was turned into a blessing.  

Israel’s close proximity to Moab, Israel’s recent conquests of the two most powerful kings in the region, and the sheer size of Israel’s population caused the Moabites to try to counter an Israelite incursion into Moab (Num 22:1-3). In addition to making the Midianites his allies, Balak, king of Moab, sends a delegation to the land of Aram with money to hire Balaam the diviner to place a curse upon the nation of Israel (Num 22:5-7). Before Balaam agrees to go along, he inquires of Yahweh, whom he remarkably calls “my God,” in spite of his unfamiliarity with the people of Israel (Num 22:11-12, 19). Yahweh responds to Balaam’s inquiry by coming to him in a theophanic revelation and refusing to let him go with the delegation (Num 22:8-14). Not long afterward a second delegation from Balak arrives and initially receives the same answer from Balaam. However, Balaam invites them to stay the night so he could inquire again of Yahweh (Num 22:15-21). Yahweh meets him again in a second theophanic revelation and gives him conditions upon which he could go with the delegation.

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49 Victor Hamilton suggests that Balaam may have provided the information about this incident (Num 22-24) in his own defense when Israel found him fighting against them in the battle of Midian (Num 31:8ff.). *Handbook on the Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982), 360. Another possibility is that the Angel of Yahweh himself provided the information to Moses.

50 Balaam is called a “diviner” in Joshua 13:22. This fact about him may also be inferred from Num 22:5-7. The fact that his home was in the land of Aram is evident from his prophecy (Num 23:7).

51 The phrase *God came to Balaam* refers most naturally to a direct theophanic encounter (i.e., not a dream, not a vision). However, it could have happened in a dream or night vision. Abraham’s contemporary Abimelech held a conversation with God in a theophanic dream, as did Solomon later in Israel’s history (Gen 20:3-7; 1 Ki 3:5-15).
delegation. In defiance of one of the conditions, Balaam immediately leaves with the delegation in the morning back to Moab.\(^5^2\)

As Balaam journeys, the Angel of Yahweh immediately and personally opposes him, standing in the path as an adversary (םַעְפָּה) against him with his sword drawn (Num 22:21-35). First meeting Balaam and his donkey in a path near a field (v.23), then in a path between two vineyards (v.24-25), and finally in a narrow place (perhaps in a narrow mountain pass) (v.26-27), the Angel of Yahweh stands with deadly intent to kill Balaam (Num 22:33). On each occasion Balaam’s donkey perceives the threat and saves Balaam by leaving the path or stopping completely. After Yahweh finally opens Balaam’s eyes on the third occasion, Balaam sees the Angel of Yahweh standing before him with his sword drawn and falls on his face in fear (Num 22:31).

The Angel of Yahweh then confronts Balaam for his sin: “Behold, I have come out as an adversary, because your way was contrary to me” (Num 22:32b, NAU).\(^5^3\) Balaam immediately recognizes the Angel of Yahweh, confessing his sin to him and stating his willingness to return home. Instead of sending him home, however, the Angel of Yahweh allows him to go with the delegation and

\(^{52}\) In God’s second theophanic revelation to Balaam, he granted him permission to go with the delegation if two conditions were met. The first condition was that the men come to call for Balaam, and the second was that Balaam speak only what God told him to say: “Only the word that I speak to you shall you do” (Num 22:20, NAU). In the morning Balaam fails to wait for the call of the delegation and immediately goes with the men, inciting God’s anger and opposition (Num 22:21-22). By giving him two conditions, Yahweh tested Balaam’s obedience. His disobedience to the first condition raised the question of whether he would also disobey the other.

\(^{53}\) The NIV translates the latter half of this phrase, “I have come here to oppose you because your path is a reckless one before me.” The Hebrew word וְנָפַל occurs one other time, in Job 16:11, where Job says of God, “God gives me up to the ungodly and casts (נפַל) me into the hands of the wicked” (ESV). Another translation of the phrase could be the following: “thou hast precipitated the journey in front of me.” BDB, 437. The sense of the word seems to indicate the recklessness and haste with which Balaam left to go with the Moabite delegation (cf. 2 Pet 2:16).
instructs him, “Go with the men, but you shall speak only the word which I tell you” (Num 22:35, NAU).

Although the designation Angel of Yahweh is not mentioned again after verse 35 until the end of the story (Num 24:25), an indication of the Angel’s continued presence remains. The final stipulation the Angel of Yahweh gives Balaam is that Balaam must speak only the words that the Angel of Yahweh himself gave him (v.35). As the events of the text unfold, however, Balaam obtains the words that he is to speak from Elohim and Yahweh (23:4,16). After directing Balak to make seven altars and offer offerings of a bull and a ram on each altar to Yahweh (Num 23:1-4), Balaam goes to meet Elohim and obtain the words he is to speak (23:3). As he does on the first occasion, the text states that Elohim meets him, but Yahweh gives him the words to speak (23:5). After a second set of altars are built in another location and a second set of sacrifices are made, Balaam leaves again and Yahweh meets him to give him the words to speak (Num 23:16). It has already been established that the Angel of Yahweh is sometimes called Yahweh and Elohim (Ex 3-4:17). Thus for the Angel of Yahweh to be called such as the narrative continues is entirely in keeping with antecedent revelation about him. Moreover, if the Angel’s final instruction to Balaam means anything at all (Num 22:35), he must necessarily be the one who provides Balaam with the words to speak (cf. 23:4,16).

This last point leads to a simple conclusion. The word of the Angel of Yahweh is the word of God. The Angel tells Balaam that he must speak the

54 Balaam’s words to Yahweh about the sacrifices indicate that the burnt offerings offered by Balak are offered to him (23:4).

55 The same alternation of Yahweh and Elohim is observable in many passages in the Pentateuch, including in Exodus 3-4:17.
words that he (the Angel of Yahweh) gives him (Num 22:35). However, the text then states that “Yahweh” gives the words to Balaam, and he must speak them, even when Balak tells him to stop (Num 23:25-27). This alternation of terms between the Angel of Yahweh and Yahweh or Elohim comes as no surprise. The Angel of Yahweh bears the Divine Name, and he is also called Elohim (cf. Ex 3-4).

Two other conclusions also emerge from this text. First, the actions of the Angel described in these chapters come in fulfillment of the promises regarding the Angel in the book of the Covenant (Ex 23:20-23). Israel is not yet in the Promised Land as these events with Balaam take place, and the Angel of Yahweh here fulfills the promise of guarding Israel along the way (Ex 23:20). The Angel of Yahweh as well personally opposes the enemies of Israel by standing as an adversary against them (Ex 23:22). His direct opposition of Balaam in the path on the way to Moab and his thwarting of the plot of Moab against Israel are prime examples of the protection that God had promised in the Covenant.

In addition to protecting Israel, the Angel of Yahweh also blessed Israel through Balaam. The Angel of Yahweh/Yahweh used Balaam to pronounce a blessing on Israel of innumerable population growth (23:10). To this he added the blessing that Israel’s conquests would be similar to those of a lioness who would not rest until she had eaten her prey (i.e., Israel would be successful in her military campaigns) (23:24). After these blessings Balaam no longer went to meet with the Angel of Yahweh/God, but the Spirit of God continued to use him to bless Israel. His final blessing of Israel prophesies of Israel’s fruitfulness as a nation (24:5-7), Israel’s national supremacy (24:7), Israel’s Messiah (24:7, 17, 19), and a curse upon her enemies—most notably, Moab (24:14-24)!

56 The curse on Moab is a fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham to curse those who curse him (Gen 12:3).
Moses prays to “Him who dwells in the bush” (Deuteronomy 33:16)

A brief but significant reference to the Angel of Yahweh is found in Moses’ final blessing of the tribes of Israel (Deut 33). After asking God for material blessings for the tribe of Joseph (33:13-16a), Moses asks for “the favor of Him who dwells in the bush” to rest upon Joseph (Deut 33:16b, ESV). The phrase translated “him who dwells in the bush” most naturally refers to the Angel of Yahweh who appeared to Moses in the burning bush at Sinai.  

Thus Moses is asking for the favor of the Divine Angel of Yahweh upon the head of Joseph (33:16b).  

The fact that Moses prays to the one “who dwells in the bush” and asks him for blessing is further indication of the identity of the Angel of Yahweh as God. As God he exercises all of the divine rights and privileges, including the right to bless or curse. Blessing a tribe materially and spiritually is entirely in keeping with his nature and activity as God.

The Commander of Yahweh’s Army appears to Joshua (Joshua 5:13-6:5)

The final appearance of the Angel of Yahweh before the entrance of the children of Israel to the Promised Land takes place on the eve of the conquest of the first Canaanite city, Jericho. Joshua had taken them to the border of the

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57 The translation “dwells” (ESV) is preferable to “dwelt” (NAU, KJV).  לְשׁוֹעִי is a Qal active participle.

58 This final statement regarding the Angel of Yahweh within the Pentateuch is similar to the final reference in Genesis. Just as Jacob was praying for the blessing of the redeeming Angel upon the sons of Joseph (Gen 48:16), here Moses is praying for divine favor upon the same tribe. The word favor is the translation of the word רָאשׁ, a word that means “acceptance” or “goodwill.” BDB, 953. The same word translated “favor” (ךָשָּׁא) occurs just a few verses later in the blessing of the tribe of Naphtali. To the tribe of Naphtali Moses says, “O Naphtali, satisfied with favor and full of the blessing of the LORD, take possession of the sea and the South” (Deut 33:23, NAU). The phrase satisfied with favor is used in synonymous parallelism with the phrase full of the blessing of Yahweh (Deut 33:23).
Promised Land on the side of the Jordan River opposite Jericho, and he stood by himself away from the camp (Josh 5:14). He suddenly meets a “man” (וֹיָא) with his sword drawn and asks for his identity (5:14). The unexpected reply comes, “No; rather I indeed come now as captain of the host of the LORD” (5:14, NAU). The title רְפֵן, translated “captain” or “commander” indicates the highest ranking officer or preeminent leader within a group, not one who is subordinate. By this statement Joshua learns he is speaking to his superior.

As the Commander of Yahweh’s army introduces himself, however, he secures not only Joshua’s allegiance but his worship. As Joshua hears who this “man” is, he immediately falls to the earth and bows to him (Josh 5:14). In addition Joshua calls him “my Lord” (יְהוָה) and offers him his service (Josh 5:14). However, the Commander of Yahweh’s army demands a further honor. He requires Joshua remove his shoes because of the holy ground on which he stands. This command was in reality an indication of his deity, for no created angel would require such reverence. Furthermore, it is a clear allusion to his previous appearance to Moses at the burning bush (Ex 3:5).

Following the parenthetical description of Jericho’s status (v. 1), the Commander of Yahweh’s army is now identified as Yahweh himself (v. 2). He proceeds to inform Joshua that Jericho’s king and powerful warriors have been

59 The word רְפֵן is translated “captain” by some English translations (KJV, NAU, etc.) and “commander” by others (ESV, NIV). However, the word indicates not a lesser officer but the highest ranking official within a group. The word is used of the chief baker and chief cupbearer in Egypt (Gen 40:2). The same term is applied to the chief of Abimelech’s army in Genesis (21:22, 32).

60 It is true that bowing to another was no more than an act of respect at times (Gen 19:1; Gen 23:7), but it also signified worship of God (Ex 4:31; 12:27; 33:10). In addition, created angels refuse worship in Scripture (Rev 19:10; 22:8-9).
given to him and to detail the plan to Joshua for taking the city. The plan first involved the unconventional action of having the men of war circle the city for six days with seven priests who were to bear the Ark of the Covenant and ram’s horns. The priests were to be stationed in the middle of the procession, continually blowing the ram’s horns as they went (Josh 6:9).

At least two conclusions may be drawn from this passage. First, the Commander of Yahweh’s Army is identified here as God. Joshua calls him “my Lord” and offers his service to him, and Joshua bows down to him in worship (Josh 5:14). Furthermore, the Commander of Yahweh’s army requires reverence from Joshua parallel to the reverence required of Moses by the Angel of Yahweh (Josh 5:15; Ex 3:5). Joshua is required to remove his sandals so as not to profane the ground he is standing on, which means the ground is holy from the presence of One who is himself holy (Josh 5:15). The conclusive evidence that the Commander of Yahweh’s army is deity is found when the narrator calls him Yahweh (Josh 6:2).

A second observation about the Angel of Yahweh may be seen in the broader context. God had promised in the book of the Covenant that the Name-bearing Angel would bring Israel into the land (Ex 23:20-23). Although Jericho is by no means the first military engagement Israel faced since they left Egypt, it is a significant one. This is, in fact, the initial entry into the Promised Land. The promised help of the Covenant Angel involved not only protection on the way to the Promised Land but aid in its conquest (Ex 23:20-23). For the Angel of Yahweh

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61 The chapter division of Joshua 6 in the English Bible is unfortunate. Making the parenthetical comment the head of the following chapter unnecessarily bifurcates this interaction with Joshua and the Captain of the Army of Yahweh.

62 The inclusion of the priests and the Ark of the Covenant in this military operation indicates that Yahweh himself went into battle with them.
to arrive on the eve of their first battle and provide the battle plans is thus entirely in keeping with the promises within the Covenant.

**Conclusion**

The biblical record of the period from the call of Moses to the battle of Jericho demonstrates that the Angel of Yahweh himself was responsible for leading the Exodus of the children of Israel from Egypt through the wilderness and to the Promised Land. The Angel of Yahweh initiated the Exodus by calling Moses at the burning bush, and he led Israel in the Shekinah cloud out of Egypt and back to Mount Sinai, where he had first appeared to Moses. At Sinai Yahweh revealed in the Book of the Covenant that his Name-bearing Angel would go with the people as the Guide and Protector of Israel throughout their wilderness wanderings. God also promised in the Book of the Covenant that the Angel would oppose Israel’s enemies, and the Angel of Yahweh fulfilled that promise by opposing the attempt of Balaam and Balak to curse Israel. Finally, the Angel of Yahweh led Israel to the edge of the Promised Land and Jericho, where he appeared to Joshua as the Commander of Yahweh’s army and provided the plan for their first military engagement within the Promised Land.
CHAPTER 6

THE ANGEL OF YAHWEH FROM THE TIME OF THE JUDGES TO THE
ESTABLISHMENT OF THE TEMPLE AT JERUSALEM

The overlap between the last chapter of Joshua and the first two chapters of the book of Judges indicates that Joshua was present at Bochim near the end of his life when the Angel of Yahweh appeared to the people (Jdg 2:1-5). Yahweh, of course, had appeared to him and Moses in the cloud at the tabernacle to commission him before he entered the land of Canaan with the people (Deut 31:14-23). He also saw the Angel of Yahweh (Commander of Yahweh’s Army) on the eve of the battle of Jericho and received the plans for the battle from him (Josh 5:13-6:5). There is thus continuity between the appearances of the Angel of Yahweh in the period of the Exodus and wilderness wanderings and the period of the Judges. During the period of the Judges the Angel of Yahweh appears to Israel at Bochim, to Gideon, to Samson’s parents, and to Samuel. As the nation transitions to following a human king, the Angel of Yahweh appears to David and establishes Jerusalem as Israel’s place of worship.¹

¹ Some writers on the present subject do not believe that the Angel of Yahweh appears at all in the books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles. They argue either that the Angel of Yahweh/Angel of God mentioned in Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles is a created angel or that the Scripture is inexplicit regarding the divine identity of the Angel. A recent dissertation on the subject by Gunther Juncker, for example, treats the appearance to Manoah and his wife and then continues in the very next section with Isaiah 63:9, thus skipping the references to the Angel within Samuel, Kings and Chronicles (2 Sam 14:17; 19:27; 24:16; 1 Kgs 19:4ff.; 2 Kgs 1:3ff.; 19:35; 1 Chron 21:12ff.; 32:21; Psa 34:7 and 35:5-6). His reason is stated in a footnote, “The seemingly abrupt jump from Judges to Isaiah, a jump considerably less abrupt in the MT than in the LXX, is mitigated by the lack of certain references to a divine angel in the canonically-intervening material (i.e., 1-2 Samuel and 1-2 Kings) and by the considerable dependence of the prophets,
The thesis of this chapter is that the divine Angel of Yahweh does indeed appear in these books and that his identity is so well established that even common people of Israel (i.e., not just the leaders and prophets) know and speak of Him. His involvement, furthermore, in the establishment of the “House of God” in Jerusalem further demonstrates his identity as the Covenant Angel mentioned in the book of the Covenant (Ex 23:20-23).

The Angel of Yahweh judges Israel at Bochim (Judges 2:1-5)

The first recorded appearance of the Angel of Yahweh in the book of the Judges takes place at Bochim within the Promised Land. Although its exact location is unknown, Bochim is apparently within the borders of the Promised Land and perhaps within a short distance of Gilgal (Jdg 2:1). The exact timing of this event is also unknown, but the event that follows immediately after the Angel’s appearance in Judges 2 is the death of Joshua. Thus Joshua was still alive when it occurred, but it was after much of the land had been conquered (Jdg 2:2, 6-8). The placement of this passage after the account of Israel’s failure to drive out all the inhabitants of the land (Jdg 1:19-36) suggests that this theophanic encounter took place near the time of Joshua’s final message to the people (Josh 24:28-29; cf. Jdg 2:6-8).

An unusual feature of the Judges 2 theophany is the Angel of Yahweh’s traversing from Gilgal to Bochim (v.1). No reason is stated for the movement of both major and minor, on the patriarchal and exodus-wilderness narratives that so prominently feature the Angel of the LORD.” Jesus and the Angel of the Lord: An Old Testament Paradigm for New Testament Christology (Ph.D. diss., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 2001), 140, footnote 313. Cf. also James A. Borland, Christ in the Old Testament, 25-26.

The initial reference to Bochim within the passage speaks more generally of the event (~ykiBoh;), literally translated “the weepers” or “the place of weeping.” Bochim is mentioned, moreover, in tandem with Gilgal, which also has the Hebrew article affixed to it (~G"l;). Thus the Angel of Yahweh came from “the place of rolling” to “the place of weeping.”
the Angel of Yahweh (v.1), but this is the first instance in Scripture of the Angel’s coming from one earthly location to another to meet with his people. A survey of city of Gilgal in the book of Joshua reveals that Gilgal was Israel’s temporary capital upon first entry into the Promised Land.\(^3\) The tabernacle (tent of meeting) may have been set up there initially until it was moved to a more permanent location at Shiloh (Jdg 18:1).\(^4\) The Angel of Yahweh therefore could be moving from the tent of meeting to the location of the people.

A second unusual feature of this theophany is the absence of any human mediator between the Angel of Yahweh and the people. Unlike Moses’ mediatorial role in the days of the Exodus and wilderness wanderings, no one stands between the Angel and the people as he speaks to them here at Bochim. The text states that the Angel of Yahweh speaks to “all the children of Israel” (v.4), and after his words the people respond with great weeping (v.4). It is conceivable that Joshua acted as mediator here as Moses did on many other occasions, but no such indication is given in the text. Instead, the Angel of Yahweh is said to directly speak to the nation, perhaps out of the Shekinah cloud as Yahweh spoke to the people at Sinai.

The speech of the Angel of Yahweh at Bochim may be divided into five parts. First, the Angel of Yahweh claims responsibility for the Exodus and Israel’s present position within the land (v.1). Second, he reminds them of his

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\(^3\) Israel first camped at Gilgal before they conquered Jericho (Josh 4:19-20). Gilgal was also the location where Israel set up a twelve-stone monument to commemorate the crossing of the Jordan for generations to come (4:20-24). The uncircumcised Israelites who had come through the wilderness were circumcised there in obedience to the law (Josh 5:1ff.). The Gibeonites came to Gilgal to make a covenant with Israel (9:1-6), and the tribe of Judah met with Joshua there to discuss an inheritance for Caleb (Josh 14:6).

\(^4\) Jeremiah 7:2 seems to indicate that Shiloh, not Gilgal, was the first place in the land where the tabernacle was set up. The fact that the Ark of the Covenant went into battle with the children of Israel at Jericho instead of staying behind at Gilgal supports this.
intent to keep the Covenant that he had made with them in spite of their failure (v.1). Third, he reminds Israel of the specific requirements of the Covenant which he made with them (driving out the inhabitants of Canaan and destroying their altars) (v.2), and fourth, he indicts them for not having obeyed the Covenant (v.2). Finally, he pronounces a judgment upon the people of Israel for their sin against him (v.3).

The claims that the Angel of Yahweh makes in the first person in this context agree with and expand upon antecedent revelation about Him.

Table 3. The Claims of the Angel of Yahweh at Bochim

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Person Statements by the Angel of Yahweh⁵</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I brought you up out of the land of Egypt”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“[I] led you into the land”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“which I swore to your fathers”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“I said, ‘I will never break my covenant with you’”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“You have not obeyed Me”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I also said, ‘I will not drive them out before you’”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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In his first statement to the children of Israel, the Angel of Yahweh indicates his identity as the Covenant Angel who had brought them out of Egypt (v.1, cf. Ex 23:20-23). He claims responsibility for bringing Israel out of Egypt and into the Promised Land: “I brought you up out of Egypt and led you into the land which I have sworn to your fathers” (Jdg 2:1, NAU).⁶ In addition, the Angel

⁵ Gunther Juncker says that the first-person statements of the Angel of Yahweh of Judges 2:1-3 indicate that the promise of the Covenant Angel and the surrounding context at the end of the book of the Covenant (Exodus 23:20-33) are of “primary significance” here. Juncker also correctly sees allusions to Exodus 23:20-33 in Exodus 34, Numbers 33, Deuteronomy 7, Joshua 23 and 24. Jesus and the Angel of the Lord, 123.

⁶ This statement is similar to the words of Yahweh on several occasions in the Pentateuch. The initial oath, to which the Angel of Yahweh refers, took place in Genesis 22. The
of Yahweh indicates that he was the one who swore to give the land of Canaan to their fathers.⁷

The following claim of the Angel of Yahweh is just as striking: “I said, ‘I will never break my covenant with you’” (v.1). The words I said indicate that the Angel of Yahweh had said previously, “I will never break my covenant with you.” Nevertheless, neither the Pentateuch nor Joshua contains a text where the Angel of Yahweh is explicitly indicated to have said these words. The only statement in the law that comes close to what the Angel of Yahweh says here is when Yahweh spoke to Moses at Mount Sinai and said, “I will not reject them, nor will I so abhor them as to destroy them, breaking My covenant with them; for I am the LORD their God” (Lev 26:44-45). This revelation came at Mount Sinai, presumably at the tent of meeting (cf. Lev 1:1; Lev 25:1).

In addition to these claims, the Angel of Yahweh details the laws in the book of the Covenant that they had broken, his grace in delivering them from Egypt and bringing them into the Promised Land, and the certainty of his covenant with them (v.2; cf. Ex 23:24, 32).⁸ The mention of their failure and the

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⁷ This is a striking statement, particularly because none of the Genesis passages explicitly state that the Angel of Yahweh swore to give the land to the patriarchs. In each case Moses writes that Yahweh makes the promise (cf. Gen 12:3; 26:3; 28:13). Thus although the designation Angel of Yahweh is not explicitly mentioned within the contexts of the oaths made with the patriarchs, it is proper to recognize those occasions as mediated by the divine Angel of Yahweh (Gen 12:1, 7; 13:17; 15:7; 17:8; 24:7; 26:3; 50:24; Ex 6:8; 13:5, 11; 32:13; 33:1; Num 11:12; 14:16, 23, 30; Deut 1:8, 35 passim).

⁸ The laws broken include their covenanting with the people of Canaan and their failure to destroy the idolatrous altars they found within the land (v.2). The covenant made with Gibeon is a notable example of failure to obey this command (Josh 9), but the fact that other Canaanites were forced into labor implies covenants (Jdg 1:27ff.). Joshua forced the Gibeonites into labor for the house of God after he learned of their deception (Josh 9:22-23).
grace of the Angel heighten the significance of the Angel’s rebuke: “But you have not obeyed my voice. What is this you have done?” (v.2, ESV). \(^9\)

The pronounced judgment following the Angel’s rebuke is severe: “So now I say, I will not drive them out before you, but they shall become thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare to you” (v.3). The first phrase in verse 3, “I will not drive them out from before you,” is a complete reversal of the promise found in the very same contexts of the two commands that they had transgressed (Ex 34:11-13; cf. Ex 23:23, 32). The judgment specified, moreover, directly refers to another warning that Yahweh had given to Moses:

“‘But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then it shall come about that those whom you let remain of them will become as pricks in your eyes and as thorns in your sides, and they will trouble you in the land in which you live” (Num 33:55-56).

After the Angel finishes his pronouncement of judgment, the first response of the people is deep sorrow: “they lifted up their voices and wept” (Jdg 2:4, ESV). \(^10\) The weeping, moreover, was intense (“lifted up their voice,” v.4), corporate (“all the people of Israel,” v.4), and united (“their voice,” v.4). This dramatic response became the defining feature of the event, and the people of Israel memorialized the place by the name “Bochim” (בָּוכִים), which means “the weepers” or “the place of weeping” (v.5).

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\(^9\) The statement of the rebuke in Judges 2:2 is an echo of Exodus 23:21 in the Book of the Covenant, where Yahweh had instructed Israel to obey the voice of the Covenant Angel. Furthermore, the commands prohibiting the making of covenants and requiring the destruction of altars to idols came, interestingly enough, in the context of the promise of the Covenant Angel (Ex 23:24, 32-33). These commands were also given to Moses by Yahweh when he descended in the cloud and made his goodness pass before Moses (Ex 33:19; 34:5, 12-13). Moses later communicated these commands to the children of Israel in Moab during the first of his discourses recorded in Deuteronomy (Deut 7:2, 5).

\(^10\) Such a response is recorded of those who mourned the dead (Gen 50:3; Num 20:29; Deut 34:8). Here it is, in the least, sorrow for the effects of the pronounced judgment.
The presence of true repentance is not indicated by weeping alone, as sorrow may be due to judgment pronounced. The fact that these Israelites offered sacrifices as well to the Angel of Yahweh, who is now called Yahweh (v.5), evidences that the people truly repented of their sin. The word sacrifice is a general term for sacrifice (םָזָה) and likely indicates a sin offering (Lev 4:13-21). In addition, the sacrifice offered to him here follows the instruction of Exodus 20:24, which directs Israel to build an altar and offer sacrifices in the place where he causes his name to be remembered. Bochim was such a place.

The Angel of Yahweh commands Israel to curse Meroz (Judges 5:23)

Following the death of Joshua, the people of Israel rebelled against Yahweh, and he gave them into the hands of their enemies. As they repented and cried out to Him, however, he provided judges for them to lead them out of their captivity. The fourth of these judges was the prophetess Deborah, who led Israel out from under the domination of the Canaanite king Jabin and Sisera, the commander of his army (Jdg 4:6-24). Following the victory of Israel over Jabin, Deborah and Israel’s military leader, Barak, sang a song to commemorate the victory (Jdg 5:1-31). In the middle of the song, Deborah sings of the Angel of Yahweh, who had commanded Israel to curse the inhabitants of the city of Meroz. Deborah sings, “‘Curse Meroz,’ said the angel of the LORD, ‘Utterly curse its inhabitants; Because they did not come to the help of the LORD, To the help of the LORD against the warriors’” (Jdg 5:23, NAU). This brief reference to the Angel of Yahweh records his involvement in the events of the previous chapter, although until the Song of Deborah it was unmentioned.

Sacrifice was allowed at Sinai for this reason (Ex 18:12; 24:4-5; 40:29). However, sacrifice was forbidden unless Yahweh himself chose the place (Deut 12:10-14).
The reason for the Angel of Yahweh’s repeated command to curse Meroz is stated directly. Meroz had failed to help Yahweh fight against Sisera (Jdg 5:23). The Qal imperative plural verb from רָא occurs twice in the passage, suggesting that the command to curse Meroz was given to all of Israel and not to Deborah alone. The second time the verb occurs it is collocated with the infinitive absolute in order to intensify the command.\(^{12}\) The translations “utterly curse” (NAU) or “curse . . . thoroughly” (ESV) give the proper sense. This city was especially culpable because its participation apparently could have given strategic advantage for Israel in battle. The fact that Meroz is not mentioned anywhere else in the Bible is perhaps an aspect of the curse itself, and it may or may not have been an Israelite city.

Two elements of the song highlight the significance of this curse on Meroz. The earlier part of the song suggests that more of the tribes of Israel should have come to fight against Sisera. The initial instruction Deborah gave to Barak was to take ten thousand men from Zebulun and Naphtali and go to Mount Tabor to fight against Sisera (4:6-7). However, the song records that the tribes of Reuben, Dan, and Asher did not come, nor did the inhabitants of Gilead (Jdg 5:15-17). Their failure to help the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali is thus mentioned as a strike against them. It is possible that Meroz was located among one of these tribes, perhaps singled out as an example to the tribes for its failure.

In contrast, the song pronounces a blessing upon Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, a descendant of Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law (Jdg 1:16; 4:11). Thus, although Jael was not even an Israelite, she acted on Israel’s behalf. The song of

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Deborah includes a reference to her as the “most blessed of women” (v.24), a direct contrast to the cursed city of Meroz.

The brief mention of the Angel of Yahweh in this passage and the lack of detail have caused some to question whether this is the same Angel of Yahweh who had appeared at Bochim and throughout the Pentateuch.13 Meredith Kline suggests, however, that this is another instance in which the Angel of Yahweh acts as a prophet.14 The Angel of Yahweh’s prophetic function is evident in the Book of the Covenant when God emphasizes the importance of obeying his voice (Ex 23:21) and earlier as he speaks on behalf of Yahweh. This command to curse, therefore, is in keeping with his prophetic function as the Covenant Angel.15

The Angel of Yahweh calls Gideon (Judges 6:11-24)

The next judge in Israel after Deborah was Gideon, to whom the Angel of Yahweh appeared at a winepress in Ophrah, a city located about twenty miles north and a little east of Jerusalem. The context preceding the appearance of the Angel of Yahweh indicates that Israel had been oppressed by the Midianites, the Amalekites, and the “sons of the east” for seven years (Jdg 6:1-6). After seven

13 Gunther Juncker places this passage in a category of questionable references to the divine Angel of Yahweh. Jesus and the Angel of the Lord, 54.

14 Images of the Spirit, 76.

15 Kline suggests that the book of Judges in particular demonstrates the prophetic function of the Angel of Yahweh. “The authority of the prophets was the delegated divine authority of those who spoke in the name of God (Deut. 18:19); divine authority was original with the Angel-prophet for God’s name was ‘in him’ (Exod. 23:21c). But perhaps the Angel’s identity as a prophet figure—as the divine paradigm prophet of whom the other prophets were human images—comes into its sharpest focus in the Book of Judges where he is depicted as messenger of the covenant engaged in that prophetic function so prominent in the Old Testament, the prosecution of Yahweh’s covenant lawsuit against Israel.” Ibid., 75.
years Israel cries to God (v.6), and God sends “a prophet” to remind them that their idolatry was the reason for their current situation (Judg 2:7-10).  

Following the ministry of the unnamed prophet, the Angel of Yahweh appears to Gideon in Ophrah. The Angel first comes and sits under a terebinth near the winepress where Gideon was threshing wheat (v.11). As he appears he says to Gideon, “The LORD is with you, O valiant warrior” (v.12). This statement is filled with irony, for Gideon is called a valiant warrior even as he hides from the Midianites (v.12). Furthermore, the statement “the LORD is with you” (ךָּנָּנ הָאָנִּיר) indicates not an abstract blessing from Yahweh upon Gideon but Yahweh’s immediate presence with him (cf. v.14).

Unaware of his Visitor’s identity, Gideon comments on the seeming incongruity between the statement that Yahweh was “with him” and the current situation. He laments the lack of Yahweh’s activity on Israel’s behalf and suggests that Yahweh had abandoned Israel to the hands of Midian (v.13). Now identified as Yahweh himself by the narrator, the Angel of Yahweh responds to Gideon’s charge of abandonment by turning to face Gideon and commanding him, “Go in this your strength and deliver Israel from the hand of Midian. Have I not sent you?” (v.13). The Angel’s action of turning to face Gideon is important

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16 Kline suggests that the prophet mentioned in verse 8 could be the Angel of Yahweh. His argument rests upon the “very close correspondence between the missions and messages of the Angel in Judges 2:1-3 and the figure called ‘prophet’ in Judges 6:8-10.” Ibid, 77.

17 The phrase נֶהוֹ התָּנָי appears in Genesis 26:23, where the men of Gerar observed that Yahweh had been “with” Isaac. They had noticed God’s blessing on him. Thus the phrase can be understood either in the abstract sense of blessing or in the concrete sense of Yahweh’s immediate presence.

18 The task of delivering Israel from the Midianites certainly would have been a daunting one. For seven years they had been oppressing Israel (v.1), and they had formed an alliance with the Amalekites and the “sons of the East” (v.2). In addition they had depleted Israel of resources (v.4), and their people and animals were numerous (v.5). The Israelites, moreover, had been forced to hide in caves for safety (v.2).
in understanding his words. The action is accompanied by his statement, “Go in this your strength.” Thus the Angel of Yahweh identifies himself as Gideon’s “Strength” (נָחָל) (v.13). The words that follow—“Have I not sent you?”—are thus an indication that the Angel of Yahweh has revealed his true identity to Gideon.¹⁹

Further irony may be seen in this scene as Gideon now calls his divine Visitor “Lord” (לֹאֵל), even though, like Moses, he resists his call to lead Israel. Gideon complains of his low status within the tribe of Manasseh as well as of his insignificance in his position as the youngest in his father’s house (v.15).²⁰ The Angel assures Gideon of his personal presence with him, “But I will be with you” (יִוֶּשֶׁנִי לָדֶךָ), and he promises victory over Midian, “You shall strike the Midianites as one man” (v.16, ESV). Gideon’s recognition of his Visitor is evident in the fact that he asks him to show him a sign to prove his identity (v.17). He requests that the Angel of Yahweh remain while he goes to get an “offering” and brings it back to him (v.18).

After preparing the offering of a young goat, unleavened cakes, and broth, Gideon returns to Yahweh (v.18-19). The Angel of God (בֵּית יְהוָה) (v.19) then instructs Gideon to lay the meat and cakes on a rock altar and pour the broth out over them. This clearly indicates that these items were a sacrifice and not a meal (v.19). The Angel of Yahweh then touches his staff to the sacrifice, and fire

¹⁹ Hengstenberg argues that Gideon must have recognized Yahweh by this point or “the words would have no meaning.” He notes further the correspondence between the call of Gideon and the call of Moses at the burning bush. Yahweh had said there too, “I will be with you” (יִוֶּשֶׁנִי לָדֶךָ), and he had given Moses a task of immense magnitude. Christology, 4:259.

²⁰ The Hebrew noun לְכָּה in the phrase “my tribe is [the] least in Manasseh” (לְכָּהָה בֵּית מָנָסֶה) can mean either “weak” or “poor.” It is used to describe the “weak” cows which Pharaoh saw in his dream (Gen 41:19) and a “poor” man who is not to give less than the rich man to Yahweh (Ex 30:15). A judge, moreover, could not show favoritism to either the “poor” or the “great” (יִוְּרֵי) (Lev 19:15).
springing from the rock consumes the sacrifice. At the same instant, Gideon no longer sees the Angel of Yahweh because he “vanished from his sight” (v. 21).

By receiving the offering from Gideon and disappearing in such a fashion, the Angel of Yahweh had provided the sign and identified that he was indeed Yahweh. Gideon’s response is fear and alarm: “Alas, O Lord GOD, for now I have seen the Angel of the LORD face to face” (v. 22). Gideon’s fear for his life is addressed by Yahweh’s immediate assurance: “Peace to you, do not fear; you shall not die” (v. 23, NAU). His fear of death was due to the sight of Yahweh. The erection of the altar named “Yahweh is peace” (~Alv hw") not only memorializes the event but demonstrates further that God had in fact appeared to him (Jdg 6:24).

No reason exists in the text to suggest that the instructions from Yahweh later that night regarding the destruction of the altar of Baal at his father’s house came from other than the Angel of Yahweh, although no form of revelation is specified (6:25-27). The narrator refers to the Angel of Yahweh as Yahweh when he describes the events at the winepress earlier in the chapter (v. 16). The timing of the instructions at night is due probably to the time lapse while Gideon built the altar named “Yahweh Shalom.”

21 Juncker observes of the fire springing from the rock, “It is unusual that fire comes up from the rock (cf. Judg 13:20) rather than down from heaven (Gen 19:24, etc.). This could be an additional indication that YHWH is present on earth with Gideon.” Jesus and the Angel of the Lord, 132.

22 The phrase “face to face” (כִּיִּים הָאָדָמָה) is the same phrase Jacob used to describe his meeting with God at the Jabbok. Jacob’s expression of alarm on that occasion is similar to Gideon’s: “I have seen God face to face, yet my life has been preserved” (Gen 32:31, NAU). Moses also saw Yahweh in this manner (Ex 33:11; Deut 34:10). The children of Israel, while they did not see Yahweh, heard the Decalogue as Yahweh spoke to them “face to face . . . out of the midst of the fire” (Deut 5:4, NAU).

23 Jacob, Moses, Gideon, and Manoah all expressed a fear of death when they saw the Angel (Gen 32:30; Ex 3:6; Jdg 6:21-22; 13:22).
In conclusion, abundant evidence exists within this passage that indicates the deity of the Angel of Yahweh. The narrator himself alternates between terms designating the Angel including the Angel of Yahweh (v.11, 12, 21, 22), Yahweh (v.14), and the Angel of God (יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים) (v.20). Other indications that Yahweh himself had appeared include the presence of a sacrifice (v.20), the acceptance of the sacrifice and disappearance of the Angel of Yahweh as a sign to Gideon of his identity (v.21), Gideon’s fear of impending death from having seen the Angel of Yahweh (v.22), and the subsequent erection of an altar to Yahweh (v.24; cf. Ex 20:24).

Although the identity of the Angel of Yahweh as deity is not an advance upon previous revelation, the Angel of Yahweh’s involvement with the sacrifice Gideon offered certainly is. Gideon was of the tribe of Manasseh (Jdg 6:15), and thus he was not allowed to offer a sacrifice to Yahweh without a priestly mediator according to the Law. In this scene, however, the instructions for sacrifice in the Law are not broken. Gideon kills and brings the offering to the

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24 A later passage refers to the one who appeared to him as God (יהוה). As Gideon begins to act as judge, he seeks for another sign from God (יהוה) (the wet fleece/dry ground sign and the wet ground/dry fleece sign) to confirm that God had truly spoken to him (Jdg 6:36-40).

25 The erection of an altar in particular demonstrates that a theophany has occurred here. Immediately after giving the Decalogue God instructed Moses that an altar of earth was to be built to him wherever he caused his name to be remembered (Ex 20:24-26). Altars were thus not to be built just anywhere or for any reason. The Law had specified the centrality of worship and sacrifice at one altar (Deut 12:10-14), but altars were built on other occasions as well, presumably with God’s approval (Ex 17:15; 24:4; Deut 27:5-8; Josh 8:30-32; 1 Sam 7:17; 14:35; 2 Sam 24:18, 25). The near civil war over the commemorative altar built by the tribes of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh illustrates the seriousness of this feature of the Law. When the high priest Phinehas and the leaders of the other tribes confronted Reuben, Gad and Manasseh, their leaders said, “Far be it from us that we should rebel against the LORD and turn away from following the LORD this day, by building an altar for burnt offering, for grain offering or for sacrifice, besides the altar of the LORD our God which is before His tabernacle” (Josh 22:29, NAU). Once the tribes of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh explained the commemorative purpose of the altar, Phinehas and the other tribal leaders relented.
Angel of Yahweh, but it is the Angel himself who causes the fire to consume the offering (cf. Lev 1:3-5). The Angel of Yahweh thus acts as the priestly Mediator between Gideon and God.²⁶

The events described in Judges 6 also illustrate the ministry of the Angel of Yahweh as the Covenant Angel (Ex 23:20-23). The covenantal context of Judges 6 is quite clear. The oppression of the nation of Israel by its enemies had been expressly stated in the law as a judgment for a failure to keep the covenant (Deut 28:15, 25, 45-48; Judg 2:10ff.). The oppression of Midian and Midian’s eating of Israel’s crops directly corresponds to the judgments expressed in the Law for Israel’s disobedience and idolatry. Leviticus 26:16b-17 specify the judgment for disobedience and idolatry: “You will sow your seed uselessly, for your enemies will eat it up. I will set My face against you . . . and those who hate you will rule over you” (NAU; cf. Lev 26:1 for the reference to idolatry in the context).

When Israel cries to Yahweh after seven years of oppression, Yahweh sends a prophet to confront Israel for worshipping the gods of the Amorites (Jdg 6:8-10). At this point the Angel of Yahweh comes to call Gideon to lead his people out from under oppression. However, the first command Gideon receives as the judge of Israel is not to conquer Midian but to destroy his father’s altar to Baal at Ophrah and erect an altar to Yahweh in its place (Jdg 6:25-27). The Covenant Angel thus calls a judge to lead Israel out of its oppression by first eliminating the cause of the oppression—idolatry.

²⁶ William Baker suggests that Yahweh is acting as “High-Priest” on this occasion. The Ten Theophanies (New York: Anson, 1883), 151.
The Angel of Yahweh appears to Samson’s Parents (Judges 13:1-24)

The context of the Angel of Yahweh’s appearance to Gideon closely parallels his appearance to the parents of Samson. As the Midianites had oppressed Israel in the days of Gideon, now the Philistines were oppressing Israel in the days of Samson’s parents. As in the days of Gideon, the Angel of Yahweh appears in connection with the rise of another judge in Israel. However, the Angel of Yahweh appears not to the judge (Samson) but to the judge’s parents.

Similar to the Angel of Yahweh’s appearance to Hagar and Sarah in the patriarchal period, the Angel of Yahweh comes to Manoah’s wife to announce

27 Kline suggests that Judges 10:11-14, which is recorded between the ministry of Gideon and the ministry of Samson, shows a remarkable similarity to other passages in which the Angel of Yahweh appears. He argues that while the writer of Judges does not use the designation Angel of Yahweh in Judges 10:11-14, the alternation between the terms Angel of Yahweh and Yahweh within the same book leaves the possibility open. See Meredith Kline, Images of the Spirit, 77. The context is admittedly similar to other passages in Judges where the Angel of Yahweh appears, Judges 6 in particular. The Israelites find themselves oppressed by an enemy due to their own idolatry (v.13; Jdg 6:1-5), and as a nation they cry out to Yahweh for help (v.10; Jdg 6:6-7). In Judges 10 Israel’s cry for help is accompanied by a confession of their worship of “the Baals” (נְבָאָלִים) (v.11). Yahweh, however, expresses his displeasure with their unfaithfulness and after recounting his gracious deliverance from seven nations He suggests that they cry to the gods that they had been worshipping instead of him (v.14; cf. Jdg 6:10). Israel responds to this rebuke by confessing their sin again and submitting to Yahweh’s judgment upon them so long as he will deliver them (v.15). Israel then removes the false gods from among them, and commits to serve the LORD alone (v.16). The last phrase of verse 16 says that Yahweh “could bear the misery of Israel no longer,” and the continuation of the narrative records the rise of Jephthah as the next judge of Israel and the victory that Yahweh brought about through him (Jdg 10:17-12:7). Whatever means Yahweh used here to communicate with Israel is not stated. However, no prophet is mentioned as in Judges 6:8-10, and every indication that the revelation involved an exchange between Yahweh and the people. In all probability the communication took place at Mizpah, where Jephthah later spoke some words “before the LORD” and where “the congregation [of Israel] assembled as one man to the LORD” (Jdg 11:9; cf. Jdg 20:1; 1 Sam 7:5ff., 10:17). Keil and Delitzsch suggest that the revelation “was evidently given in front of the tabernacle, where the people had called upon the lord, and either came through the high priest, or else through an inward voice in which God spoke to the hearts of the people.” C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, Commentary on the Book of Judges, trans. James Martin (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1866; reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2001), 271. The latter suggestion of an “inward voice” is unlikely, but the former is a distinct possibility. Joshua consulted with the high priest Eleazar for the judgments of Yahweh (Num 27:21). Such revelation could be simply called the “urim” (Num 27:21; cf. 1 Sam 28:6).
that she was going to bear a child (Jdg 13:3-5; cf. Gen 16:7ff.; Gen 18:1ff.).

However, Manoah’s wife had not yet conceived, and the Angel’s announcement came before conception in order to ensure that the child would be a Nazirite throughout his entire life, beginning in the womb (Jdg 13:3-5). The final announcement from the Angel of Yahweh to the woman is that her son would begin to deliver Israel from the Philistines (v.5).

As she tells her husband about her encounter with the Angel of Yahweh, Manoah’s wife describes the appearance of the “man of God” (אֶלְגָּדִיא) and relates the message given by him (v.6-7). As she describes his appearance, Manoah’s wife says ironically that his appearance is like “the Angel of God” (מַלְאֵךְ יְהוָה), which is “very awesome” (נְרָא מַעֲרָא). She also relates that she did not ask for his name or from where he had come and that he promised her a son who would be a Nazirite from the womb (v.7).

Manoah’s prayer for the return of the “man of God” is answered by the return of the “Angel of God” (מַלְאֵךְ יְהוָה) to his wife in the field (v.8-9). Upon his return she goes quickly to get Manoah to tell him that “the man” has appeared again. As he arrives and sees the Angel of God Manoah inquires, “When your words come true, what is to be the child’s manner of life, and what is his mission?” (v.12). The Angel provides no new information beyond what been given to his wife (v.13-14), but Manoah then asks to provide a meal for the Angel (v.15). Refusing the offer of a meal, the Angel of Yahweh instructs Manoah

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28 The primary instruction for Nazirites in Numbers 6 indicates that each Nazirite took a vow for a period of time. Thus Samson would be an unusual Nazirite (רְדָשׁ “consecrated” or “devoted one”) since he would be one for his entire life. Either a man or a woman could take the nazirite vow (Num 6:2), which resulted in certain obligations like abstaining from eating anything from the fruit of the vine (v.3-4), from cutting one’s hair (v.5), and from touching unclean or dead things (v.6-8). The provisions for unintentionally coming into contact with unclean things, as well as the sacrifices required to fulfill the vow, are also detailed in this chapter (v.9-21).
to prepare a burnt offering (עַלְעָה) to Yahweh (v.16). The additional comment of the narrator in verse 16 clarifies the interchange over the meal/burnt offering. Manoah had offered him a meal instead of an offering because Manoah was ignorant of the Angel of Yahweh’s identity.

After hearing the instruction to offer a burnt offering to Yahweh, Manoah asks for the name of the Angel so that he and his wife can “honor” him when his words prove true (v. 17). The Angel denies this request, however, explaining that his name is too wonderful or marvelous: “Why do you ask my name, seeing it is wonderful?” (v.18).29 Manoah then goes to prepare his offering, and when he returns he offers it on the rock to Yahweh (Jdg 13:19). The following phrase (יָדַע אָלָפָה אִלְפֶּשֶׁת), a combination of the Hiphil participle from филь and the infinitive absolute from חֲפָר, has been translated various ways, including the following: “to the one who works wonders” (ESV), “and the angel did wondrously” (KJV), “and He performed wonders” (NAU), “and the LORD did an amazing thing” (NIV), “and wonderfully (miraculously) he did act” (Keil & Delitzsch).30 The lack of a subject in the phrase (יָדַע אָלָפָה אִלְפֶּשֶׁת) forces the translator to supply one. However, the most proper subject is Yahweh.31 Thus it is Yahweh himself who is

29 The Hebrew adjective יָדַע, according to Keil and Delitzsch, “is not the proper name of the angel of the Lord, but expresses the character of his name; and as the name simply denotes the nature, it expresses the peculiarity of his nature also. It is to be understood in an absolute sense—‘absolutely and supremely wonderful’—as a predicate belonging to God alone.” C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, Commentary on Judges, 294. The related noun wonder (רָשָׁם) is applied to the works of God on other occasions such as the miracles in Egypt and the dividing of the Jordan as the people crossed over (Ex 3:20; Josh 3:5).

30 Judges, 294.

31 Keil and Delitzsch indicate that the proper subject of the phrase is Yahweh. “These words form a circumstantial clause, which is not to be attached, however, to the subject of the principle clause, but to יָדַע אָלָפָה אִלְפֶּשֶׁת: ‘Manoah offered a sacrifice to the Lord, whereupon He acted to do wonderfully,’ i.e., He performed a wonder or miracle, and Manoah and his wife saw it.” Ibid., 294.
acting wonderfully, and it is Yahweh himself to whom Manoah offers his offering (v.19).

The “rock” of verse 19 becomes “the altar” in verse 20, and Angel of Yahweh ascends in the flame of the altar (v.20). This sight causes Manoah and his wife to bow to the earth in worship (v.20), and the Angel of Yahweh is no longer seen (v.21). It is at this point that the narrator inserts the comment, “then Manoah knew that He was the Angel of the LORD” (v.21, NKJ). This statement is in direct contrast to the statement of verse 16, “For Manoah did not know that He was the Angel of the LORD” (NKJ). The recognition of the Angel of Yahweh in verse 21 is immediately followed by Manoah’s fearful exclamation to his wife, “We shall surely die, for we have seen God.”

The final word in this passage comes not from Manoah, but his wife, who kindly but effectively points out that Manoah’s fear is absurd. Yahweh had done two things for them that precluded any intent to destroy them. He had accepted a burnt offering and a grain offering from them, and he had shown them “all these things” at this particular time (v.23). Yahweh had not come to destroy them but to bless them.

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32 The translation of verse 21 in the KJV, “Then Manoah knew that he was an angel of the LORD,” is only justifiable if one element of the context in this chapter is singled out and the rest is ignored. The Angel of Yahweh had said in verse 16 to Manoah, “But if you prepare a burnt offering, offer it to the LORD.” Verse 16’s statement sounds like the Angel is distinguishing himself from Yahweh. One might infer that he is thus a created angel and not Yahweh himself. However, the statement can also be explained by the Angel of Yahweh’s speaking in third person about himself because Manoah has yet to recognize who he is. The fact that Manoah had not yet recognized his identity is apparent from the explanation at the end of the verse, “For Manoah did not know that He was the Angel of the LORD” (v.16, NKJ).

33 Fear (esp. of death) and the claim to have seen God frequently accompany theophanies (Gen 16:13; 32:30; Ex 3:6; 20:19; Jdg 6:20-21). God himself says that no man can see his face and live (Ex 33:20). However, on certain occasions he graciously sustained the life of those to whom he appeared.
The overwhelming point of this narrative is that God himself had appeared. The facts pointing to this conclusion are numerous. Manoah’s initial ignorance of the identity of the Angel of Yahweh (v.16) is followed by his realization (v.21) and brought to a climax in his statement to his wife, “We have seen God!” (v.22, NKJ). Preceding this realization Manoah and his wife had prostrated themselves before the Angel of Yahweh who ascended in the flame of the sacrifice. The offering of sacrifices such as a burnt offering and a meal offering (v.16, 23), the lack of mediation by a human priest, the presence of an altar (v.19-20), and the fact that this sacrifice is allowed at a location other than the tabernacle are sure indicators that a theophany has occurred (cf. Ex 20:24).

_Yahweh calls Samuel (1 Samuel 3)_

As the last judge of Israel and leader of the transition between the time of the judges and the time of the kings, Samuel was privileged to be the recipient of a theophany as a child at the tabernacle. After the days of the judges, the designation Angel of Yahweh does not appear until 2 Samuel 24:16. However, the record of Samuel’s call to be a prophet and the last judge of Israel exhibits characteristics of a theophany. These characteristics include Yahweh’s immediate presence in the location where Samuel is and Yahweh’s direct communication to Samuel. Samuel’s location within the temple (“tent of meeting” or “house of the LORD”) is also a significant feature of this theophany.  

Samuel’s mother, Hannah, purposed before he was weaned to have him “appear before the LORD and stay there forever” (1 Sam 1:22). This purpose was very directly fulfilled as he served in the tabernacle itself as a doorkeeper (v.15).

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34 The tabernacle is called the “temple” (טֵבָא) for the first time in Scripture in Samuel (1 Sam 1:9; 3:3). Between these two references, however, it is called the “house of the LORD” (1 Sam 1:24) and “tent of meeting” (2:22).
On the night that God came to him in the tabernacle, he was sleeping in the temple where the ark of God was (1 Sam 3:3). Samuel was thus as close as one could legally come to the Ark of the Covenant, the visible symbol of God’s presence on earth.

Before Samuel went to sleep, he heard the voice of Yahweh, who called his name (3:4). Samuel first thought Eli had called and went to him to ask why he had called him. Eli corrected him and sent him back to lie down. This happened twice more with the same result (v.6), except that the narrator inserts a parenthetical comment between these two occasions explaining Samuel’s actions, “Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, nor had the word of the LORD yet been revealed to him” (v.7, NAU). On the third occasion Eli perceives that Yahweh had called him and instructs him how to respond (v.8-9).

The last time Yahweh calls to Samuel, the narrator describes the theophanic presence of Yahweh in the temple: “And the LORD came, and stood, and called as at other times” (v.10). The fact that he came (היה) and stood (стал) indicates a theophanic presence, not a dream or vision. The phrase as at other times (כֻּלְּעַל הָעָרָתֶים) indicates, furthermore, that he had come and stood on the previous instances when he had called Samuel’s name (v.4, 6, 8).

Samuel’s response on the fourth occasion, “Speak, LORD, for your servant hears” (1 Sam 3:9, ESV), is answered as Yahweh reveals to the young boy that he is about to punish Eli’s household because of its iniquity (1 Sam 3:11-14). Samuel

35 In Leviticus 16:2 Yahweh said to Moses that he would appear in the cloud above the mercy seat in the tabernacle. On a different occasion Moses heard the voice of Yahweh coming from above the mercy seat (Num 8:89). It is not clear from 1 Samuel 3 whether the voice was coming from above the mercy seat or closer to Samuel.

36 The later description of what Samuel saw as a “vision” (ראות) (v.15) supports the proposition that God appeared in his theophanic presence to Samuel.
initially fears to tell Eli the vision, but Eli’s threat quickly motivates him to tell him everything that Yahweh had said (1 Sam 3:15-17).

Samuel’s rise to prominence as a prophet in Israel is described as nationwide (“all Israel from Dan to Beersheba,” v.20). His rise also coincided with Yahweh’s return to Shiloh: “And the LORD appeared again at Shiloh, because the LORD revealed himself to Samuel at Shiloh by the word of the LORD” (v.21). The statement “the LORD appeared again” indicates that Yahweh returned in his theophanic presence to Shiloh.³⁷ The phrase by the word of the LORD in verse 21, furthermore, specifies the divine agent who appeared. The Word of Yahweh does not here refer to the abstract concept of a communication of Yahweh but the divine person who is called the Word of Yahweh (cf. Gen 15:1, 4; 1 Kgs 18:31; 19:9; Jer 1:4ff.).

The presence of the Angel of Yahweh here at the tent of meeting is inferred from the following facts: First, some texts in the Pentateuch state that Yahweh (not the Angel of Yahweh) appeared to an individual (e.g., Jacob in Gen 28), but we learn later that it was the Angel of God (Gen 31:13); Second, Yahweh in the period of the Exodus appears in union with the theophanic cloud, but we find out later that it was the Angel of God who appeared in union with the theophanic cloud (Ex 14:19-20); third, Yahweh, who is also the Angel of God, descended in the theophanic cloud and met with Moses on many occasions at the

³⁷ Yahweh’s appearance at Shiloh began in the days of Joshua, when the tabernacle was moved from Gilgal to Shiloh (Josh 18:1, 8-10; 19:51; 21:2; 22:9, 12). Whether the return of Yahweh’s theophanic presence coincided with the return of the Shekinah cloud is not clear. Nothing in the context of 1 Samuel 3 or later in the book of Samuel suggests the return of the cloud. In Psalm 78 Asaph indicates that Yahweh left the tabernacle at Shiloh due to the idolatry of the people of Israel, “So that He abandoned the dwelling place at Shiloh, The tent which He pitched among men” (v. 60). A similar departure of God from his temple is found in the prophet Ezekiel, when he sees a departure of the theophanic cloud due to the sinfulness of the city of Jerusalem (Ezek 11:22-23).
tent of meeting (e.g., Ex 33:9); fourth, this theophany to Samuel takes place at the tabernacle (also known as the tent of meeting); fifth, the one who appears to Samuel is specified as the Word of Yahweh (1 Sam 3:21). The personal Word of Yahweh was thus the divine Agent who appeared to Samuel.

The personal Word of Yahweh was thus the divine Agent who appeared to Samuel.

The Angel of God described by the common people of Israel

Following the ministry of Samuel and the death of Israel’s first king Saul, David came to the throne of Israel. During his reign David personally saw the Angel of Yahweh as the Angel brought judgment upon Israel after David numbered the people, and David wrote about the Angel of Yahweh in two Psalms. In addition, two of David’s subjects spoke of the Angel of God as they spoke to him on two occasions.

A comparison of texts about the theophany at the Jabbok demonstrates that the Angel of Yahweh and the Word of Yahweh are one in the same (compare Gen 32:23-32 with 1 Kings 18:31 and Hosea 12:2-6). The Word of Yahweh also came to Samuel the night before Saul was rejected as the king of Israel (1 Samuel 15:10, 23, 26). As Samuel relates the story to Saul, he says that Yahweh spoke to Him. Although the manner in which Yahweh communicated to him is not explicit, it is probable that the communication was theophanic.

Two Psalms contain references to the Angel of Yahweh. In Psalms 34 and 35 David writes of the Angel of Yahweh’s protection of the people of God and his opposition to the enemies of his people. David writes in Psalm 34, “The angel of the LORD encamps all around those who fear Him, and delivers them” (v.7, NKJ). The familiar designation מְשָׁפַט מְנַבֵּל occurs here in conjunction with a statement that can properly be applied only to God himself. David presents the Angel of Yahweh himself as the one who is to be feared. He “encamps all around those who fear Him” (NKJ, emphasis added). The antecedent to the third person pronoun him is the Angel of Yahweh. Thus the Angel of Yahweh protects those who fear Him. In Psalm 35 David petitions Yahweh to chase and pursue his enemies. In the opening of the Psalm, David asks Yahweh to don the armor and weaponry of a warrior and fight against those who fight against him (Psa 35:1-3). He then requests, “Let them be like chaff before the wind, with the angel of the LORD driving them on. Let their way be dark and slippery, with the angel of the LORD pursuing them” (Psalm 35:5-6). The request for the Angel of Yahweh to fight against the enemies of the Psalmist, therefore, is found immediately after the Psalmist has asked for Yahweh to put his armor on. It may be concluded that the Angel of Yahweh is Yahweh, the one whom David asks to fight for him. This ministry of the Angel of Yahweh mentioned in these Psalms directly parallels to the ministry of the Covenant Angel (Ex 23:20-23). The promise made to Israel that the Covenant Angel would protect the children of Israel on their journey into the Promised Land is tantamount to the Angel of Yahweh encamping round about them that fear Him.
The first reference to the Angel of God during David’s life is found in the speech of the wise woman of Tekoa as she spoke to David regarding the return of David’s son Absalom to Jerusalem (2 Sam 14:1-21). Absalom’s murder of his brother Amnon left David with little hope of bringing Absalom back to Jerusalem with the support of the people. The wise woman met with the king at Joab’s request after Joab noticed David’s desire to bring Absalom back to Jerusalem (2 Sam 14:1). Joab’s purpose was to demonstrate to the king that the people would accept Absalom, so he asked the wise woman of Tekoa to approach the king with a carefully contrived story that mirrored David’s own situation. By this he hoped David would see the heart of his people about the matter and bring Absalom back (2 Sam 14:2-3).

As the woman enters David’s presence and begins to tell him her story, she says to David, “And your servant thought, ‘The word of my lord the king will set me at rest,’ for my lord the king is like the angel of God to discern good and evil. The LORD your God be with you!” (2 Sam 14:17, ESV). Expressing her confidence in David’s discernment, the woman says that David is like the Angel of God in his ability to distinguish between the good and the evil in the matter she brings before him. In other words, the message communicated to David is that his people would trust his judgment if he brought Absalom back to Jerusalem because his discernment is like that of the Angel of God.

The second mention of the “Angel of God” follows David’s recognition of Joab’s involvement in the wise woman’s presence and her story. After confessing to David that Joab had commanded her to do what she was doing, the woman says to David, “But my lord is wise, like the wisdom of the angel of God, to know all that is in the earth” (2 Sam 14:20b). Like the previous compliment given to David, the intent of her statement was to communicate the
people’s support for him. She thus attributes to David extensive wisdom like that of the Angel of God, who knows everything that happens on the earth (v.20b). While created angels could certainly be said to have attributes ascribed here to the Angel of God in some limited way, the woman’s second compliment to David must refer to Divine wisdom (v.20). Such extensive knowledge is never ascribed to created angels in Scripture, and such a revelation about created angels would seem to exaggerate their supernatural intelligence. The statements made of the Angel here more naturally agree with antecedent theology regarding the Angel of Yahweh/Angel of God, with whom the nation of Israel by this time would have been quite familiar.

40 The phrase all that is in the earth (אֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר כְּלָל הָאָרֶץ) in verse 20 is similar to a statement God made about the effects of the flood upon the earth, “Everything that is on the earth [קָחָל הָאָרֶץ] shall die” (Gen 6:17b, ESV). The phrase in Genesis 6:17b refers to all life on the earth. In 2 Samuel 14:20, however, the point of the statement of the woman is that David’s knowledge extends not to the contents of the earth but to the events on the earth.

41 The extent of angelic intelligence is a subject more properly discussed within systematic theology, yet the systematic theological evidence for the subject does provide an aid to interpreting passages such as 2 Samuel 14:17, 20. The supernatural intelligence of the created angels is implied from statements about their higher rank within creation (Psa 8:5), as well as specific statements of Scripture like Matthew 24:36, “But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but my Father only.” The fact that Jesus says “not even the angels of heaven” implies that they do have superior knowledge to the human race. It is still limited, however, and it is therefore inferior to the knowledge of the Son and the Father. The precise limitation of their knowledge is not specified in Scripture, but limits to their knowledge are implied (e.g., 1 Pet 1:12).

42 Passages in which the designation Angel of God appears include Genesis 31:11, Judges 6:20; 13:9, and Exodus 14:19. The designation Angel of God (אֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר כְּלָל הָאָרֶץ) is never used for any other angel in the Old Testament. The Philistine king Achish probably spoke of an ideal person (not a specific angel) when he said to David, “I know that you are pleasing in my sight, like an angel of God [אֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר כְּלָל הָאָרֶץ]” (1 Sam 29:9a, NAU). In addition, the word Elohim lacks the definite article, and it is probably not meant in the context to designate any particular angel and perhaps not even the God of Israel. It is also unlikely that a pagan Philistine king would speak of the Angel of God/Angel of Yahweh in such a manner. The only other occasion where the same designation may be found in the Masoretic text is Genesis 21:17, where the Hebrew phrase (אֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר כְּלָל הָאָרֶץ) clearly refers to the Angel of God/Angel of Yahweh.
The statements of the woman of Tekoa here emphasize a point made in a previous chapter. In Numbers 20:16 the messengers sent to the king of Edom spoke of the Angel who had brought them out of Egypt, which indicated a widespread knowledge of the Angel of Yahweh. Here the comments of the wise woman of Tekoa further indicate a common knowledge of the Angel of God within the nation of Israel. The first statement could be attributed to Joab if he is the source of her story, but her second statement is made when Joab’s scheme is revealed (2 Sam 14:20). Thus the woman herself knew of the divine Angel of God, and she attributes divine wisdom to Him.

A similar reference to the Angel of God is found in the mouth of the lame son of Jonathan whom David allowed to sit at his own royal table after Jonathan’s death (cf. 2 Sam 4:4; 9:1-13). When Absalom usurped the throne of David at Jerusalem, Mephibosheth stayed in Jerusalem when David left. This failure to leave with David thus called his loyalty to David into question, as did the actions of his servant Ziba. Ziba had left Jerusalem to take David food and animals to help him during the rebellion of Absalom. He also brought David news that Mephibosheth was waiting at Jerusalem with the hope that Israel would make him king (2 Sam 16:1-4). David responded by allotting all of the land that belonged to Mephibosheth to Ziba, apparently believing the story that Ziba told about his master.

After Absalom had been killed and David returned to Jerusalem, Mephibosheth went out to meet David. Upon their meeting David asks him directly, “Why did you not go with me, Mephibosheth?” (2 Sam 19:25b, ESV). Mephibosheth responded first by proclaiming his innocence and suggesting that Ziba had slandered him to David (2 Sam 19:26-27a). Mephibosheth, however, humbly resigned himself to David’s judgment about him when he said, “But my
lord the king is like the angel of God. Therefore do what is good in your eyes” (v.27b). Mephibosheth describes the good that David had done for him and pleads for mercy (v.28). David responds by reversing his decision to give Ziba the land and divides it between Mephibosheth and Ziba (v.29).

What Mephibosheth expresses to David on this occasion is not that he in some way resembles a created angel in his conduct or person. He is rather ascribing sovereignty to David. The phrase “Therefore do what is good in your eyes” highlights Mephibosheth’s resignation to David’s sentence. The comparison Mephibosheth makes to the sovereignty of the Angel of God mirrors a number of other Angel passages. Perhaps the most vivid illustration of the Angel’s sovereignty is at Bochim, when he sentenced the children of Israel to live in the land with Canaanites and false gods who would be a snare to them and told them that he would not drive out the inhabitants of the land (Jdg 2:1-5). In a similar way David was sovereign over Mephibosheth’s land and his life.

_The Angel of Yahweh establishes the location of the “House of God” at Jerusalem_  
(2 Samuel 24; 1 Chronicles 21)

One of the most difficult and yet important texts about the Angel of Yahweh is his participation in the establishment of the temple location at Jerusalem. While David’s sin of numbering the people is certainly one reason for the Angel of Yahweh’s presence on this occasion, David’s repentance is met with a very significant revelation on the biblical landscape—the location of Yahweh’s earthly temple at Jerusalem.43 The importance of the passage is indicated by its placement at the conclusion of 2 Samuel, as well as the repetition of the story.

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43 The prophecy that Yahweh would designate a sanctuary for himself in the Promised Land is found in the Song of Moses (Ex 15:16-17).
within Scriptures (2 Sam 24; 1 Chron 21-22:1). A harmony of the events aids in seeing the complete story and the order of events.

### Table 4. A Harmony of 2 Samuel 24 and 1 Chronicles 21

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Order of Events</th>
<th>2 Sam 24</th>
<th>1 Chron 21</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>David commands Joab to number the people; he obeys.</td>
<td>24:1-9</td>
<td>21:1-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David confesses his sin to God privately.</td>
<td>24:10</td>
<td>21:8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yahweh (personal “Word of Yahweh,” 2 Sam 24:11) speaks to Gad, describing the three possible judgments.</td>
<td>24:11-12</td>
<td>21:9-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yahweh speaks to David by David’s seer (prophet) Gad, offering him the choice of the three judgments.</td>
<td>24:9-13</td>
<td>21:11-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David chooses the judgment described as the sword of the LORD, a pestilence, and the Angel of Yahweh destroying throughout the land.</td>
<td>24:14</td>
<td>21:13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Angel of Yahweh destroys 70,000 men of Israel.</td>
<td>24:15</td>
<td>21:14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Angel of Yahweh begins destroying in Jerusalem.</td>
<td>24:16</td>
<td>21:15a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yahweh commands (speaks to) the Angel who was destroying to cease.</td>
<td>24:16</td>
<td>21:15b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Angel of Yahweh ceases his destruction near the threshing floor of Ornan (Araunah) the Jebusite.</td>
<td>24:16</td>
<td>21:15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David sees the Angel of Yahweh between heaven and earth with a drawn sword stretched over Jerusalem.</td>
<td>24:17a</td>
<td>21:16a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At the sight of the Angel, David and the elders of Jerusalem, clothed in sackcloth, fall to the earth on their faces.</td>
<td>24:17b</td>
<td>21:16b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David confesses his sin to God publicly and asks that the plague be on his family instead of Israel.</td>
<td>24:18-19</td>
<td>21:18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Angel of Yahweh (Yahweh) commands Gad to instruct David to build an altar at Ornan the Jebusite’s threshing floor.</td>
<td>24:20</td>
<td>21:20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ornan turns and sees the Angel while he threshes wheat. At this sight he and his sons hide themselves.</td>
<td>24:21-24</td>
<td>21:22-25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ornan sees David and his servants coming toward the threshing floor and goes out to meet him and bows to him.</td>
<td>24:25</td>
<td>21:26a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David designates the place as the “house of God” and the altar he made as “the altar of the burnt offering for Israel.”</td>
<td>22:1</td>
<td>21:26b</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The harmonization of these two passages brings the events of the final day of the plague into clearer focus, and it clarifies the exact nature of the participation of the Angel of Yahweh, especially since the Chronicles account is more detailed regarding his role in the events. The first mention of the Angel of Yahweh within the Masoretic Text of Samuel refers to “the angel” (גֵּרְם הַיָּדָה) with no previous reference within the context (2 Sam 24:16).44 However, the first mention of the Angel of Yahweh in the Chronicles passage is more explicit. The Angel of Yahweh is mentioned in the Chronicles account in the list of three judgments relayed from Yahweh to David by Gad the seer. Specifying the third judgment, Gad says it would include “three days of the sword of the LORD, pestilence on the land, with the Angel of the LORD destroying throughout the territory of Israel” (1 Chron 21:12, ESV). The three phrases describing this judgment—the sword of the LORD (ה' וּניָה בְּרֹאשֵׁי), the pestilence on the land (לְאֵשׁ בַּתָּרְדִים), and the Angel of Yahweh (גֵּרְם הַיָּדָה) destroying—indicate one judgment with three aspects. As the story unfolds, it is the Angel of Yahweh who bears the sword of Yahweh and brings the pestilence (1 Chron 21:16, 27; cf. v. 30).45

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44 G. Kautzsch indicates that the word order of this sentence in Samuel is unusual (stretched—hand—the angel; i.e., verb-object-subject). Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar, trans. A.E. Cowley (Oxford: Clarendon, 1910), 456. Since the normal word order is verb-subject-object, the object in this sentence is out of order. Placed first, the object ידִים is thus the emphasized word and the subject the angel follows. However, Kautzsch suggests that ידִים was “probably only a subsequent addition,” presumably referring to a scribal addition. If Kautzsch is correct regarding the addition, then the subject of the original text would most naturally be Yahweh himself. The subject of the previous verse is Yahweh (v.15), and the subject of the second clause within verse 16 directly states that Yahweh is the subject. If Kautzsch is not correct, and the Masoretic text reflects the original, then the emphasis is that the Angel himself is doing the destruction. Thus it is either Yahweh whose hand is stretched out to destroy (Kautzsch), or it is the hand of the Angel himself that destroys. The emphasis that it is his hand, the angel’s hand, therefore, is just as significant as if Yahweh were the subject of the sentence. The LXX translation of this verse has ἀγγέλου τοῦ θεοῦ for ידִים, which is directly equivalent to the title Angel of Yahweh in the Old Testament.

45 The plague on the people here is remarkably similar to the plague of the firstborn in Exodus 12 in that it was executed by the “destroyer” (גֵּרְם הַיָּדָה). The same word is used in all three
As the Angel of Yahweh enters Jerusalem, he continues destroying the people, but as Yahweh views the destruction, he relents and tells the sword-bearing Angel of Yahweh, “It is enough, now relax your hand” (1 Chron 21:15, NAU). David and the elders, clothed in sackcloth, then see the Angel of Yahweh, who is stationed over the threshing floor of Ornan, and fall on their faces (1 Chron 21:16-17; 2 Sam 24:17). David confesses his sin and requests that the judgment fall on him instead of the people (1 Chron 21:17; 2 Sam 24:17).

After David’s public confession of his sin, the Angel of Yahweh sends Gad to tell David to build an altar at the threshing floor of Ornan (apparently with some lapse of time), where the Angel of Yahweh himself is stationed (2 Sam 24:16; 1 Chron 21:15, 18). The Chronicler records that Ornan was threshing wheat passages (Ex 12:23; 2 Sam 24:16; 1 Chron 21:15), yet the language of Exodus 12:23 seems to distinguish Yahweh from the destroyer at one point: “The LORD will pass through to strike the Egyptians, and when he sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the LORD will pass over the door and will not allow the destroyer to enter your houses to strike you” (ESV). Nevertheless Exodus 12:12 and 12:29 both indicate that Yahweh himself would pass through the land of Egypt to execute the judgment. Keil and Delitzsch identify the “destroyer” of Exodus 12:23 with the Angel of Yahweh, “in whom Jehovah revealed himself to the patriarchs and Moses.” Pentateuch, 334. They also note that the Psalmist’s mention of a band of destroying angels who were involved in the judgments upon Egypt does not militate against this identification because the Psalmist has more in view than just the plague of the firstborn (Psalm 78:49). However, their suggestion that the word מיתה could be taken as a collective noun (cf. 1 Sam 13:17 where מיתה refers to a band of destroying men) leads to a further possibility, viz., Yahweh’s passing through the land of Egypt with a band of his angels (מיתים) to destroy the firstborn (Ex 12:23). Such an understanding could further explain how the mass destruction of Sennacherib’s army took place (2 Kgs 19:35; cf. also Ezek 9:1-11). Oehler also says that the term in Exodus 12:23 is a collective noun. Theology of the Old Testament, 451. In the NT Christ refers to “his angels” as those who will execute judgment with him (Matt 13:41; 16:47; 2 Thess 1:7).

Yahweh seeing and speaking to the Angel of Yahweh here is similar to the distinction of persons named Yahweh in Genesis 19:24, where Yahweh rains fire and brimstone upon Sodom “from Yahweh” from heaven. It is an indication of a plurality of persons in God, just as in Exodus 23:20-23, where Yahweh speaks of the Angel and says, “My name is in Him” (v.21b). Robert Reymond comments, “A careful analysis of the relevant passages will disclose that God differentiates himself from this Angel by the very title itself as well as by the fact that he refers to him in the third person and may even address him in the second person in 2 Samuel 24:16, and yet the Angel in his speeches, while often distinguishing himself from God, lays claim to divine attributes and prerogatives, indeed, to identity with God.” Jesus, Divine Messiah: The Old Testament Witness (Ross-shire, Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 1990), 73.
at the floor when this took place, but he and his four sons hid themselves when they saw the Angel of Yahweh (v.20). As David proceeds toward the threshing floor with his servants, Ornan sees David coming and goes out to meet him (1 Chron 21:21; 2 Sam 24:19-20). David explains to Ornan his purpose in coming, and he refuses Ornan’s offer to give him the threshing floor and the oxen. Instead he negotiates the purchase of the threshing floor and the oxen, and then he offers burnt offerings and peace offerings and calls upon Yahweh (1 Chron 21:22-25).

Yahweh’s answer of fire from heaven is recorded only by the Chronicler (1 Chron 21:26), as is the command from Yahweh to the Angel of Yahweh to return his sword to its sheath (1 Chron 21:27). Samuel’s account indicates that Yahweh was moved by David’s entreaties for the land and for the staying of the plague (2 Sam 24:25). The record of the two events, the Angel’s returning of his sword to its sheath (1 Chron 21:27) and the staying of the plague (2 Sam 24:25), are two ways of saying the same thing.

The Chronicler goes even further in discussing the significance of the location for the worship of Israel. David’s offering here in Jerusalem and Yahweh’s acceptance of it caused him to recognize that God had specially chosen Jerusalem instead of Gibeon as the location of Israel’s altar and thus the location

47 The Hithpael participle (טָהִיטְפָּה) comes from the same root verb used to describe Adam and Eve’s action after they sinned when they “hid themselves” (תָּלַעְתָּה) from the presence of Yahweh (Gen 3:8). The New King James incorrectly translates the end of the verse “but Ornan continued threshing wheat.” No idea of continuation is found in the Qal perfect verb שָׁלַע in the context. The phrase indicates instead what Ornan was doing when he saw the Angel. Upon seeing the Angel of Yahweh he and his sons with him (חֲנָנָא לוֹ) were hiding themselves (יֹּכָהָהּ)

48 One very plausible solution for the difference in the purchase price in the passages (50 shekels of silver in Samuel vs. 600 shekels of gold in Chronicles) is that the Chronicler records David’s purchase of the entire area (וֹתֵרֵך) from Ornan (1 Chron 21:26) while Samuel records the purchase of the threshing floor and oxen only (2 Sam 24:24). Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., Peter H. Davids, F. F. Bruce, and Manfred T. Brauch, *Hard Sayings of the Bible* (Downer’s Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 242.
of his house (1 Chron 21:29). The fact that the altar of burnt offering and the tabernacle of Moses were at Gibeon is significant, because the Chronicler relates the fact that the Angel of Yahweh had been in Gibeon too, keeping David from inquiring of Yahweh by his sword (1 Chron 21:29-30).

A number of elements of theophany converge in these passages that have not come together before in Scripture.

**Table 5. Indications of Theophany at the Threshing Floor of Ornan**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indication</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The visible, sword-bearing Angel of Yahweh (2 Sam 24:16; 1 Chron 21:15-16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Angel of Yahweh’s command to David to erect an altar and the building of the altar (2 Sam 24:18-19, 25; 1 Chron 21:18-19, 26; cf. Ex 20:24-26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The fear of David and the Jerusalem elders, who bow to the earth before the Angel of Yahweh, and the fear of Ornan and his sons, who hide from him (1 Chron 21:16b, 20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The presence of sacrifice (burnt offerings and peace offerings) where the Angel appears (2 Sam 24:25; 1 Chron 21:26a; cf. Jdg 6:20-21; 13:19-20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The supernatural fire that comes from heaven (where the Angel of Yahweh is said to be, 1 Chron 21:16a) and consumes the offerings (1 Chron 21:26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The memorializing of the place as David calls the place the “house of God” and the altar as “the altar of burnt offering for Israel” (1 Chron 21:1; cf. Gen 28:17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Chronicler’s direct statement that Yahweh appeared to David at the threshing floor of Ornan, also called Mount Moriah (2 Chron 3:1; cf. Mount Moriah; cf. Gen 22:2, 14)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

49 After the Ark was lost to the Philistines and later returned, it did not return to the tabernacle. When the ark returned to Israel, it was in the house of Abinadab at Kirath-Jearim for twenty years (1 Sam 7:1-2). David went to get the ark early in his reign, but he did not do so properly, and Uzzah died as a result (2 Sam 6:1-9). The ark went to the house of Obed-edom after Uzzah died (2 Sam 6:11; cf. 1 Chron 13:13-14). After David heard that God blessed Obed-edom because of the ark’s presence, he sought again to bring the ark to Jerusalem and did so with the help of the proper persons (the Levites) as the law instructed (2 Sam 6:12-18; cf. 1 Chron 15:1-25). This signaled that Jerusalem had become a place of worship. The Chronicler indicates that at this same time the Mosaic tabernacle and altar of burnt offering were at the high place of Gibeon (1 Chron 21:29; cf. 1 Kgs 2:28-34). David’s recognition of the importance of the altar at Gibeon as Israel’s altar is evident from his division of the priesthood when the ark returned to Jerusalem. One division, headed by Asaph, went to the high place at Gibeon (1 Chron 16:37-38), while the other division, headed by Zadok, remained with the ark (1 Chron 16:39-40).

50 The Angel of Yahweh’s sword is called Yahweh’s sword (1 Chron 21:12, 16, 27, 30).

51 In spite of David’s declaration, Solomon did not recognize this altar to be the altar for Israel until after Yahweh appeared to him in a dream at the beginning of his reign (1 Kgs 3:1-15).
The most significant conclusion emerging from this passage is that the appearance of the Angel of Yahweh at the threshing floor of Ornan leads to the establishment of the temple at this very location. The altar that David built in obedience to the Angel’s command is an indication of the Divine choice of the location for the worship of Yahweh. Moses had said long before in the song of Moses that Yahweh would bring the people into the land and appoint a sanctuary for Israel (Ex 15:17). The history of Israel includes the construction of the tabernacle at Sinai, the continuous movement of the tabernacle through the wilderness, the first establishment of the tabernacle at Shiloh, and then its removal to Gibeon. The final moving of the entire tabernacle to Jerusalem is due to the appearance of the Angel of Yahweh at the threshing floor or Ornan. This appearance of the Angel of Yahweh signals the beginning of a new era for the worship of the nation of Israel. It signifies the divine choice of Jerusalem as the place where he would cause his name to dwell (cf. Deut 12:5ff.; Deut 26).

A second major advance in the revelation of the Angel of Yahweh from these passages is that he himself executes divine judgment on his own people. In Numbers 22 he opposes Balaam with his sword, and in Joshua 5:13-15 he presents his sword to indicate his readiness to lead Israel in the destruction of Jericho. In the events described in 1 Chronicles 21 and 2 Samuel 24, however, his sword is directed toward 70,000 of his own people, perhaps for their rebellion against David in following Absalom.

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52 David’s personal anticipation of God’s choosing of a place for his temple is found in his statement to Zadok when he brought the ark outside the city to him during the rebellion of Absalom: “Carry the ark of God back into the city. If I find favor in the eyes of the LORD, he will bring me back and let me see both it and his dwelling place” (2 Sam 15:25).

53 Ben K. Duffy suggests that the people’s participation in the rebellion of Absalom against David was the primary reason that David was incited to number the people. Ben K. Duffy, *The Role of the Angel of the Lord in the Location of Solomon’s Temple: 2 Samuel 24:18* (M.A.
A final observation about the Angel of Yahweh from this passage is that he further demonstrates himself to be the Angel of the Covenant (Ex 23:20-23). The location of the altar that David was directed to build was on the land of Ornan, who was a Jebusite. The Jebusites were among those nations that Israel was commanded to expel from the land, according to the book of the Covenant (Ex 23:20-23). Ornan obviously owned the threshing floor and presumably the portion of land around it. Thus as the Angel of Yahweh commands David to erect an altar there, he lays claim to the land and effectively removes the foreigner Ornan. The Angel is instructing David to claim a final portion of the land of the Jebusites that he had commanded them to secure long before (cf. Ex 3:8; 23:23; Deut 7:1-2; Jdg 1:21).

Conclusion

The period of revelation between Joshua and David demonstrates that the Angel of Yahweh continues functioning in his role as the Angel of the Covenant. He holds Israel to account for its sins against the covenant at Bochim, and he

thesis, Multnomah School of the Bible, 1983), 15. 2 Samuel 24:1 indicates that Yahweh’s anger burned toward Israel before David numbered the people. In the parallel passage in 1 Chronicles, Satan is the instrument of Divine Providence who provokes David to number Israel (1 Chron 21:1). For a good discussion of the theological problem that these two facts present and a biblically balanced solution, see Layton Talbert, Not By Chance (Greenville, SC: BJU Press, 2001), 141-55. While Talbert’s focus is more on the involvement of Satan and God in the life of Job, the “principles of providence” he presents are definitely applicable to the circumstance described in 2 Samuel 24 and 1 Chronicles 21.

54 Duffy explores the identity of Ornan (Araunah) archaeologically and linguistically and concludes that Ornan was probably a Jebusite king who lived at Jerusalem after David conquered it. The strongest evidence suggesting such a conclusion is the presence of the Hebrew article before both the kethib and the qere readings of his name in the Masoretic Text of 2 Sam 24:16. Thus he is “the Araunah,” which according to Duffy is a “Hurrian cognate meaning ‘lord.’” Duffy also observes Josephus’s comment that Ornan was David’s friend and Louis Ginzburg’s suggestion that he was a proselyte to the Jewish religion. The Role of the Angel of the LORD in the Location of Solomon’s Temple: 2 Samuel 24:18, 9-10.

55 The fact that David knew who and where Ornan was suggests that Ornan was no stranger in Jerusalem.
commissions leaders for the nation such as Gideon, Samson, and Samuel. Perhaps the clearest development of the theology of the Angel of Yahweh is the offering of sacrifice to him on both an individual and a national scale. As David was commanded to sacrifice on Mount Moriah, he recognized that God was signaling a new location for the worship of Yahweh. His momentous sacrifice, offered before the Angel of Yahweh, identified Jerusalem the central place of worship for the nation of Israel, and the dwelling place of Yahweh upon the earth (Psalm 135:21).
CHAPTER 7

THE ANGEL OF YAHWEH IN THE PERIOD OF THE DIVIDED KINGDOM

The Angel of Yahweh’s establishment of Jerusalem as the center of Israel’s cultic worship during the reign of David was confirmed by the building of the temple there during the reign of Solomon (2 Chron 3:1) and the appearance of the Shekinah cloud at its dedication (2 Chron 7:1). However, Israel quickly departed from the worship of Yahweh in the latter days of Solomon’s reign (1 Kgs 11:3-4), and the kingdom was divided during his son Rehoboam’s reign (1 Kgs 12). Following the division of the kingdom, Jeroboam furthered the apostasy of the northern kingdom by building idols of convenience at Bethel and Dan (1 Kgs 12:28-29). Although the instances of the Angel’s ministry during this period are fewer and farther between, the Angel of Yahweh continued his ministry to both Israel and Judah. Hosea and Isaiah both prophesied of the saving ministry of the Angel of Yahweh as a theological basis for the repentance and faith of the people.

*The Angel of Yahweh strengthens Elijah (1 Kings 19:4-8)*

The first appearance of the Angel of Yahweh during the time of the divided kingdom of Israel is his appearance to Elijah in the wilderness of Beersheba in Judah (1 Kgs 19:1-2). Jezebel threatens Elijah after he executes the prophets of Baal, and he flees in fear to hide from her in the land of Judah. Exhausted from his journey and the events at Mount Carmel (1 Kgs 18), Elijah
asks Yahweh to take his life and then falls asleep (1 Kgs 19:4). After Elijah sleeps for a while, an “angel” (מְלָאך) touches him and instructs him to arise and eat the meal of hot bread cakes and water that had been prepared (v.5). After the nourishment Elijah rests again.

Two important details are added when the Angel returns to Elijah (v.7). The Angel’s command to Elijah is the same as before (“Arise and eat,” v.7), but the narrator now identifies the מְלָאך as the Angel of Yahweh ( מלאך יהוה). The Angel of Yahweh specifies a reason for his command: “Because the journey is too great for you” (v.7). This command is unusual because the narrative contains no record that Elijah was intending to take a journey. He went to the wilderness of Judah to hide from Jezebel, and he had just asked Yahweh to take his life. In any case, Elijah eats and departs for Mount Horeb, being sustained by the nourishment provided by the Angel of Yahweh on a journey of forty days (v.8).

1 The LXX of 1 Kings 19:5 has τις for מְלָאך instead of ἄγγελος, the normal word in the LXX for מְלָאך. The phrase in verse 5 in the LXX is thus, “Someone touched Elijah.” In verse 7, however, it is the ὁ ἄγγελος κυρίου who returns to Elijah.

2 Hengstenberg identifies the מְלָאך in 1 Kings 19:4-8 as a created finite angel based on the anarthrous occurrence of מְלָאך in verse 5. He suggests that the previous mention of מְלָאך (an angel) is the reason for the definite יהוה מְלָאך (the angel of Yahweh). However, the anarthrous מְלָאך occurs in other passages when the מְלָאך is definitely the divine Angel of Yahweh (Ex 23:20-23; Num 20:16; 2 Sam 24; 1 Chron 21). Hengstenberg himself makes this very point on the use of the anarthrous מְלָאך in Exodus 23:20-23, “The angel is certainly also an angel.” Ernst Wilhelm Hengstenberg, Christology of the Old Testament, trans. Theod. Meyer and James Martin (reprint of the British edition printed 1872-78; Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1956), 4: 254. The difference between the present context and Exodus 23, of course, is that the מְלָאך of Exodus 23 clearly possesses an obvious indication of deity. Following the anarthrous מְלָאך in Exodus 23, Yahweh says of the Angel, “My name is in Him” (Ex 23:21). While such an obvious indication of deity is absent in 1 Kings 19:4-8, the information provided is sufficient to infer that the one ministering to Elijah is indeed divine.

3 The theophany to Elijah in the cave at Mount Horeb (Sinai) that follows (2 Kgs 19) is reminiscent of Moses’ personal encounters with Yahweh at Mount Sinai (Ex 3:1; 17:6; cf. Deut 4:10, 15). In addition, the passage bears a resemblance to other passages in which the “Word of Yahweh” seems to take on a personal rather than abstract nature.
This brief account elucidates the ministry of the Angel of Yahweh to his prophet in distress. First, the Angel of Yahweh comes and ministers to Elijah by rejuvenating him physically and emotionally. Elijah is discouraged to the point of wanting to die (v.4), and the Angel of Yahweh provides nourishment and strengthens him with sleep. Thus the Angel of Yahweh demonstrates personal concern and compassion for his servant’s needs (cf. Gen 16:7ff.; 21:17-20).

This account also illustrates the power and intelligence of the Angel of Yahweh. His supernatural intelligence is evident in that he knows where Elijah is in the wilderness and where he intends to go. Elijah’s attempt to hide himself completely had not hidden him from the Angel. It is precisely in the obscurity of the wilderness of Judah where the Angel of Yahweh finds him (1 Kgs 19:4).

The Angel’s awareness of Elijah’s journey to Horeb further demonstrates his complete knowledge of his servant (1 Kgs 19:8). The Angel’s supernatural power is exhibited by his double provision of food and water for Elijah in the wilderness. The provision of the food at such a critical point for Elijah, as well as the second meal that sustained him for forty days, clearly demonstrates his command of the supernatural (1 Kgs 19:8).

The Angel of Yahweh confronts Ahaziah’s idolatry (2 Kings 1:1-17)

Elijah’s ministry continued after the reign of Ahab right through the reign of Ahab’s son Ahaziah. In the beginning of 2 Kings the writer records that

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4 Four similarities exist between 1 Kings 19 and the appearance of the Angel of God to Hagar in Genesis 21: a person in distress, a prayer of desperation, the Angel’s provision for both physical and spiritual needs, and the location (the wilderness of Beersheba).

5 Elijah’s confrontation of the idolatry of Ahab and Israel is an essential backdrop to his confrontation of Ahab’s son Ahaziah. The contest between Baal and the God of Israel on the top of Mount Carmel emphatically demonstrated the identity of Yahweh as the true God of Israel in the eyes of the Israelites. Elijah’s announcement the same day that it would rain after it had not rained for three and half years further emphasized this truth. Elijah had announced to Ahab three
Ahaziah fell through the lattice in the upper chamber of his house in Samaria and consequently became very ill (2 Kgs 1:1-2). Rather than inquiring of Yahweh, Ahaziah sent to inquire of the Baal of Ekron to see whether he would live (2 Kgs 1:2). Aware of the idolatrous act, the Angel of Yahweh instructs Elijah to meet Ahaziah’s messengers on their way to Ekron and send them back to Ahaziah with a message: “Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are going to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron?”  

This question is coupled with a judgment: “Now therefore thus says the LORD, ‘You shall not come down from the bed where you have gone up, but you shall surely die’” (2 Kgs 1:3-4).

Upon hearing the message and discerning Elijah’s involvement, Ahaziah sends a delegation of fifty men and their captain to arrest Elijah. The captain comes to Elijah, who is sitting on top of a hill, and says, “O man of God, the king says, ‘Come down’” (v.9, NAU). Seizing upon the words \textit{man of God} (\textit{יהוּדֵי וֹאָי}), Elijah says, “If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume years prior to the contest on Mount Carmel, “As the LORD, the God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, surely there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word” (1 Kgs 17:1, NAU). Immediately after the events at Carmel, Elijah prays, and the rain falls as further testimony to the one true God (1 Kgs 17:41-45).

6 The question regarding the “God of Israel” is suggestive of the fact that Ahaziah knew better than to inquire of the Baal of Ekron. The severe judgments that follow, moreover, confirm that he did know better. The focus on this phrase “God of Israel” is further accentuated by Elijah’s prayer on Mount Carmel: “O LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, today let it be known that You are God in Israel and that I am Your servant and I have done all these things at Your word” (1 Kgs 18:36, NAU). The prayer to the “God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel” rather than the “God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob” intentionally directed the attention of the people of Israel to Yahweh, the true “God of Israel.”

7 Such an immediate and final judgment for one act of idolatry was the exact penalty of the Law of Moses (Deut 17:1-5), but Yahweh had seemingly been more merciful to previous idolatrous kings such as Ahaziah’s father. However, it was precisely because Ahaziah was the son of Ahab that he was judged so severely. Yahweh had demonstrated to Ahab in a spectacular way that He indeed was the God of Israel, and God expected the son to heed the message to the father.
you and your fifty.” The fire from heaven that falls immediately on Elijah’s words demonstrates that Yahweh is indeed the God of Israel, and Elijah is still his man (1 Kgs 18).

The account of the second delegation with a similar message for Elijah differs only in the command of the second captain to Elijah to come “quickly” (v.11). Elijah is again called a man of God, and he calls down the same judgment upon the men and their captain. However, the final captain is considerably more cautious in his approach, pleading with Elijah to consider his life and the life of his soldiers as “precious” (v.13-14). At this approach the Angel of Yahweh commands Elijah to go with the delegation to Ahaziah, where Elijah delivers the same message of judgment to Ahaziah in person (v.16, cf. v.5-6). The death of Ahaziah follows according to the word of Yahweh (v.17).

This confrontation of Ahaziah’s idolatry brings forward two important emphases concerning the theology of the Angel of Yahweh. First, this narrative illustrates the nature of the relationship between the Angel of Yahweh and his prophets. In the narrative Elijah acts according to the command of the Angel of Yahweh. He speaks what the Angel of Yahweh tells him to speak, and he takes

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8 The fire from heaven that consumes the servants of Ahaziah in this passage intentionally echoes the fire that fell from heaven at Carmel (1 Kgs 18).

9 The delay between the first pronouncement and the last pronouncement on Ahaziah is likely due to the patience of Yahweh with Ahaziah, giving him an opportunity to humble himself before Yahweh, as his father Ahab did when judgment was pronounced upon him (cf. 1 Kgs 21:17-29).

10 Meredith Kline suggests that 2 Kings 1 and other passages like it illustrate “the intermediary role of the Angel in the formation of the prophets who were raised up after the order of Moses.” Meredith Kline, Images of the Spirit (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980; Reprint, Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1999), 80. See also the Angel of Yahweh’s interaction with Gad (1 Chron 21:18-19).
the message of judgment to Ahaziah himself when he is commanded to do so (2
Kgs 1:15). Thus the prophet is the spokesman for the Angel of Yahweh.\footnote{11}

Another emphasis within this passage is the continuation of the ministry of
the Angel of Yahweh as the Covenant Angel over the northern kingdom of
Israel. The Angel’s pronouncement of judgment upon Ahaziah indicates that he
had not abandoned the northern kingdom of Israel during the days of the
divided kingdom (Ex 23:20-23). His knowledge of Ahaziah’s idolatrous act is the
impetus for directing Elijah to take a message to him (2 Kgs 1:2-4), and his
judgment was pronounced with finality. Ahaziah’s refusal to accept the message
and his attempts to arrest Elijah confirms the justice of the divine decision.

*The Angel of Yahweh defends Jerusalem against Sennacherib*

*(Isaiah 37; 2 Kings 19; 2 Chronicles 32)*

In addition to judging one of Israel’s kings for his idolatry, the Angel of
Yahweh protected Hezekiah, the king of Judah, for his faithfulness to God. J.
Barton Payne says that Angel of Yahweh’s defense of Jerusalem and the
destruction of Sennacherib’s armies in the days of Hezekiah was “one of the two
greatest deliverances that God’s people ever experienced.”\footnote{12} Supporting this
assertion is the three-fold repetition of the deliverance of Jerusalem within the
Old Testament (Isa 37; 2 Kgs 19; 2 Chron 32) as well as the predictions of the
event in the prophecies of Hosea and Isaiah (Hos 1:7; Isa 10:16-17; 31:5).

The events leading to this remarkable deliverance by the Angel include
the siege and capture of Judah’s fortified cities by Sennacherib (2 Kgs 18:13) as

\footnote{11} All this takes place in a way that remarkably answers Ahaziah’s initial request of
whether he was going to die (2 Kgs 1:2).

\footnote{12} Payne regards the greatest Old Testament deliverance as the Exodus from Egypt. “The
well as a series of insulting letters and messages sent by Sennacherib’s messengers to reproach Hezekiah and the God of Jerusalem (2 Chron 32:9-16; 2 Chron 32:20; 2 Kgs 19:14-19; Isa 37:14-20). The climax of tension came when the Rabshakeh wrote a letter that spoke of Yahweh as if he were just like the gods of the other nations that Assyria had destroyed (2 Kgs 19:9-13). Yahweh responded to Sennacherib’s affront by assuring a prayerful Hezekiah with a promise of Jerusalem’s survival and humiliating judgment for the king of Assyria (2 Kgs 19:20-34). He also promised his personal involvement: “I will defend this city to save it for My own sake and for my servant David’s sake” (2 Kgs 19:34; Isa 36:35, ESV). That very night the Angel of Yahweh went out to the camp of Assyria at Libnah and struck 185,000 soldiers dead.\footnote{The destruction of the Assyrian hosts did not take place right outside of Jerusalem, because Sennacherib and his army were fighting at Libnah at the time (compare Isa 37:8, 33-34).}

Of these three passages 2 Chronicles gives the least information about the Angel of Yahweh, calling him only “an angel” (נָשִּּׁמָהן) (2 Chron 32:21).\footnote{The Israelite messengers refer to the Angel of Yahweh simply as נָשִּׁמָה in Numbers 20:16 when the messengers of Israel explain to the Edomites how they came up from Egypt and in 1 Chronicles 21:15 when Yahweh sent the Angel of Yahweh to Jerusalem.} For this reason, some have identified the נָשִּׁמָה here as a created angel.\footnote{E.g., Paul Heinisch, Theology of the Old Testament (St. Paul: North Central, 1955), 104.} However, antecedent revelation demonstrates that the Angel of Yahweh is referred to in this way (e.g., Num 20:16 and Ex 23:20). Furthermore, a harmony of the passages demonstrates that it is indeed the Angel of Yahweh who acted on Israel’s behalf.\footnote{E.g., Paul Heinisch, Theology of the Old Testament (St. Paul: North Central, 1955), 104.}
Table 6. Harmony of the Angel of Yahweh’s Defense of Jerusalem

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<tr>
<td>33 &quot;By the way that he came, by the same he will return, and he shall not come to this city,&quot; declares the LORD. 34 &quot;For I will defend this city to save it for My own sake and for My servant David’s sake.&quot;</td>
<td>34 'By the way that he came, by the same he will return, and he will not come to this city,' declares the LORD. 35 &quot;For I will defend this city to save it for My own sake and for My servant David’s sake.&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>35 Then it happened that night that the angel of the LORD went out and struck 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians; and when men rose early in the morning, behold, all of them were dead.</td>
<td>21a And the LORD sent an angel who destroyed every mighty warrior, commander and officer in the camp of the king of Assyria.</td>
<td>36 Then the angel of the LORD went out and struck 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians; and when men arose early in the morning, behold, all of these were dead.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and returned home, and lived at Nineveh. 37 It came about as he was worshiping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer killed him with the sword; and they escaped into the land of Ararat. And Esarhaddon his son became king in his place.</td>
<td>21b So he returned in shame to his own land. And when he had entered the temple of his god, some of his own children killed him there with the sword.</td>
<td>37 So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and returned home and lived at Nineveh. 38 It came about as he was worshiping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons killed him with the sword; and they escaped into the land of Ararat. And Esarhaddon his son became king in his place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 So the LORD saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib the king of Assyria and from the hand of all others, and guided them on every side.</td>
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The anarthrous הָלַךְ in 2 Chronicles 32:21a indicates that the destruction of the Assyrians was ultimately executed by a Person and not merely a pestilence or plague.\(^\text{16}\) This verse also explains the precise nature of the Assyrian

\(^{16}\) The 6th-century B.C. historian Herodotus says that a pestilence of mice brought about the demise of the Assyrian army, “There swarmed by night upon their enemies mice of the fields, and ate up their quivers and their bows, and moreover the handles of their shields, so that on the next day they fled, and being without defence of arms great numbers fell. And at the present time this king stands in the temple of Hephaistos in stone, holding upon his hand a mouse, and by
destruction, whereas the parallel passages in 2 Kings and Isaiah do not. Verse 21 indicates that the Angel did not destroy the Assyrians with massive and indiscriminate force but rather targeted and killed “every mighty warrior, commander, and officer” of the Assyrian army (v.21). When the remaining soldiers arose in the morning, they found these soldiers dead (Isa 37:35; 2 Kgs 19:35). Thus the solitary Angel of Yahweh destroyed the bulk of Sennacherib’s army and spared a remnant of the least powerful soldiers. With this relatively small number of soldiers Sennacherib returned to his own land in shame. While such a manifestation of power and intelligence is perhaps within the power and intelligence of a created angel, further considerations point to divine agency.

One of the considerations pointing to divine agency is the various passages predicting this event. The prophecies of Isaiah and Hosea, for example, parallel the Chronicler’s description of the selective destruction of the most

letters inscribed he says these words: ‘Let him who looks upon me learn to fear the gods.’” Herodotus The Histories 2.141.

17 Such selective targeting of individuals within Sennacherib’s army is reminiscent of Yahweh’s killing of the firstborn of men and cattle in Egypt on the night of the Passover (Ex 12:29). Yahweh had said that He would “pass over” the land of Egypt that night and take the life of the firstborn in each household that failed to put the blood over the door (Ex 12:12-13). The fact that Yahweh Himself (i.e., the Angel of Yahweh) passed through the land of Egypt is evident from the detail within Exodus 12, where Yahweh says, “I will go through the land of Egypt that night and will strike down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast” (v. 12, NAU). As Exodus 12 continues, Yahweh speaks of seeing the blood on the lintel and the doorposts Himself and passing over the houses (v. 13). Moses additionally describes what is going to take place to the elders of Israel, “For the LORD will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when He sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the LORD will pass over the door and will not allow the destroyer to come in to your houses to smite you” (Ex 12:23). The explanation that the Israelites were to give to their children also contains a specificity that is very exact: “And when your children say to you, ‘What does this rite mean to you?’, you shall say, ‘It is a Passover sacrifice to the LORD who passed over the houses of the sons of Israel in Egypt when He smote the Egyptians, but spared our homes’” (Ex 12:27).

18 Where exactly the army of Sennacherib was when the Angel of Yahweh killed 185,000 is unknown, and no indication is given as to whether those destroyed were in one location. The fact that not all of his army was destroyed is evident from Isaiah 37:36 and 2 Kings 19:35, where both writers indicate that “when men arose early in the morning, behold, all these were dead.”
powerful and the officials in Sennacherib’s army. In Isaiah 31:8, for instance, 
Yahweh asserts that the Assyrian would fall “by a sword, not of man (ץָּנַח), and a 
sword, not of man (רבָּנָ) shall devour him” (NAU). This is first a denial of any 
human agency to execute the destruction, but it may also refer to the sword of 
the Angel of Yahweh (cf. Isa 27:1; 34:6; 66:16). Isaiah 10:17 also prophesies of 
judgment on the pride of the Assyrian king.

Therefore the Lord, the GOD of Hosts, will send a wasting disease among 
his stout warriors; And under his glory a fire will be kindled like a 
burning flame. And the light of Israel will become a fire and his Holy One 
a flame, and it will burn and devour his thorns and his briars in a single 
day. (Isa 10:16-17)

The selective destruction can be seen by the fact that Yahweh will send “wasting 
disease” or “leanness” among the “stout warriors” (ESV, NAU) or “fat ones” 
(NKJ). The imagery then shifts in the remainder of the verse to that of a great 
forest fire that is ignited and fueled by the “Light of Israel” and “His Holy 
One.” The fire, moreover, will burn the “thorns and briars” of the Assyrian 
king, an allusion to Assyrian officers (v.17). All of this will take place, finally, in a 

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19 The Angel of Yahweh’s sword is mentioned several times in the Old Testament (Num 

20 The translation “wasting disease” (Isa 10:16, NAU, NIV) is perhaps part of the reason 
for the idea that the Angel of Yahweh’s judgment upon Sennacherib involved some kind of 
plague or pestilence. However, the word צָּנַח may also be translated “leanness” (Isa 10:16, NKJ; cf. 
Isa 17:4). The fact that צָּנַח is used in contrast with קֶבֶר (“fat ones,” NKJ), in addition to the fact 
that the phrase occurs in a highly figurative context, militates against the thought that Isaiah is 
prophesying the exact method of destruction by the Angel of Yahweh.

21 The name applied here to the agent of the destruction is the “Lord, the GOD of Hosts” 
or the Lord Yahweh of Hosts. Hosea’s prophecy of the Angel in Hosea 12:2-6 applies the name 
“Yahweh, the God of Hosts” to Him.

22 Whether the “Light of Israel” (לאנֶרֶדְיוֹא מָרֹא) in Isaiah’s prophecy is an allusion to the 
Angel of Yahweh’s appearance to Moses in the burning bush is not clear, but it is certainly 
suggestive. The phrase also appears earlier in the chapter when Isaiah refers to Yahweh and says, 
“whose fire [רָא] is in Zion, and whose furnace is in Jerusalem” (31:8, NAU). Zechariah also refers 
to Yahweh as a “wall of fire” about Jerusalem (Zech 2:5).
“single day” (יָמָן). Such language directly corresponds to the events of Isaiah 36-37.

Further indications that it was the divine Angel of Yahweh who exacted the judgment upon Assyria come from the promises Yahweh made regarding his defense of Jerusalem. Isaiah and the writer of Kings both record the promise immediately preceding the destruction upon Assyria: “‘For I will defend this city to save it for My own sake and for My servant David’s sake’” (Isa 37:35; 2 Kgs 19:34; cf. 2 Kgs 20:6; Isa 38:6). The word translated “defend” is the infinitive absolute נָעַם (from נָעַם), which means “cover,” “surround,” or “defend.” The same word is translated “protect” in Isaiah 31:5 (NAU), a similar context in which Isaiah predicts the deliverance of Jerusalem from Sennacherib by Yahweh of Hosts. Isaiah says, “Like flying birds so the LORD of Hosts will protect [גָּן] Jerusalem. He will protect [הָבֵית] and deliver it; He will pass over [יָשָׁפֵף] and rescue it” (NAU).

The word יָשָׁפֵף describing Yahweh’s actions is a direct allusion to the deliverance of Israel from the plague of the firstborn in Egypt. Isaiah says that Yahweh “passing over” יָשָׁפֵף will rescue Jerusalem (31:5). This allusion not

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23 The correspondence in these statements to the judgment upon Assyria continues in Isaiah 33:18-19 where the prophet says that the “glory of the forest” would be consumed and that even a child could number the trees left over. The destruction thus will not be annihilation but humiliation. The greatest soldiers are destroyed but the weakest are left (cf. v.33-34).

24 In Zechariah 9:15 and 12:8, God uses the same word with reference to his defense of Jerusalem in the future.

25 BDB, 171.

26 Isaiah 30-31 is a pronouncement of judgment on those in Judah and Jerusalem who are relying on Egypt for their rescue from Sennacherib. Yahweh says that He will defend Jerusalem Himself.

27 The infinitive absolute יָשָׁפֵף translated “passing over” (NKJ) comes from the same word used in Exodus 12 to describe the action of Yahweh as He protected the Israelites from the plague.
only suggests divine agency (cf. Ex 12:12-13, 23, 27, 29), but it also links the 
destruction of Sennacherib’s army with another parallel. Like the judgment of 
Assyria, Yahweh’s judgment upon the Egyptians’ firstborn was also selective (Ex 
12:12).  

Another strong corroboration for divine agency in the judgment on 
Sennacherib comes from Hosea’s prophecy, which describes a coming 
deliverance of Judah by God himself (Hosea 1:6-7). After announcing the demise 
of the northern kingdom of Israel, Hosea writes, “But I will have compassion on 
the house of Judah and deliver them by the LORD their God, and will not deliver 
them by bow, sword, battle, horses or horsemen” (Hos 1:7). The deliverance of 
Judah, not by the traditional instruments of war, but rather “by Yahweh יְהֹוָה 
their God,” indicates divine rather than human agency. This description best fits 
the Angel of Yahweh not only because he bears the name Yahweh, but as the 
Covenant Angel he protects his people (Ex 23:21). 

Several points emerge from this discussion of the various passages 
relating to the deliverance of Jerusalem by the Angel of Yahweh. The first of 
these is the staggering display of power and intelligence by the Angel of Yahweh 
as he executes judgment on Sennacherib and his armies. The execution of 185,000 
men in a single night is itself astonishing, but the selection of soldiers of might 
and rank within the army of Sennacherib can hardly be the work of any other 

of the firstborn. What makes this reference interesting is the qualifying phrase in the beginning of 
the verse is “like flying birds” (Isa 31:5, NAU). In other words Isaiah is using two terms (נָעַם and 
נָעַם) that describe the actions of a bird who hovers over her young to protect them from 
predators. Kline argues that the term נָעַם should also be translated “hover over” instead of the 
more common “pass over.” He argues that the alternate translation fits better with the avian 
imagery suggested by the word נָעַם. “The Feast of Cover-Over,” JETS, 37:4, December, 1994, 497-
510. 

28 The only difference in the latter case was that Yahweh also killed the firstborn of the 
beasts (or cattle) as well (Ex 12:29).
than the omniscient Angel of God, who knows “all that is in the earth” (2 Sam 14:20).

Another emphasis in each of the records of this event is the fact that the Angel of Yahweh acts to protect Jerusalem (2 Kgs 19:34; Isa 37:35). It is precisely in view of Yahweh’s relationship to Jerusalem that Sennacherib’s threats to destroy Jerusalem must be understood. Sennacherib’s threats did not pose a problem simply because Jerusalem was the capital of Judah. They posed a theological problem. Leading up to the destruction of Sennacherib’s army by the Angel of Yahweh, Sennacherib had repeatedly insulted Yahweh by suggesting that Yahweh was no different from the gods of the other nations that he had already conquered. Furthermore, he made the blasphemous suggestion that Yahweh could not defend his own people.  

It was to defend the divine Name, therefore, that the Angel of Yahweh acted against the king of Assyria (Ex 23:21). His destruction of Sennacherib and the protection of Jerusalem thus proved to be a sensational turn of events bringing shame and dishonor to Sennacherib and glory and honor to Yahweh.

_Hosea prophesies of the Angel named Yahweh, the God of Hosts (Hosea 12:2-6)_

Complementing the references to the Angel’s deliverance of Jerusalem within the prophecies of Hosea and Isaiah are what may be called historical-theological references to the Angel.  Similar to the inclusion of the reference to the Angel of Yahweh within the Song of Deborah (Judges 5), Hosea and Isaiah

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29 One instance of Sennacherib’s blasphemous words is found in 2 Kings 19:35: “Who among all the gods of the lands have delivered their land from my hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem from my hand?”

30 The term historical-theological is meant to distinguish between those references to the Angel of Yahweh appearing in narratives and prophecy and those references that look back on some act or acts of the Angel of Yahweh in biblical history.
refer to the Angel of Yahweh’s historical interaction with his people as a theological basis for their prophetic message.

Hosea’s prophecy provides a brief yet robust synthesis of Jacob’s several encounters with the Angel of Yahweh as he calls the nation of Israel to repentance. In Hosea 12 he writes that Yahweh has a “charge” (indictment) against Judah and that he will punish “Jacob” (i.e., the nation of Israel) according to its ways (12:2). He then sets forth the patriarch Jacob himself as a prime example of the kind of humble repentance that the nation needs to exhibit before Yahweh. It is precisely Jacob’s posture toward God that Hosea calls Israel to assume. Hosea writes,

The LORD also brings a charge against Judah, And will punish Jacob according to his ways; According to his deeds He will recompense him. He took [\(\text{נָשַׁן}\)] his brother by the heel in the womb, And in his strength he struggled with God. Yes, he struggled with the Angel and prevailed; He wept, and sought favor from Him. He found Him in Bethel, And there He spoke to us -- That is, the LORD God of Hosts. The LORD is His memorable name. So you, by the help of your God, return; Observe mercy and justice, And wait on your God continually. (Hos 12:2-6, NKJ; Hos 12:1-5, MT)

Hosea first notes that the first observable act of Jacob outside of the womb was his “grasping” (\(\text{נָשַׁן}\)) of his brother’s heel (cf. Gen 25:26). It was this action which resulted in his name Jacob (\(\text{נָשַׁן}\)). This act of “striving” with his brother at birth, moreover, parallels his “contending” (\(\text{נָשַׁן}\)) with God in his “strength” (v.3; v.4, MT). This “contending” with God, however, is explained further as Jacob’s “striving” (\(\text{נָשַׁן}\)) with the Angel of Yahweh at the Jabbok ford on his way back to Canaan. Hosea explains further, “Yes, he wrestled [\(\text{נָשַׁן}\)] with the angel and prevailed; he wept and sought His favor” (v.4, ESV; v.5, MT). The repetition of

31 The word \(\text{נָשַׁן}\) in this passage is the same word that Jacob used when he referred to Reuben as the “firstfruits of [his] strength” \(\text{נָשַׁן}\) in Genesis 49:3. It is translated “manhood” (ESV), “maturity” (NAU), and “strength” (KJV, NKJ).
the verb לְפָרַע in both clauses indicates that verse 4 [v.5, MT] is an explanation of verse 3 [v.4, MT]. In verse 3 Jacob strives with God (אֶלֶה), but in verse 4 he was striving with the Angel. This is a direct reference to the statement of Jacob’s opponent in Genesis 32:28b [v.29b, MT] which has the same verb (albeit a different form): “You have striven [לְפָרַע] with God . . . and have prevailed” (ESV). Hosea thus makes explicit what Moses implies—the Opponent of Jacob at the Jabbok was the Angel (אֱלֹהֵי) who is also God (אֶלֶה) (i.e., the Angel of God; cf. Gen 31:11-13).

Important to Hosea’s message is not merely the identity of Jacob’s God, but also Jacob’s posture of humility toward him and his earnest seeking of him by prayer. The words that communicate this posture are the words “He wept and sought His favor” (Hos 12:4, ESV; 12:5, MT). It is just this posture that Israel needs now toward God. It is only as they imitate the sincere pleading of their patriarch and humble themselves before God that they will truly be Israel (cf. Hos 13:9).

Hosea also describes a second major occasion when Jacob sought God. This time, however, the place is significant. Verse 4b [5b, MT] says, “He found Him at Bethel, and there He spoke with us.” The proper antecedent of the pronoun Him in the phrase is not Jacob but the Angel of the previous verse. The narrative of Genesis points to this fact not only through the chronological parallel in Jacob’s life (i.e., Jabbok then Bethel) but also by the description of Jacob’s journey back to Bethel. God told him to go back to Bethel, which Jacob had so named after the dream theophany of the ladder reaching up to heaven (Gen 28:11ff.). Jacob did not find the Angel at Bethel the first time. Rather, it was the
Angel who found him (Gen 28:11ff.; Gen 31:11-13). On his return to Bethel, however, it was Jacob who found the Angel (cf. Gen 35:6-15).  

In the mention of Bethel, Hosea directly confronts the idolatry of Israel. The northern tribes had been worshipping the golden calf at Bethel since the days of Jeroboam I (1 Kgs 12:28), but Hosea reminds them that the true God of Bethel is actually “Yahweh, the God of Hosts,” the Angel of God whom Jacob worshipped and sought (Hos 12:5, 12:6, MT). The name of God Hosea chooses, furthermore, “Yahweh God of Hosts,” adds further weight to his appeal for repentance. *Yahweh God of Hosts* is the name that signifies his royal rule over all his subjects, which includes the people of Israel.  

32 On this second occasion at Bethel, in addition, the Angel spoke to the nation itself, either to Jacob as its representative or to the entire nation in its earliest stage. The phrase *with us* indicates that God spoke to the entire nation (Hos 12:4). That Israel was already a “nation” at this point is evident from Genesis 34:7, where Moses writes that Hamor’s violation of Dinah was “folly in Israel.”  

33 This name “God of Hosts” is significant here because Israel was the first in Scripture to be called the “hosts of Yahweh” (Ex 7:4; 12:41). The NIV’s translation of this phrase as “LORD God Almighty” would certainly tether Hosea’s language directly to Jacob’s second theophany at Bethel (esp. Gen 35:11), but no basis exists in the Masoretic text for doing so. It seems that the NIV follows the Septuagint translation of the phrase παντοκράτωρ with the word παντοκράτωρ (Cf. 2 Sam 5:10; 7:8, 25, 27 passim, LXX). If it meant “LORD God Almighty,” the Hebrew phrase would be הַלַּו אֹתְךָ אֱלֹהֵי יָהֵה אָדָם, but this combination never occurs in the Old Testament.  

34 The Biblical evidence suggests a variety of possible identifications for the “hosts” of Yahweh, and the name indicates the regal authority of Yahweh over his subjects. The first occurrence of the plural “hosts” (הַוָּדָה) is in Exodus 6:26, when Yahweh commanded Moses to bring the nation of Israel out of Egypt by hosts (Ex 7:4). Nevertheless, the first appearance of the name “Yahweh of Hosts” was not until the time of Samuel (1 Sam 1:3). A variation of this name, “Yahweh God of Hosts,” appears during the time of David (2 Sam 5:10). As it appears in Samuel’s prophecy, the word *hosts* (הַוָּדָה) seems to refer to God’s people (esp. 1 Sam 17:45). David says, for instance, that he came out against Goliath in the name of “the LORD of Hosts, the God of the armies of Israel” (1 Sam 17:45, NAU). However, sometimes the name refers to the angelic hosts of heaven (1 Sam 4:4). Ethan the Ezrahite applied the name “Yahweh, the God of Hosts” to the one who is utterly transcendent above even his angelic “holy ones” and the “sons of the mighty” (Psa 89:5-8; cf. Psa 103:20-21, Psa 148:2). The mention of the cherubim or seraphim in contexts where this name occurs seems to support this view (cf. 1 Sam 4:4; 2 Sam 6:2; Isa 6:2-5). Some Old Testament theologians, such as J. Barton Payne, have argued that the meaning of the term varies according its context and that it could apply to the “host of heaven” (i.e., stars) as
identifies the true God of Bethel, but the phrase *God of Hosts* indicates that he is also their true and proper Sovereign.

Hosea further emphasizes the identity of Jacob’s proper God as Yahweh by explaining that Yahweh “is his memorial name” (12:5b, ESV). Only two words in Hebrew, the phrase *his memorial name* (יהוה זכרו) is a direct reference to the answer that the Angel of Yahweh gave to Moses when asked for his name at Horeb (Ex 3:13). The Angel of Yahweh had said to Moses, “Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, ‘The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.’ This is My name forever, and this is My memorial-name to all generations” (Ex 3:15, NAU). By emphasizing the fact that Yahweh, not Baal, is the memorial name of God, Hosea rebukes Israel for its failure to recognize this most basic of revealed truths about God (Hos 13:1).

In summary, Hosea calls Jacob (i.e., the nation of Israel) to repent and return to the God whom Jacob worshipped just as Jacob did during his lifetime.

well, although this is less frequent than the other two. *The Theology of the Older Testament* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan Publishing House, 1962), 150. Geerhardus Vos emphasized that the name progressed in Old Testament history to the place where it was understood primarily in terms of Yahweh’s relationship to his heavenly armies. He says, “The war-like flavour [of the name] arises from the fact that the God of the angels is the omnipotent King of the heavenly multitudes, who can conquer His enemies, when earthly resources fail, nay, can even turn against His hosts against Israel if need be [Isa 31:4].” *Biblical Theology*, 239-243. Robert Reymond adds that although the revelation of the name *Yahweh of Hosts* coincided with the inception of Israel’s earthly monarchy, emphasizing Yahweh’s identity as “true Monarch of Israel,” Israel’s failure in its subsequent history resulted in the application of the term *hosts* to the angels, especially during the divided kingdom. He states, “The prophets of the divided monarchy came more and more to transfer the honor of being God’s fighting force from Israel on earth to the angels of heaven.” *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*, 158. In any case it is apparent that the name *Yahweh of Hosts* refers at its root to the royal position of God over his creation, whether angelic, celestial, or human. As Vos put it, he is the “almighty King both in nature and history.” *Biblical Theology*, 239-43; see also Oehler, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 438-444.

35 It is precisely this statement of God that the writer of Psalm 135 has in mind: “Thy name, O LORD, endureth for ever; and thy memorial, O LORD, throughout all generations” (v.13, KJV). The context of this Psalm includes the deliverance of the people from Egypt as well as the conquest of the land of Israel.
This One is called God (Hos 12:3; 12:4, MT), Angel (12:4; 12:5, MT), and Yahweh, the God of Hosts (12:5; 12:6, MT). It was the God-Angel whose name was Yahweh, the God of Hosts, to whom Jacob had wept and made supplication at the Jabbok (Hos 12:4; 12:5, MT; Gen 32:23-32). This same God is the true God of Bethel (12:4; 12:5, MT; cf. Gen 31:11-13). It is in the light of the identity of Jacob’s God and Jacob’s proper worship of him that Hosea calls Israel to “return” (בָּשָׂךְ) and wait continually for him (Hos 12:6; 12:7, MT).

Hosea’s prophecy marks two new developments in the theology of the Angel of Yahweh. The first development is Hosea’s own use of the theology of the Angel. The brief passage in which he refers to the Angel is a remarkable synthesis of several passages. He synthesizes texts from the life of Jacob in Genesis 32 and 35, neither of which contains explicit references to the Angel of Yahweh. To these Hosea adds the Memorial Name from Exodus 3.

Finally, he adds to the theology of the Angel by applying a new name to him. The first-time application of the name “Yahweh, the God of Hosts” to the Angel of Yahweh is also an important development. Although Exodus 23:21 makes it plain that the Angel bears the name Yahweh, the phrase God of Hosts had never been applied to the Angel of Yahweh until Hosea’s prophecy. It is true that Joshua had spoken of the Angel of Yahweh as the “Commander of the Hosts of Yahweh,” but Hosea identifies him as the God of the hosts, not just the Commander of his hosts. In addition to emphasizing the deity of the Angel of

36 The fact that the Angel of Yahweh is also “Yahweh, the God of Hosts” could perhaps be inferred by the fact that the Angel of Yahweh bears the name Yahweh (Ex 23:21), yet Hosea’s application of the name to the Angel leaves no question that the name properly applies to Him. Although the exact form Hosea uses (יְהֹウェָה הֶוֹלֶכֶת) occurs only here in his prophecy (12:5; 12:6, MT) and once in Amos (6:14), the differentiation between the name “Yahweh God of Hosts” and the variation “Yahweh of Hosts” seems to amount only to hairsplitting. Nevertheless, in some contexts some distinction must be made, because on at least one occasion the Angel of Yahweh speaks to “Yahweh of Hosts” (cf. Zech 1:13).
Yahweh by calling him “the God of Hosts,” Hosea also emphasizes his royal character as the Sovereign of Israel. Hosea is calling the hosts of Israel who came out of Egypt under the Sovereign Angel of Yahweh to return to their King, the God of Hosts.\(^{37}\)

*Isaiah prophesies of the Angel of His Presence (Isa 63:9)*

The other prominent prophecy featuring the Angel of Yahweh is found in the historical-theological context of Isaiah 63, where Isaiah speaks of “the angel of His presence” (v.7-9). Isaiah writes,

> I shall make mention of the lovingkindnesses of the LORD, the praises of the LORD, According to all that the LORD has granted us, And the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which He has granted them according to His compassion and according to the abundance of His lovingkindnesses. For He said, ‘Surely, they are My people, sons who will not deal falsely.’ So He became their Savior. In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them; In His love and in His mercy He redeemed them, And He lifted them and carried them all the days of old. (Isa 63:7-9).

In this context Isaiah praises Yahweh for his goodness and loving loyalty toward his people (v.7-8). In particular Isaiah mentions Yahweh’s salvation of Israel through the Angel of his presence (v.9). The details of the Exodus in the context indicate that the Angel of Yahweh was responsible for this greatest instance of deliverance in their history. However, Isaiah’s prophecy indicates that more than the Exodus is in view.

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\(^{37}\) Hosea’s prophecy continues with references to the deliverance from Egypt as well as a reference to their first king (12:9, 13; 13:4, 11). The rejection of Yahweh’s sovereignty is the particular concern of Hosea 13:9-11, where Yahweh says, “It is your destruction, O Israel, That you are against Me, against your help. Where now is your king That he may save you in all your cities, And your judges of whom you requested, ‘Give me a king and princes’? I gave you a king in My anger and took him away in My wrath” (NAU).
In addition to the redemption by the Angel in the Exodus, Isaiah indicates that the salvific work of the Angel of Yahweh was pervasive throughout the history of the nation: “In all their afflictions He was afflicted, and the Angel of His presence saved them” (v.9). In other words, the Angel’s saving acts toward Israel extend beyond the events of the Exodus and the journey in the wilderness to the times of the Judges and Kings into the days of Isaiah. This sweeping statement, furthermore, follows a precedent set by Jacob as he prayed to the Angel who had redeemed him from all evil (Gen 48:16). Gunther Juncker aptly notes,

As Jacob had once looked back over the course of his own life and attributed all of God’s mighty acts of redemption to a מלאך, so does Isaiah look back over the course of Israel’s national life and do the same. 39

No less significant for the theology of the Angel of Yahweh is Isaiah’s designation of the Angel as “Angel of His Presence” (אֵל פִּנֵיהֶם). The two thoughts brought together by this synthesis are the face or presence of Yahweh and the Angel of Yahweh. These two thoughts are associated in Exodus 32 and

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38 Aside from the Exodus the Angel of Yahweh is explicitly mentioned in the deliverance of the Israelites from Moab (Num 22-24), Sisera (Jdg 5), Midian (Jdg 6), the Philistines (Jdg 13), and Sennacherib in the days of Hezekiah (2 Kgs 19, 2 Chron 32, Isa 37). Isaiah’s prophecy, however, indicates that the Angel of Yahweh participated in the deliverance on those occasions either when He is briefly mentioned in the context or when He is not mentioned at all. An example of a brief mention of the Angel of Yahweh’s involvement is in the Song of Deborah after Israel was delivered from Sisera (Jdg 5). Deborah’s song includes a reference to the command of the Angel of Yahweh to curse Meroz for its failure to come to Israel’s aid (v.23). That the Angel Himself was involved in the deliverance is indicated by the presence of the command to curse Meroz. Although no other actions or speech of the Angel are explicitly attributed to the Angel within the narrative, Isaiah’s prophecy leads toward identifying the very first command within the narrative of the deliverance as the command of the Angel of Yahweh. Deborah had announced the command in a message to Barak, “Behold, the LORD, the God of Israel, has commanded, ‘Go and march to Mount Tabor, and take with you ten thousand men from the sons of Naphtali and from the sons of Zebulun. I will draw out to you Sisera, the commander of Jabin’s army, with his chariots and his many troops to the river Kishon, and I will give him into your hand’” (Jdg 4:6-7, NAU).

39 Jesus and the Angel of the LORD, 141.
when Yahweh promises Moses that he will send his Angel ahead of them into the land of Canaan rather than go up in their midst (Ex 32:34; 33:2). Distressed by this arrangement, Moses intercedes with Yahweh, who then relents from his threat with the promise, “My presence יְנוֹכֶל וְאִשְׁתָּמַר will go with you, and I will give you rest” (Ex 33:14). The promise to send his presence with Israel is tantamount to saying that his Angel will go with them. His Angel mediates his theophanic presence. Thus when Yahweh’s Angel is present with his people, Yahweh is present. Isaiah’s designation of the Angel of his presence is thus a synthesis of previous revelation.

Conclusion

The biblical theology of the Angel of Yahweh in the time of the divided kingdom exhibits continuity with previous revelation about the Angel as well as development. The continuity with previous revelation is evident as the Angel of Yahweh maintains his role as Covenant Angel to both Israel and Judah. In this role the Angel of Yahweh confronts the king of the northern kingdom of Israel for his idolatry through his prophet Elijah, and he delivers Hezekiah and Jerusalem in the southern kingdom of Judah from Sennacherib and his army. The prophecies of Hosea and Isaiah likewise demonstrate that both Isaiah and Hosea as prophets and the people to whom they ministered recognized the Angel of Yahweh as a unique divine Personage within their history.

The two primary developments within the theology of the Angel of Yahweh during this period are the names applied to the Angel by the prophets Hosea and Isaiah. Isaiah’s name, “Angel of his presence,” identifies the Angel of

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40 Juncker states that Exodus 33:2 and Exodus 33:14-15 are “the key texts for a determination of the identity of the מַלְאָךְ פִּתי “. Jesus and the Angel of the Lord, 149.
Yahweh as the mediator of the theophanic presence of God. Hosea’s name, “Yahweh God of Hosts,” as applied to the Angel indicates that he is the one who leads the hosts of Yahweh as their King and God.
CHAPTER 8
THE ANGEL OF YAHWEH IN THE EXILIC AND POST-EXILIC PERIODS

The failure of the northern kingdom of Israel to repent from its idolatry
and heed Hosea’s message to return to their God resulted ultimately in their exile
to Assyria in the 8th Century B.C. Although the southern kingdom continued
longer in the land, Judah too was exiled to Babylon by the 6th Century B.C.
During this period the Angel of Yahweh is not mentioned explicitly in prophecy,
but two major instances of God’s deliverance through “his angel” in the
prophecy of Daniel suggest that the Angel of Yahweh was indeed the divine
deliverer. In the post-exilic period the prophet Zechariah prophesied of the
Angel of Yahweh’s critical role in the restoration of Israel to their homeland.
Even after the restoration of Israel, however, the apostasy of Israel became so bad
that Yahweh promised that the divine Angel of the Covenant would himself
come to purify his people (Mal 3:1).

The Angel delivers the three Hebrew children (Dan 3)
The deliverance of Shadrach, Meschach, and Abednego from the fiery
furnace of Nebuchadnezzar is one of several instances within Daniel’s prophecy
highlighting a theme of divine deliverance.1 The need for deliverance came about

1 Other notable instances of deliverance of Daniel and the three Hebrew children include
God’s granting them favor in the eyes of foreign officials (Dan 1:9), his answering their prayer for
the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream (2:17-23), and his protection of Daniel from his
envious colleagues and the lions (6:1-28).
as the three young men refused to bow down to the idol that Nebuchadnezzar had built in the plain of Dura (Dan 3:1). Learning of their refusal, Nebuchadnezzar offered them another opportunity to comply and threatened them with the fiery furnace if they refused (Dan 3:14-15). He then challenged them with the question, “What god is there who can deliver you out of my hands?” (Dan 3:15).

The faith and courage of the young men is epitomized by their response to Nebuchadnezzar: “Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king” (Dan 3:17). This affront to Nebuchadnezzar enraged him, and he immediately ordered that the furnace be heated seven times hotter and that the young men be thrown into it (Dan 3:19). Once the young men were thrown into the furnace, Nebuchadnezzar looked on with astonishment as suddenly he saw a fourth figure walking in the furnace with the men (v.24).

Nebuchadnezzar’s assessment of the fourth “man” in the furnace was that his appearance was as a “son of the gods” (יִהְיוּלָא/־רְבָּא). Although this expression reflected his polytheistic beliefs, it also indicates his belief that the fourth person in the fire was divine. After summoning the three young men to come out of the

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2 This event remarkably coincides with the promise of Isaiah 43:2b, “When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched, nor will the flame burn you” (NAU).

3 Although the Aramaic phrase יִהְיוּלָא/־רְבָּא is translated with the interpretive phrase “Son of God” in some translations (e.g., KJV, NKJ), the Aramaic word יִהְיוּלָא properly denotes a numerical plural. This fact is even more clearly seen in the use of the Aramaic singular and the plural together in Daniel 2:47, where Nebuchadnezzar refers to the God of Daniel as the “God of gods” (יִהְיוּלָא/־רְבָּא). A proper translation of the phrase in Daniel 3:25 is thus “a son of the gods” (NAU, ESV, NIV). See Payne, The Theology of the Older Testament, 146, 288.

4 The word son (בר) is similar to the parallel Hebrew word (בן) in that it can refer to one out of a particular class of beings. Barrett states, “Semitic language often uses the word “son” to designate members of a class. This would mean that Nebuchadnezzar recognized the fourth individual as belonging to a class of supernatural beings, a designation that fits with his referring
fire, Nebuchadnezzar attributes their deliverance to the Most High God, who had sent “his angel” (חַנִּיאָלָם) to deliver his servants (3:28). Furthermore, Nebuchadnezzar issues a threatening decree for anyone who would speak against their God. His reason is that “there is no other god who can deliver in this way” (Dan 3:29).

The fact that Nebuchadnezzar attributes this remarkable deliverance to the Most High God and “his angel” does not seem to point conclusively to identifying the fourth person in the fire as the divine Angel of Yahweh, particularly because Nebuchadnezzar is a pagan. His description of the appearance of the fourth person in the fire as the “son of the gods,” in addition, does not seem to be of any help, particularly because of the possibility of confusing a created angel with God himself. However, it is not Nebuchadnezzar’s description of the fourth person but Daniel’s recording of it that is such a strong indicator of the divine identity of the one in the furnace. It is the prophet Daniel who deliberately draws attention to the description of the fourth person in the fire in the narrative by quoting Nebuchadnezzar’s response to the individual as an ‘angel’ in verse 28.” Michael P. V. Barrett, *God’s Unfailing Purpose: The Message of Daniel* (Greenville, SC: Ambassador-Emerald, 2003), 140. The phrase *son of man* in Daniel 7:13 is a parallel expression to the phrase *son of the gods* in Daniel 3:25 in the sense that it describes a person of a particular class.

The only difference between the word for angel here (חַנִּיאָלָם) and the Hebrew form (כָּלָם) is the change of the singular masculine pronominal suffix to π. The Hebrew equivalent occurs twice in Genesis 24 when Abraham promises that God will send “his angel” (כָּלָם) before his servant to find a wife for Isaac (v.7, 40).

The phrase *his angel* may in fact denote the Angel of Yahweh, but the argument cannot be made from the linguistic evidence alone. The phrase *his angel* occurs only four times in the Old Testament, twice in Genesis (24:7, 40) and twice in Daniel (3:28; 6:22). On all four of these occasions the text is inexplicit. When Yahweh uses the similar phrase *My angel* (כָּלָם) in the Pentateuch, however, it does refer to the Angel of Yahweh (Ex 23:23; 32:34). Thus the linguistic evidence on this point is inconclusive.

The apostle John mistakenly bowed at the feet of angels twice (Rev 19:10; 22:8).
to the miraculous deliverance, and it is Daniel who indicates that the deliverance of the three young men must be understood not only in terms of the Most High God but also “his angel.”

The presentation of this narrative also suggests that the purpose of the appearance of the fourth figure in the fire was not so much for the three Hebrew children as it was for Nebuchadnezzar.\(^8\) It is an astonished Nebuchadnezzar who remarks that he sees a fourth person in the fire, and it is Nebuchadnezzar who describes what he sees in terms of deity, however pagan it might be. In effect, what he saw answered his question to the three young men: “What god is there who can deliver you out of my hands?” (Dan 3:15). The very last words of Nebuchadnezzar in this story are found in his decree: “there is no other god who can deliver in this way” (Dan 3:29).

Another significant parallel between the אֵלֶּה of Daniel 3:28 and the Angel of Yahweh is supernatural power over fire. In Daniel 3 the אֵלֶּה appears in the fire himself without any harm. The Angel of Yahweh exhibits the same power over fire at the burning bush (Ex 3:2ff.) and in his ascent in the flame before

\(^8\) Barrett gives the alternate suggestion for the purpose of the appearance of the fourth person as fellowship between God and his faithful servants. He notes, “Although Nebuchadnezzar saw Him, the Lord did not appear primarily for his benefit; He was there for the comfort and encouragement of the three who had been faithful to Him unto what they perceived to be their death.” \textit{God’s Unfailing Purpose: The Message of Daniel}, 140. This suggestion, which is based on Isaiah 43:2, does seem to be the key to what is happening in the furnace. Isaiah says, “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they will not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched, nor will the flame burn you” (Isa 43:2, NAU). Isaiah’s prophecy thus indicates not only the safety of those who trust in Yahweh but his personal presence with them (i.e., “I will be with you”). Perhaps the best solution is not to see one or the other purpose as primary but to recognize that Yahweh had a dual purpose of revealing himself to Nebuchadnezzar as well as fellowshiping with his servants.
Manoah and his wife (Jdg 13:20). In Daniel 3, however, the חַגִּירָה also delivers others from the fire.⁹

In conclusion, nothing in this passage precludes the חַגִּירָה from being the Angel of Yahweh. In addition, at least two features of the context suggest that it was indeed the Angel of Yahweh. First, the narrative of Daniel 3 emphasizes Nebuchadnezzar’s challenge to the three young men about their God (Dan 3:15), the assertion of the young men that their God will deliver them (Dan 3:17), Nebuchadnezzar’s observation and description of the fourth person in the fire as a divine person (Dan 3:24-25), and his conclusion that no god could deliver like their God (Dan 3:29). Antecedent theology of the Angel of Yahweh indicates his identity as God (Gen 31:13) and his ministry as a divine agent of deliverance (e.g., Gen 16:7ff., Isa 63:9).

A second indication that the one in the fire is the Angel of Yahweh is that the same individual who is described as a “son of the gods” (i.e., deity) is associated with the Most High God as “his angel” (חַגִּירָה) (3:28). In the light of the antecedent theology, the Angel of Yahweh is properly the only One who fits the description. The fact that Nebuchadnezzar is the one speaking and identifying the person in the fire is of little consequence, because Daniel is the author of the prophecy and would not have included any aberrant theology.

Taken with antecedent theology of the Angel of Yahweh, these considerations adequately substantiate a claim for identifying the חַגִּירָה who appeared in the furnace with the three young men as the divine Angel of Yahweh. However, the antecedent revelation regarding the ministry of created

⁹ The union of the angel and the theophanic cloudy pillar/fiery pillar could be another association (Ex 14:19-21).
angels and their participation in the deliverance of God’s people from affliction (e.g., Gen 19:1ff.) militates against any dogmatic conclusion.

The Angel who delivered Daniel (Daniel 6)

The deliverance of the three young men in Daniel 3 from Nebuchadnezzar closely parallels the deliverance of Daniel from the den of lions in the days of Darius, king of Persia. Daniel’s deliverance is also credited to God and “his angel” (נסא). The sentence of execution for Daniel came after the jealous colleagues of Daniel had connived to remove him from his position and enacted a law that made it illegal for Daniel to pray to anyone other than Darius (Dan 6:6-7). Darius learned of their plot against Daniel too late, and he was forced by his own law to sentence Daniel to the den of lions (Dan 6:16). As Darius himself reluctantly gave the order for Daniel to be cast into the den of lions, he said, “Your God whom you constantly serve will Himself deliver you” (Dan 6:16, NAU, emphasis added).  

When Darius returned the next morning to see whether Daniel was still alive, Daniel says that God delivered him by “his angel” (נסא). Daniel says, “My God sent His angel and shut the lions’ mouths and they have not harmed me, inasmuch as I was found innocent before Him; and also toward you, O king, I have committed no crime” (Dan 6:22). The only two facts regarding the נָא in the context are that God himself had sent the נָא and that the נָא had been

10 Preceding the verb in the phrase will Himself deliver you is the third person personal pronoun (יהיוו), which sometimes occurs in addition to the verb in order to emphasize the subject. This emphasis could indicate that the one who served as the agent of the deliverance would himself be divine. E. Kautzsch, Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar (London: Oxford Press, 1910), 105, 437.

11 The repetition of the words his angel (נסא) here could be an intentional parallel to Daniel’s previous record of the deliverance of the three young men (Dan 3).
the agent who delivered Daniel by supernaturally shutting the mouths of the lions.

Although this account of Daniel’s deliverance is separated by time and circumstance from the account of the deliverance of the three young men (Dan 3), it is possible that Daniel’s brief mention of deliverance by God through “his angel” is an intentional recollection of the same כְּלַשֵׁם described in Daniel chapter 3. Daniel has not spoken of any other כְּלַשֵׁם in his prophecy to this point, and the two accounts have remarkable parallels. In both accounts the identity of the one true God is at stake. The challenge of Nebuchadnezzar, “What god is there who can deliver you out of my hands?” (Dan 3:15), is mirrored by the tentative but accurate affirmation of Darius: “Your God whom you constantly serve will Himself deliver you” (Dan 6:16). An additional parallel is that in both cases those who are faithful to the covenant are delivered over to be executed, and in both cases Daniel writes that God delivered them through “his angel” (כְּלַשֵׁם). A final parallel is that the ruling king of the empire closely observes the deliverance and issues an imperial decree about the God who delivers his people in such a miraculous way.

Such parallels between the two passages do not conclusively show the agent who delivered Daniel from the den of lions to be the same one who delivered the three young men from Nebuchadnezzar’s fiery furnace. Nevertheless, the combination of these parallels within the same prophecy and the strong suggestion of a divine Angel, particularly in Daniel 3, suggest the
possibility. Finally, nothing in the context of either deliverance precludes the identification of the הלחם as the divine Angel of Yahweh.\(^{12}\)

**The Angel of Yahweh intercedes for Jerusalem (Zech 1:6-17)**\(^{13}\)

Of the three post-exilic writing prophets, two of them feature the Angel of Yahweh prominently within their prophecy. The first of these two is Zechariah, who adds a number of new developments to the theology of the Angel of Yahweh. The familiar phrase preceding Zechariah’s first vision, “the word of the LORD came to Zechariah,” is a frequently used formula in his prophecy (1:7; cf. 1:1; 4:6, 8; 6:9; 7:1, 4, 8; 8:1, 18; 9:1; 11:1; 12:1).\(^{14}\) When the word of Yahweh comes on this occasion, Zechariah sees a vision of the Angel of Yahweh, who is described as a man, mounted on a red horse and stationed between myrtle trees in a ravine (v.8).\(^{15}\) Behind the man are other riders on red, sorrel and white horses.

Zechariah then asks the question regarding the riders with horses of various colors, “O my lord, what are these?” (v.9). This question is then answered by a person referred to frequently in the book of Zechariah as “the

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\(^{12}\) John F. Walvoord, “Series in Christology – Part 3: The Preincarnate Son of God,” BibSac 104 (1947), 282-90. Of the many passages John Walvoord lists that he believes pertain to the Angel of Yahweh, Daniel 3:28 and Daniel 6:22 are the only two he lists as questionable.

\(^{13}\) Because the verse numbering in this section is different in the English Bible and the Masoretic text, this section will follow the English Bible unless otherwise noted.

\(^{14}\) This phrase, as indicated in previous chapters, sometimes refers to an abstract “word of Yahweh” but on certain occasions refers to a personal “Word of Yahweh” who reveals his will to his prophet (cf. Jer 1:4ff.). Zechariah’s question in verse 9 (“O my lord, what are these?”) could be explained more easily if the “word of Yahweh” coming to Zechariah in verse 7 is personal. If this is the case, the Person to whom he is speaking has already been introduced.

\(^{15}\) The fact that he is the Angel of Yahweh is evident from the three statements about his position between the myrtle trees. The first two times Zechariah refers to him as a “man” between the myrtle trees (v.8, 10), but the third time he says that he is the Angel of Yahweh between the myrtle trees (v.11).
angel who was speaking with me” ( Heb נביאrides יב), who says that he will show him. In verse 10 the focus of attention goes back to the myrtle trees, where Zechariah hears the “man” (Angel of Yahweh) on the red horse say, “These are those whom the LORD has sent to patrol the earth.” Immediately following this statement Zechariah identifies the “man” as the Angel of Yahweh, and he records the report of the patrolling riders to him (v.11).17

The report that the patrolling riders bring to the Angel of Yahweh seems to be good: “We have patrolled the earth, and behold, all the earth is peaceful and quiet” (v.11). Nevertheless, it is precisely the peacefulness of the earth that

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16 One of the greatest difficulties in understanding the revelation regarding the Angel of Yahweh in Zechariah’s prophecy is the involvement of several unnamed persons in his visions. The most prominent of these unnamed individuals is this “interpreter angel,” usually identified in the text as “the angel who was speaking with me” ( Heb נביאrides יב) (1:9, 13, 14, 19; 2:2, 7; 4:1, 4; 5:5, 10; 6:4). However, he also refers to him as “my lord” (1:9; 6:4) and simply “the angel” (6:5). What is interesting about this angel is that some commentators have found it necessary to distinguish him from the Angel of Yahweh, because on certain occasions they seem to be one in the same. (See, for example, E. W. Hengstenberg, Christology of the Old Testament, 3:274-75. Meredith Kline, Glory in Our Midst, 72.) One passage that seems to indicate that they are the same is in Zechariah’s first vision, where the Angel of Yahweh intercedes with Yahweh of Hosts, asking how long it will be until the nations will be judged for their treatment of Israel (1:12). After the Angel of Yahweh’s intercession it is Yahweh who answers the interpreting angel with “good” and “comforting” words (v.13). Later in Zechariah the two seem to be distinct when the interpreting angel comes to Zechariah and rouses him from his vision of the Angel of Yahweh and the high priest Joshua (4:1). Such a clear distinction seems to eliminate the possibility of their identification, yet the distinction could be obliterated by suggesting that the Angel of Yahweh is the interpreting angel who shows Zechariah a vision in which he himself is depicted. E. W. Hengstenberg argues that the two are not the same for various reasons, including what he calls a “decisive” interchange between the interpreting angel and another angel in Zechariah 2:1-3 [2:5-7, MT]. He suggests that the fact that the interpreting angel receives a command from another angel implies his inferiority. Nevertheless, it is possible to understand the interpreting angel and the man with the measuring line as the same person. Verse 1 describes Zechariah’s sudden vision of the measurer and his question to the measurer, “where are you going?” (NAU). Immediately after the man says that he is going to measure Jerusalem’s length and breadth, the interpreting angel is described as “going out” (v.2). If the measurer and the interpreting angel are the same, then it is the measurer/interpreting angel who commands the other angel to speak to Zechariah (v.3). This understanding would thus identify the interpreting angel, the measurer, and Yahweh all as the same.

17 Zechariah’s identification of the man on the red horse in the midst of the myrtles is probably due to the statement identifying him with Yahweh in verse 10.
serves as the impetus to the Angel of Yahweh to intercede immediately for Jerusalem and the cities of Judah: “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?” (1:12; cf. Jer 29:10ff.; Dan 9:1-21). It is the very fact that the earth is quiet and peaceful that indicates the delay of divine retribution upon the nations who acted overzealously against Jerusalem and Judah (Zech 1:15).

After this intercession of the Angel of Yahweh, Yahweh responds with good and comforting words to the interpreting angel (v.13). The interpreting angel then gives the words to Zechariah so he can prophesy them to the people (vv.14-17). Zechariah is directed to prophesy of Yahweh’s jealousy for Jerusalem and the cities of Judah and his anger with the nations who overzealously destroyed Jerusalem and the cities of Judah (vv.14-15). He must also assure the people of Yahweh’s promise to have compassion upon Jerusalem and Zion, a promise that includes the rebuilding of the temple (“My house”) and the prosperity of the cities of Judah (vv.16-17).

At least one point of emphasis as well as a new development in the theology of the Angel of Yahweh may be seen in this prophecy. First, the portrayal of the Angel of Yahweh as mounted and initiating a patrol of the earth

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18 The Yahweh mentioned in verse 13 may be a reference to the Angel of Yahweh or Yahweh of Hosts. If it is Yahweh of Hosts who is speaking, he is responding immediately to the intercession of verse 12, and he is presumably speaking to the Angel of Yahweh (identified as the interpreting angel). If instead it is the Angel of Yahweh who is speaking in verse 13, then he is identified directly as Yahweh, and the interpreting angel is an inferior angel (v.12). The repetition of Yahweh of Hosts in the verses 14, 16, and 17 seem to support the former interpretation.

19 Further elaboration of the answer of Yahweh of Hosts to the Angel of Yahweh is given in the vision of the four horns and the four craftsmen (Zech 1:18-21 [2:1-4, MT]). The interpreting angel explains that the four horns are the nations that scattered Judah and Jerusalem and that the four craftsmen are the nations who will bring judgment upon those nations.
suggests his interest in judging the nations who brought about the destruction of Jerusalem and Judah. This portrayal emphasizes his function as Covenant Angel, which includes protection as well as judgment on Israel’s enemies (cf. Ex 23:22).

A new development in this passage is also the depiction of the Angel of Yahweh as interceding for the people of God. Never before in Scripture has the Angel of Yahweh been portrayed as interceding for the nation of Israel. The fact that he is portrayed in this priestly role here is due to the lack of a high priest to stand on Israel’s behalf before God. As Zechariah’s prophecy continues, the Angel of Yahweh himself remedies this situation by calling and cleansing Joshua the son of Jehozadak (cf. 3:1-10).

The “Sent Yahweh” who will dwell in Israel’s midst (Zech 2:1-13)

Although the third vision of Zechariah does not explicitly mention the Angel of Yahweh, some have suggested that the Angel of Yahweh is both the man with the measuring line and the “sent Yahweh” within the chapter. His third vision begins when he lifts up his eyes and suddenly sees a man with a measuring line who is going out to measure Jerusalem (Zech 2:1-2; cf. 1:16). Zechariah asks where he is going, and the man tells him that he is going to measure Jerusalem’s width and breadth and length (v.2). Following the answer of the man with the measuring line, it is Zechariah’s interpreting angel who

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20 The only other possible reference to the intercession of the Angel of Yahweh is found in the book of Job, where Elihu describes a mediating who stands between God and man (Job 33:23).

21 Three commentators who identify the measurer as the Angel of Yahweh include Meredith Kline, Merrill Unger, and Charles Feinberg. Unger and Feinberg also identify the measurer of Zechariah’s third vision with the measurer (i.e., Angel of Yahweh) described in Ezekiel 40:3. Meredith Kline, *Glory in Our Midst*, 72-73; Charles Feinberg, *God Remembers* (Wheaton, IL: Van Kampen Press, 1950), 43-44; Merill F. Unger, *Zechariah: Prophet of Messiah’s Glory*, 44-54 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1963), 44-54.
“goes out” and another angel who is coming out to meet him (v.2). The interpreting angel then sends a message to the man with the measuring line, who is referred to as a “young man” (v.4, v.8, MT).

The message of hope given by the interpreting angel comes from Yahweh himself, and the message expands on the promises of Yahweh in Zechariah’s first vision. Yahweh says, “Run, speak to that young man, saying, ‘Jerusalem will be inhabited without walls because of the multitude of men and cattle within it.’” This promise of Jerusalem’s future prosperity is founded on the presence of Yahweh himself in her midst. Yahweh says, “‘For I,’ declares the LORD, ‘will be a wall of fire around her, and I will be the glory in her midst’” (v.5).

However, before this promise is fulfilled, Yahweh will judge the nations who have plundered Israel (v.8-9). After the judging of the nations, many people will turn to Yahweh, who will then come to dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. However, Yahweh who comes to dwell in the midst of Jerusalem is distinct in some way from Yahweh of Hosts. Verse 11 states the distinction starkly:

> Many nations will join themselves to the LORD in that day and will become My people. Then I will dwell in your midst, and you will know that the LORD of Hosts has sent Me to you (NAU).

22 The interpreting angel’s action and the action of the other angel in this verse are described by the same Qal participle קָשֵׁם (from קָשֵׁם). The word means “to go or come out.” BDB, 425.

23 Meredith Kline argues for the identification of the other angel as either the man with the measuring line or an angel-messenger who is sent out from the man with the measuring line. Glory in our Midst, 73.

24 A possible allusion may be seen here to the Angel theophany when the children of Israel were fleeing from the Egyptians. Exodus 14:24 says that Yahweh looked down on the Egyptians from the pillar of cloud and fire, indicating the fire was part of the barrier between the Egyptians and the Israelites.

25 The essence of the phrase “you will know that the LORD of Hosts has sent Me to you” is repeated later in the vision of the lampstands (4:9) and in the vision of the crowning of Joshua (6:15). Interestingly, on both occasions it is by the “word of Yahweh” that this is revealed to
In other words, Yahweh of Hosts sends Yahweh who will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem.

Although the Angel of Yahweh is not mentioned explicitly in this section (Zechariah 2:5-13, 2:9-17, MT), the distinction between “Yahweh of Hosts” and the “sent Yahweh” certainly parallels the relationship between the Angel/Intercessor and Yahweh of Hosts in the first vision of Zechariah. In addition, the vision that immediately follows shows the Angel of Yahweh standing in the temple itself as the mediator of revelation from Yahweh of Hosts (Zech 3:7ff.). Thus in Zechariah’s first and fourth vision the Angel of Yahweh speaks to or mediates revelation from Yahweh of Hosts. In the third vision Yahweh who is sent speaks of himself as being sent by Yahweh of Hosts.

Presupposing that the “sent Yahweh” in Zechariah 2 is identical with the Angel of Yahweh, two important emphases and two developments of the theology of the Angel of Yahweh emerge from this passage. The first of the two emphases is the Angel of Yahweh’s protection of Jerusalem. The promise of the multitude of people who will inhabit the city is followed by the promise that Yahweh himself will be a “wall of fire” around Jerusalem (2:5). This protection would also come by an offensive action, furthermore, because the sent Yahweh promises as well to wave his hand over the nations who plundered Jerusalem in judgment (2:8-9 [2:12-13]). As evidenced by the Angel of Yahweh’s protection of Jerusalem that coincided with his judgment on Assyria in the days of Hezekiah,

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Zechariah (4:8-9; 6:9-15). These instances, in addition to 2:9, 11 [2:13, 15, MT], seem to further the concept of the personal “Word of Yahweh” in the Old Testament advanced by Charles Gieschen’s “The Real Presence of the Son before Christ: A New Approach to Old Testament Christology.” See Appendix A. Such a distinction between two persons named Yahweh may also be seen in other places in Scripture when the Angel of Yahweh is present (e.g., Gen 19:24).

26 By its three-fold repetition in Zechariah 2, Yahweh’s promise to dwell in the midst of Israel receives significant emphasis (2:5,10,11 [2:9,14,15]). Zechariah 8 further elaborates this theme.
this dual emphasis on divine protection and judgment upon its enemies through the Angel of Yahweh is not new.

Most significant in Zechariah’s prophecy regarding the theology of the Angel of Yahweh is the promise that he himself will come and dwell in the midst of Jerusalem (2:5, 10, 11).27 This not only rekindles the hope that Yahweh would once again return Israel to Jerusalem and that the temple would be rebuilt, but it also recalls the early days of Israel, when Yahweh commanded Moses to build a tabernacle so that he could dwell in their midst (Ex 25:8).

A second development links the Angel of Yahweh’s dwelling in the midst of Jerusalem with the conversion of many nations, who will become his people (2:11 [2:15]). This link indicates that the presence of the Yahweh in the midst of Jerusalem will coincide with the conversion of the nations. Furthermore, by distinctly repeating this theme of the conversion of the Gentiles on four other occasions (6:15; 8:20-23; 9:7; 14:16-19), Zechariah joins the prophetic voices before him who predicted the conversion of the nations (e.g., Isa 2:4ff.; Jer 3:17; Ezek 38:23; Amos 9:11-12; Mic 4:2-4; Zeph 2:11).28 In several of these contexts, furthermore, it is clear that the one to whom the nations will come is the Messiah himself (e.g., Isa 2:4ff., Mic 4:2-4, Amos 9:11-12). Thus the doctrine of the Angel of Yahweh and the doctrine of the Messiah, two distinct lines of Old Testament thought, begin to converge.

27 During the exile the prophet Ezekiel also heard this promise from a “man” (מָנָף) who is also “Yahweh” (Ezek 43:7-9; cf. Ezek 40:3).

28 For a discussion of this theme within the book of Zechariah, including its connection to the Messiah, see Timothy L. Berrey, “A Theological Analysis of the Book of Zechariah,” (Ph.D. diss., Bob Jones University, 1999), 212-227.
In his fourth vision Yahweh shows Zechariah that a high priest will stand before him (3:1; cf. 1:20, 2:3, MT). Zechariah then sees Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest of Israel, standing before the Angel of Yahweh in the temple in filthy garments (3:1-3). Satan also appears in the vision, standing at the right hand of Joshua to accuse him (v.1). The Angel of Yahweh, now referred to as Yahweh in verse 2, emphatically rebukes Satan with a double rebuke: “The LORD rebuke you, Satan! Indeed, the LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?” (NAU). The description of Joshua as a “brand plucked from the fire” is an acknowledgement of Satan’s proper assessment of Joshua (as evidenced by the filthy garments he wears, v.3) and at the same time an assertion that divine mercy has been extended to Joshua.

Following his rebuke of Satan, the Angel of Yahweh commands the attendants to remove the filthy garments of Joshua and clothe him with “festal robes,” a symbolic action indicating the removal of his iniquity (v.4). Once this has been accomplished, Zechariah himself requests that a “clean turban” be placed on his head while “the Angel of Yahweh [is] standing by” (v.5). The stance of the Angel demonstrates his approval of Zechariah’s request, and the

29 Kline argues based on the presence of both human and angelic figures (i.e., the attendants of the Angel of Yahweh) that this vision portrays a “coalescence” of the earthly and heavenly sanctuary. Glory in Our Midst, 98.

30 The adversary (םד) here is identical to the adversary of Job in Job 1-2 and the adversary of Israel in 1 Chronicles 21:1.
formal high priestly charge that follows indicates that a complete investiture of Joshua was his full intent.\footnote{31}

The Angel of Yahweh formally charges Joshua with conditions from Yahweh of Hosts whereby he must serve as high priest of Israel (v.7). These conditions include Joshua’s personal obedience to Yahweh and his faithful performance of the duties of the priestly office. Furthermore, Joshua and those who sit before him (probably priests) are to be a prophetic sign (נביאים מהודר, “men of a sign”) of a coming Priest Messiah—the Servant/Branch of Yahweh and his people (v.8, cf. Zech 6:12).\footnote{32} The stone upon Joshua’s head with seven eyes on it, moreover, probably refers to the inscribed gold stone upon the high priestly headpiece, which was necessary in the Mosaic legislation for the high priest to be accepted by Yahweh (cf. Ex 26:36-39; 39:30). Yahweh of Hosts says that he himself will inscribe the stone (3:9), indicating his acceptance of the future High Priest named Branch.\footnote{33} It is through this Priest-Messiah named Branch, moreover, that Yahweh of Hosts will remove the iniquity of the land in one day and restore its blessing (Zech 3:9-10).\footnote{34}

\footnote{31} Kline says that the “standing” of the Angel of Yahweh “accents his dominant presence and the decisiveness of his advocacy for Joshua’s justification and reinstatement.” \textit{Ibid.}, 116.

\footnote{32} See Isaiah 4:2; Jeremiah 23:5; 33:15. The stone is also sometimes identified as the Messianic stone of stumbling of which Isaiah speaks (Isa 8:13-14). Nevertheless, the high priestly imagery is throughout the vision, and he has just received a “clean turban” (v. 5). The proper high priestly turban had a golden plate affixed to it which read, “Holiness to the LORD” (Ex 39:30). The seven facets on the stone are later identified as symbolic of the eyes of Yahweh, “which range to and fro throughout the earth” (Zech 4:10).

\footnote{33} For a fuller explanation of this concept and its significance, see \textit{Ibid.}, 124-127. For an interpretation of the symbolism of the stone as the stone of stumbling (Isa 8:13-14), see Merrill Unger, \textit{Zechariah, Prophet of Messiah’s Glory} (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 55-68.

\footnote{34} The eighth vision of Zechariah expands on this vision in 6:9-15, where the “word of Yahweh” comes to Zechariah. Zechariah is to take an offering from the returning exiles and make a crown of silver and gold for Joshua to wear (v.10-11). The crown itself is to be a further testimony to the coming Branch, who would be both king and priest.
Several elements of this vision emphasize previous revelation about the Angel of Yahweh. First, this vision clearly reveals the Angel of Yahweh’s authority to forgive sin. It is the Angel of Yahweh who gives the order to remove Joshua’s filthy garments (v.3), and it is the Angel who says to Joshua, “Behold, I have taken your iniquity away from you” (v.4, NAU). This action affirms the implication in the Book of the Covenant when Yahweh states that the Covenant Name-bearing Angel will not pardon the transgressions of the people (Ex 23:21). The statement in the context of Exodus 23 implies that the Angel of Yahweh has the prerogative to forgive the sins but will not do so.

This vision also elucidates the Angel of Yahweh’s function as Prophet and Mediator of revelation from Yahweh of Hosts. It is evident from this vision that the Angel of Yahweh is indeed God as he stands in the temple itself and forgives the sin of the high priest (v.1-6). Nevertheless, the charge that the Angel of Yahweh gives to Joshua is a message from Yahweh of Hosts (v.7-10). Three times in the charge to Joshua the Angel of Yahweh indicates that his message is from Yahweh of Hosts (v.7, 9, 10). The Angel of Yahweh’s function as Mediator of revelation from Yahweh, first exhibited in Genesis 22:16-18 in God’s oath to Abraham, is emphasized again here.

A final emphasis in this vision is the personal involvement of the Angel of Yahweh in the restoration of the nation. Zechariah’s first vision portrays him as interceding for Jerusalem and Judah and initiating judgment on the nations who have harmed them. This fourth vision of Zechariah portrays the Angel of Yahweh as initiating the spiritual restoration of the nation by cleansing the sins of Joshua and installing him as the high priest of Israel. Such activity parallels his previous ministry in the days of Moses, when he initiated the exodus of Israel from Egypt and brought them to Sinai to worship (Ex 3:2ff.). His activity in
Zechariah likewise confirms that he is indeed the Angel of Yahweh’s presence, who saves Israel from all of its afflictions (Isa 63:9).

_The Angel of Yahweh who went before Israel (Zech 12:8)_

The final mention of the Angel of Yahweh in Zechariah’s prophecy occurs in a simile describing the strength of Jerusalem’s inhabitants and the protection of Jerusalem by Yahweh himself. Recollecting the avian imagery of Isaiah (cf. Isa 31:5), Zechariah describes Yahweh’s protection of the inhabitants of Jerusalem in terms of “hovering” over them like a bird protecting her nest (v.8). This protection of Jerusalem, however, is also described by the strength of its inhabitants.

The extraordinary strength of the inhabitants in that day is seen in the fact that the “ones who stumble” (“feeblest,” ESV, NIV) will have the strength of David, the greatest warrior in Israel’s history. The royal house of David, in addition, will be “as God, as the Angel of Yahweh before them” (Zech 12:8, NAU). The synthetic parallelism of last two statements indicates that “God” and the “Angel of Yahweh” are to be regarded as equal. Thus the Angel of Yahweh is identified as God. The words _before them_, in addition, allude to the triumphant and powerful leadership of the Angel of God in battle, the one who went before Israel as a divine Vanguard when the nation journeyed from Egypt and then turned to fight against the Egyptians (Ex 13:21; 14:19).  

The allusion of the phrase _before them_ in this passage, while certainly alluding directly to the Exodus deliverance, may also refer to any or all of the

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35 Charles Feinberg writes, “The one who can scarcely walk, let alone wage effective warfare, will become as the greatest warrior in all Israel’s history, David. And the royal house itself will become as the mighty Angel of Jehovah who went before Israel in their desert march.” “Exegetical Studies in the Book of Zechariah,” _BibSac_, 102 (October, 1945): 424.
times when the Angel of Yahweh went before the hosts of Israel into battle. This would include the Angel of Yahweh’s appearance at Jericho to lead them into the land as the Commander of the hosts of Yahweh (Josh 5:13-15). It would certainly include as well those occasions when he alone was responsible for the deliverance, such as his humiliation of Sennacherib and his armies (Isa 37; 2 Kgs 19; 2 Chron 32).

The Angel of the Covenant who is coming (Mal 3:1)

The Old Testament doctrine of the Angel of Yahweh is brought to a remarkable crescendo by the final writing prophet of the Old Testament. Malachi’s development of the doctrine is significant because of his prophecy of the הֶבְרִי the צַעֲרָה, but he also highlights the doctrine by a prominent “messenger motif” within his prophecy. The “messenger motif” of Malachi’s prophecy refers to several different messengers, the last of which is divine. The first of these is Malachi the prophet himself, whose name means “my messenger” (1:1). The second is not a specific person but an officer in Israel—the Levitical priest, whose ministry should be characterized by faithful instruction of the law because he is the “messenger of the LORD of Hosts” (2:7). The third messenger is one that God says he will send before he himself comes to his temple (3:1). Finally, when

36 The presence of this theme within the book in addition to other considerations has led some writers to believe that the title “Malachi” (מַלָּכָה) refers not to the name of the prophet but the “messenger motif” in his prophecy. Cf. Terry Rude’s explanation of the different views in “Malachi’s Messenger Motif,” BV, November 1998, 27-32; Eugene Merrill, An Exegetical Commentary: Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi (Chicago: Moody, 1994), 387-390; Hengstenberg, Christology, 4:139-143.
God himself comes, he is called the “Messenger” or “Angel of the covenant” (3:1).  

The context immediately preceding the promise of the coming of the Angel of the Covenant is a rebuke of the tribe of Levi and the people of Israel for their breaking of the covenant (Mal 2:8,10,14). The Levitical priests played a primary role in this breach of the covenant, as their instruction had caused many to stumble (2:8). The situation thus parallels the egregious breach of the covenant at Sinai, including the leading role of the Levites (especially Aaron, Ex 32:1-9). In addition, Yahweh charges the Israelites with “wearying” him with their words by suggesting that he takes pleasure in evildoers because he does not immediately judge them (2:17). Their unbelief is epitomized by the question, “Where is the God of justice?” (2:17, NAU). Yahweh says in response,

> “Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming,” says the LORD of Hosts.

Although the question of Israel is insincere, God announces his intention to deal with the injustice when he comes to his temple. However, his arrival will not take place without adequate preparation of the people. The God of justice promises first to send a messenger (“My messenger,” יָעַלַּמ) to prepare or clear

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37 Although many translations use the word “messenger” instead of “angel” in this passage (NKJ, NAU, NIV, KJV, ESV), it is the same word שָׁמַע that is used throughout the Old Testament for the divine Angel of Yahweh.

38 The insincerity of the people is indicated by the fact that they are said to “seek” the Lord and “delight in” the Messenger of the Covenant.

39 God’s preparation of the people for his coming also took place at Mount Sinai (Ex 19:9ff.).
the way before him, and then he himself will come. His promise is in the first person, “I will send my messenger before Me” (3:1).

Following this promise to send a messenger to prepare his way, the language shifts to third person, but the divine Speaker is still the same. At the end of Malachi 3:1 it becomes clear that the God of justice is revealing a message from Yahweh of Hosts. It is thus Yahweh of Hosts who says that the Lord (ךָצֹר) himself will personally come to his temple. This statement is synonymously parallel with the next statement, indicating that “the Lord, whom you seek” and “the Messenger of the Covenant, in whom you delight” are the same. Thus, the is to be equated with . This is the Divine Sovereign, the Messenger of the covenant.

As Malachi further describes the coming of the to Israel, he particularly emphasizes its purifying effects (3:2-6). The two rhetorical questions

40 The word Malachi uses to describe the mission of the first messenger in Malachi 3:1 is נָשַׁל, which in the piel stem means to “make clear” or “prepare” something. In Genesis 24:31 it refers to the preparation of a house for a guest, while in Isaiah 57:14 it refers to the clearing of a path. Most notably, the word occurs in Isaiah 40:3 where Isaiah prophesies of one who calls out in the wilderness for the clearing of the way before Yahweh.

41 This way of speaking and this reference to the Lord of Hosts is another indication of a plurality of Divine persons, but more specifically it parallels Zechariah’s prophecy of Yahweh who is sent and Yahweh of Hosts in Zechariah 2. See above.

42 The word כָּצֹר occurs six times in Scripture, and it always refers to Yahweh alone (Isa 1:24; 3:1; 10:16, 33; 19:4). The reference to the fact that the people are “seeking” him alludes to the question of 2:17, “Where is the God of justice?” (NAU).

43 For an analysis of the single-, two-, and three-character approach to this passage, see Gunther Juncker, Jesus and the Angel of the Lord, 163-185. Juncker correctly identifies the two-character approach as the correct one.

44 The designation כָּצֹר, although occurring only here in Scripture, is an accurate synthesis of two major facts about the divine Name-bearing Angel. Since he bears the divine Name, he is God (Ex 23:21). Since the promise of his ministry comes within the Book of the Covenant itself and he acts throughout Israel’s history as Covenant Angel to Israel (Ex 23:20-23; Ex 24:4, 7), he is properly called the כָּצֹר, the “Angel of the Covenant.”
in Malachi 3:2 emphasize that these effects will be dramatic: “But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears?” (NAU).

The purification will be intense, as is illustrated by the comparison of the effects of his ministry with the effects of a refiner’s fire and a fuller’s soap (3:2). Finally, his particular focus will be to bring purity to the Levitical priests (3:3-4) and judgment to lawbreakers (3:5).

The purification process, while intense, is actually a merciful alternative to the only other option—consuming (הָלַק) or utterly destroying the people for their sins. Nevertheless the Angel of the Covenant will not do this, because as Yahweh says, “For I, the LORD, do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed” (Mal 3:6). This statement not only recalls the mercy shown to Israel at Sinai, when Yahweh relented from his threat to consume the people for their idolatry (Ex 32:10, 12), but it also alludes to Yahweh’s later promise to send his Angel before Israel rather than with them lest they be “consumed” (פָּרַע) (Ex 33:3, 5).

As the concluding prophetic word of the Old Testament regarding the Angel of Yahweh, Malachi’s prophecy has several important developments. The most prominent development is the promise that the Sovereign Angel of the Covenant is coming to his people. Closely associated is the promise that a

45 The same verbal root of the word consumed (הָלַק) in verse 6 occurs four times in Exodus 32-33, when Yahweh threatened to “consume” the children of Israel for their sin at the base of the mountain (Ex 32:10, 12; 33:3, 5). The word פָּרַע in verse 5 is a Qal perfect, which contextually should be regarded as a stative perfect—they had not been consumed, nor would they be. Not only had the children of Israel not been consumed at Sinai when they sinned against Yahweh, but when the Messenger/Angel of the Covenant comes, he will still not consume them in spite of their numerous breaches of the covenant (v.5). Further verification that the incident in Exodus is in mind is the reference to the law in Malachi 3:7.
forerunner messenger will “clear the way” before him (Mal 3:1; 4:6).\textsuperscript{46} The preparatory ministry of this forerunner messenger will at some point give way to the intense purifying ministry of the Angel of the Covenant himself.\textsuperscript{37}

A final development of Malachi’s prophecy is his synthesizing designation “Angel of the Covenant” (ךְָלַחְתָּם כְּבָר). The designation occurs only here in Scripture, and in the context it identifies the divine Sovereign who will come to purify the Levites and judge the people of Israel for their failure to keep the covenant (v.3, 5, 7-12). In the broader context of the Old Testament, however, the designation indicates the focal point of the Angel of Yahweh’s entire ministry to his people—his covenant. This includes his initial revelation of the covenant to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as well as his administration of the covenant through the entirety of Israel’s history.\textsuperscript{48}

Of the emphases in Malachi’s prophecy, the deity of the Angel of the Covenant stands out immediately. His deity is indicated first by the synonymous parallelism of “the Lord” and the “Angel of the Covenant” in 3:1. The reference to “his temple” likewise implies that he is God (3:1). By indicating that the Angel of the Covenant is the rightful Lord of the temple, Malachi synthesizes what could have been logically deduced from Exodus and the history of the tabernacle/temple—that the Angel of the Covenant rightfully inhabits the

\textsuperscript{46} The fact that the Angel of the Covenant has an angel (i.e., messenger) of his own is not a new thought. Gad was his messenger to David (1 Chron 21:18), Elijah was his messenger to Ahaziah (2 Kgs 1:3), and Moses was his messenger to Pharoah (Ex 3:18).

\textsuperscript{47} The ministry of this forerunner is essential because of the innate power ofךְָלַחְתָּם כְָבָר, whose voice has the power to bring a curse upon the land (Mal 4:6).

\textsuperscript{48} The Angel of the Covenant’s administration of the covenant includes his revelation and oversight of the covenant (cf. Angel’s activity in the period of the patriarchs), his judging of the people according to it (e.g., Judg 2:1-5), and his deliverance of the people in keeping with his promises (e.g., Isa 63:9).
temple of God as God. His presence at the temple, furthermore, corresponds with his presence in the Shekinah cloud (Ex 14:19) and the Shekinah cloud’s presence at the tabernacle.49

Malachi’s prophecy also emphasizes the judicial ministry of Angel of the Covenant. His judgment would result in the purification of the Levites (3:3) as well as the people (Mal 3:4-5). This ministry is in keeping with the ministry of the Angel of Yahweh, whose judicial acts resulted in the purification of his people on many occasions, including his confrontation at Bochim (Jdg 2:1ff.), his appearance to Gideon (Jdg 6:25ff.), his judgment upon Ahaziah’s idolatry (2 Kgs 1) and his cleansing of the high priest Joshua (Zech 3:1-10).

The prophecy of Malachi thus brings the teaching of the Old Testament about the Angel of Yahweh to a conclusion with a look backward and a look forward. The look backward identifies the Angel of the Covenant as the one through whom Yahweh promised to lead Israel through the wilderness and into the Promised Land (Ex 23). The look forward anticipates the coming of that same Angel of the Covenant to purify the Levites and the sons of Jacob.

Conclusion

The prophetic books written during the exilic and post-exilic period of Israel’s history develop and emphasize the doctrine of the Angel of Yahweh in several ways. Daniel’s prophecy, while never mentioning the Angel of Yahweh

49 In Exodus the Angel of God inhabits the Shekinah cloud (Ex 13:21; 14:19-21). Yahweh came down in the Shekinah cloud to meet with Moses at the tent of meeting (Ex 33:7-11), and the Shekinah cloud later filled the tabernacle and the temple (e.g., Ex 40:34-38; 1 Kgs 8:10-13). The promise that the Angel of the Covenant will come to his temple is remarkable, because no Old Testament writer indicates that the Shekinah cloud ever came to the temple built by Zerubbabel and Joshua (Ezra 6), even after its completion and dedication (Ezra 6:14-16). The promise that the Lord was going to come to the temple was in fact an assertion that he would come to dwell in their midst as he had before.
explicitly, suggests a divine Angel who delivers the three Hebrew children from
the fiery furnace and Daniel from the den of lions. Zechariah’s prophecy
demonstrates the Angel of Yahweh’s initiation of the restoration of the nation by
interceding for them and installing new leadership for them. Malachi’s prophecy,
the most notable development within these periods, indicates that the divine
Angel of the Covenant will himself come to his temple in order to bring
judgment and purify the people of Israel.
CHAPTER 9

THE ANGEL OF YAHWEH IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The designation that often alerted the reader of the Old Testament to the presence of the Angel of Yahweh ( מלאך יهوֹה ) is suddenly absent in the New Testament. This change is due in part to the Jewish aversion to saying the Divine name\(^1\) as well as the shift of the language from Old Testament Hebrew to Koine Greek. Instead of using the name Yahweh or Jehovah, the New Testament authors used κύριος, even in cases when they quote from Old Testament passages containing the name Yahweh. Such a practice would presumably lead to translating מַלֵּךְ יְהוָה with the Greek phrase ἄγγελος κυρίου, and this exact phrase appears numerous times in the New Testament. However, it is doubtful that ἄγγελος κυρίου ever refers to the Angel of Yahweh in the New Testament, and in some cases the phrase clearly refers to a created angel.\(^2\)

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\(^1\) The LXX translation of Leviticus 24:16 led to the belief that one could not even utter the name Yahweh or Jehovah. The verse reads, "οὐνόμαζων δὲ τὸ ὄνομα κυρίου θανάτω θανατοῦσθαι." Brenton translates, "And he that names the name of the Lord, let him die the death: let all the congregation of Israel stone him with stones; whether he be a stranger or a native, let him die for naming the name of the Lord" (Lev 24:16, BRE). The context of Leviticus 24 indicates that a man blasphemed (blasphem) the divine Name and cursed (cursed) while fighting with another man. Both Hebrew words describing what the man did are used synonymously throughout the passage, and the word מַעֲשֶׂה in Leviticus 24:16 (translated ὄνομαζων in the LXX) occurs in Proverbs 11:26, where people are described as cursing (blasphem) a ruler who withholds grain in a time of need. Thus blasphemy does not consist in simply naming or saying a name but rather speaking evil of it.

\(^2\) Cases when ἄγγελος κυρίου clearly refers to a created angel include the following: Matt 1:20, 24; 2:13, 19; Matt 28:2; Luk 1:11; 2:9; 12:7, 23. However, some of these passages in which an “angel of the Lord” (ἄγγελος κυρίου, Acts 5:19; 8:26; 10:3-7, 22; 11:13-14; 12:7-11; 12:23; 27:23 ) or an “angel of God” (ἄγγελον τοῦ θεοῦ, Acts 10:3-7) appears, the angel is not identified by

The Angel of Yahweh in the Gospels

The Angel of Yahweh is never mentioned explicitly in the Gospels, but the Gospels do emphasize John’s ministry as the forerunner to the Angel of the Covenant. They also mention the theophanic cloud in the context of the Transfiguration, and Jesus’ use of the Angel of Yahweh’s name “I AM.”

The Angel of the Covenant

It is not without significance that every Gospel writer identifies John the Baptist as the forerunner of Jesus Christ and emphasizes the nature of his ministry. By doing so they demonstrate that John’s ministry is an essential part of the presentation of Jesus. The prophetic background forming the basis for identifying John is primarily the prophecy of Isaiah, who spoke of the forerunner as a “voice in the wilderness” who prepares the “way of the Lord” (the way of name. The details of each of these passages, however, do not resemble the passages of the Old Testament in which the Divine Angel of Yahweh appeared. At the same time, none of these latter passages precludes an identification of the angel as the Divine Angel. In Acts 10 Cornelius addresses the angel who appears to him as κύριε (v.3). In Acts 12 it is the ἄγγελος κυρίου who lets Peter out of prison, but Peter says that the Lord (ὁ κύριος) led him out (v.17). In Acts 12 as well it is the ἄγγελος κυρίου who strikes Herod for not giving the glory to God (v.23). Paul’s mention of the angel in Acts 27:23 also could be interpreted either way, as there are no clear characteristics of deity. Obviously in cases like Acts 12, Peter could be attributing his deliverance ultimately to the Lord, who delivered him through a created angel.
Yahweh) (Isa 40:3-6; cf. Matt 3:3; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4; John 1:23). That prophecy, however, was streamlined and developed further by Malachi, who specified that Yahweh would indeed come in the person of the Angel of the Covenant (Angel of Yahweh).³ By citing these two prophecies, therefore, and by the prophecy of Malachi especially, the Gospel writers show that Jesus is both Messiah and Angel of the Covenant. Chronologically, this identification of Jesus in the period of the New Testament began not with the Gospel writers but with Gabriel’s announcement to Zacharias:

And he will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God. It is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, TO TURN THE HEARTS OF THE FATHERS BACK TO THE CHILDREN, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord (Luke 1:16-17).

The phrase “to turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children” is a direct quotation from Malachi 4:6, where God promises to send an “Elijah” before the “coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD” (Mal 4:6).⁴ Along with the

³ Meredith Kline says that John’s coming as the forerunner directly corresponds to the “messenger of ultimatum” within the ancient suzerain covenant administration. He explains, “The mission of the Old Testament prophets, those messengers of Yahweh to enforce the covenant mediated to Israel through Moses, is surely to be understood within the judicial framework of the covenant lawsuit. So too the mission of John the Baptist. John was sent with the word of ultimatum from Yahweh to his covenant violating vassal, Israel.” According to Kline, the messengers sent by the suzerain requiring obedience formed the first of two stages in the process of bringing the vassal into subjection. The second stage included a declaration of war. Jesus’ parable of the vineyard alludes to this same covenantal judicial process (Matt 21:33-46; Mark 12:1-12; Luke 20:9-19). Kline notes the context of this parable immediately following the discussion regarding John’s Baptism (e.g., Luke 20:3ff.), which indicates that John’s death as a servant, along with Christ’s death as the son of the lord of the vineyard in the parable, justified the judgment of taking the vineyard and giving it to another. “Oath and Ordeal Signs,” WTJ, 27:2 (1965), 116-40.

⁴ Gabriel here explains the sense in which Malachi referred to the messenger who will precede the Angel/Messenger of the Covenant as “Elijah.” He indicates that it is not the Old Testament prophet Elijah who is meant but rather one who comes “in the spirit and power of Elijah.” Jesus further affirmed that John the Baptist fulfilled Malachi’s prophecy when he said, “This is he of whom it is written” (Matt 11:14; Mark 9:13). Walter Kaiser, Jr., has argued from Luke 1:16-17 along with the other NT evidence that John indeed did fulfill Malachi’s prophecy but that he is “one in a series of forerunners who are appearing in history until that great and
latter part of Luke 1:17, the phrase describes the preparation of Israel for the divine Messenger of the Covenant (Mal 3:1). By combining these concepts, the Elijah-like messenger and his work of preparation, Gabriel distinctly identifies the son of Zacharias as the messenger who would precede the Lord, the Angel of the Covenant.

Once Gabriel’s prophecy is fulfilled in John’s birth, Zacharias affirms John’s identity as the forerunner to Yahweh himself when he says, “And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go on BEFORE THE LORD TO PREPARE HIS WAYS” (Luke 1:76, emphasis original). His affirmation is a conflation of two prophecies—Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3, both of which speak of a forerunner sent by the Lord to prepare the way of the Lord himself.

As John the Baptist began his own public ministry, he likewise identified himself as the forerunner of the Angel of the Covenant. As he preached to the Israelites, he distinguished Jesus as the “Expected One” (NAU) or the “one who is coming” (ὁ ἐρχόμενος) in numerous ways emphasizing Christ’s deity and Messianic ministry as well as his own relative insignificance.

climactically terrible day of Yahweh.” “The Promise of the Arrival of Elijah in Malachi and the Gospels,” GTJ, Fall 1982, 222-235. Hengstenberg argues against an earlier proponent of such a view by citing Jesus’ direct identification of John as the forerunner with the words “this is the one of whom it is written” (Matt 11:14). Christology, 4:215.
Table 7. John’s Descriptions of the “Expected One”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NT Location</th>
<th>Description of the “Expected One” NAU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Matt 3:11; Mark 1:7; Luke 3:16</td>
<td>He is mightier than I.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matt 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33</td>
<td>He baptizes with the Holy Spirit and fire.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matt 3:11; Luke 3:17</td>
<td>He threshes wheat (purification) and burns chaff with unquenchable fire (judgment).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5 John’s statement about his unworthiness to loose the latchet of Christ’s sandals, according to Gunther Juncker, is “more than mildly evocative of Exod 3:6 and Josh 5:15, two more important Angel of the LORD texts.” As Juncker notes, the reference to Christ’s sandals instead of John’s sandals keeps the statements from being directly parallel. It was the Angel of Yahweh who told Moses to take off his sandals, but it is John who says that he is unworthy to remove Christ’s sandals. Jesus and the Angel of the LORD, 332. That being true, the theological point of both statements is the same: the Angel’s command to Moses to remove his sandals testifies to his own holiness, and John’s expression of his personal unworthiness to loose Jesus’ sandals testifies to the holiness of Jesus. These statements thus find parallelism in the thought rather than the exact correspondence of the owner of the sandals. |
| John 1:29, 36                                                              | He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. |
| John 1:30                                                                  | He is a man of higher rank than I, for he existed before me. |
| John 1:32-33                                                               | He is the one upon whom the Spirit remains. |
| John 1:34                                                                  | He is the Son of God.                 |
| John 3:3                                                                   | He is the Son.                       |
| John 3:28                                                                  | I am not the Christ but was sent ahead of him. |
| John 3:29                                                                  | He is the Bridegroom.                |
| John 3:34                                                                  | He whom God has sent speaks the words of God. |

John questioned Jesus’ identity after being imprisoned by Herod (Matt 11:1), asking his disciples to certify Jesus’ identity by asking him whether he was the “Coming One” (Matt 11:2-3, NKJ). In answer to John’s question Jesus first explained that the miracles he was doing were distinctly Messianic (cf. Isa 35:5ff.; 61:1), and then he said, “Blessed is he who is not offended in Me” (Matt 11:4-6, NAU). Thus Jesus’ benediction is pronounced upon those who recognize him to...
be the Rock of offense, which in Isaiah’s prophecy is the Stone over which the Jews would stumble (Isa 8:14-15; 28:16). Jesus’ answer to John’s question is therefore a double affirmation of his identity as the “Coming One.”

In the verses that followed Jesus’ answer to John (Matthew 11:7-19; Luke 7:24-30), Jesus taught the crowds that John was a prophet and “more than a prophet” (Matt 11:9). His immediate explanation of John as “more than a prophet” is found in Matthew 11:10: “For this is he of whom it is written: ‘Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You’” (NKJ; cf. Luke 7:27). Close examination of these words reveals both a semantic and syntactical relationship to three Old Testament prophecies—Exodus 23:20a, Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3.

The first part of Jesus’ statement about John (ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ ἀποστέλλω τὸν ἅγγελόν μου πρὸ τοῦ προσώπου σου) is an exact repetition of Exodus 23:20a in the Septuagint, where Yahweh promises to send the Divine Angel/Messenger of the Covenant before Israel as they journey toward and enter into the Promised Land. That promise of guidance, protection and provision was fulfilled within the history of the nation by the Angel of Yahweh. Thus, when Jesus refers to John as the messenger who goes before him to prepare the way and identifies himself as the one who comes after John, something new is taking place (Matt 11:10; cf. Mark 1:2-3). However, what exactly is taking place is not the concern of Jesus to

6 Jesus’ identity as the one coming after John may also be seen in his description of the people’s response to John and their response to him as the Son of Man (Matt 11:16-19).

7 Henry Alford suggests that Jesus’ distinction of John as “more than a prophet” was due to the fact that John “saw and pointed out the object of his prophecy” as well as the fact that John was himself both “the subject and vehicle of prophecy.” Emphasis original. The Greek Testament (GT) (Chicago: Moody Press, 1958), 116.

8 Gunther Juncker highlights four different frameworks for the ministry of the Angel of Yahweh: the Exodus Forerunner (the Divine Angel whom God sends who guides Israel), the
explain in the context of Matthew 11 or Luke 7. His primary point was to identify John.\(^9\)

The second prophecy to which Jesus alludes in Matthew 11:10 is Malachi 3:1, which speaks of the Divine Angel of the Covenant as well as the messenger who would precede him. However, Jesus adds a third person by a subtle shift in wording, referring to himself as “You” in the statement, “For this is he of whom it is written: ‘Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You’” (Matt 11:10). By using the words “your face” and “you” (σου) instead of “me” (μου) as it appears in Malachi 3:1 (LXX), Jesus draws attention to a distinction between the persons of the Trinity. God is the one doing the sending. John the Baptist is the messenger. God sends John before a third person, who is also divine.\(^{10}\) Jesus thus implies his own deity as he highlights John’s identity.\(^{11}\)

Malachi forerunner (the messenger-prophet [Elijah] whom God sends to prepare the way for the Divine Angel of the Covenant), the Isaiah forerunner (the prophet who exhorts the people who prepare the way for Yahweh), and the New Testament Forerunner (the prophet who prepares the way for the Messiah).

\(^9\) What is disconcerting to the present study is Jesus’ application of Exodus 23:20a to John the Baptist, whereas Moses clearly was writing of the divine Name-bearing Covenant Angel (Exodus 23:20-21). We might have expected Jesus to apply Exodus 23:20a to himself, but instead He applies it to John. However, it is important to recognize that while using the same phraseology, Jesus quotes only a portion of it. Thus Jesus is not identifying John as the Angel of the Covenant but instead highlighting John’s significance with a look forward toward a “New Exodus,” just as the words in the Mosaic Covenant were pointing to a Messenger who would lead them into the Promised Land. See Rikki Watts, *Isaiah’s New Exodus and Mark* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001).

\(^{10}\) Hengstenberg explains the change from the prophecy of Malachi 3:1 to what is found in Matthew 11:10 as due to the difference in time. “The Saviour, on the other hand, in a manner befitting the time, when a clearer insight had been obtained into the relation between the sender and the sent, the Father and the Son, through the incarnation of the Logos, gave greater prominence to the difference, and spoke of the sender as addressing him the sent.” *Christology*, 4:213.

\(^{11}\) Further evidence that Malachi’s prophecy is foundational in Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 11 is that he identifies John as the Elijah who would come before the day of Yahweh (Matt 11:14-15; cf. Mal 4:6). He also implies that understanding John as Elijah would take spiritual
The final prophecy to which Jesus alludes is found in Isaiah 40. The concept of a forerunner who would precede Yahweh’s coming, while clearly stated in Malachi, is first put forth in Isaiah’s prophecy:

The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the LORD; Make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill brought low; the crooked places shall be made straight And the rough places smooth; the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, And all flesh shall see it together; For the mouth of the LORD has spoken (Isa 40:3-5, NKJ).

Isaiah’s prophecy shows that the one whose way is being prepared is both Yahweh and God. He also refers to him as the Glory of Yahweh (v.5). Therefore, for Jesus to shift the wording to indicate that the forerunner messenger is being sent “before You” to prepare “Your way” is tantamount to saying that he is Yahweh, Elohim, and the Glory of Yahweh (Isa 40:3-5).

The process of revealing both the forerunner of the Angel of the Covenant and the Angel of the Covenant himself began with Gabriel, continued with Zacharias and John, and was certified by Jesus himself. It is plain that the Gospel writers were not at all original in their identification of John as the forerunner or Jesus as the Angel of the Covenant. They were simply following the cues given by John and Jesus. The result of this combination of passages is a consolidation of insight when he prefaced his statement by the phrase if you are willing to accept it (Matt 11:14, NAU). He underscores this point by following his identification of John with the familiar word “He who has ears to hear, let him hear” (v.15). Hengstenberg writes of the latter phrase, “This phrase is always employed with a subject, the meaning of which does not lie upon the surface, and for the understanding of which something more is required than merely the outward ear.” Christology, 4:215.

12 Malachi’s prophecy should be looked upon as a development of Isaiah’s prophecy not because Malachi says that Yahweh is coming but rather because Malachi identifies him specifically as the Lord and Angel of the Covenant (Mal 3:1). Neither of these titles is mentioned in Isaiah 40. However, it is interesting that the title the Lord (יהוה) occurs only in Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah (1:24; 3:1; 10:16, 33; 19:4).
two lines of Old Testament thought—the Divine Messiah and the Angel of Yahweh.\(^{13}\)

One of the important conclusions emerging from the aforementioned considerations is that the doctrine of the Angel of Yahweh, far from being absent from the New Testament, forms part of the very foundation for recognizing what is happening at the very beginning of the New Testament, before Christ is even born (Luke 1:16-17). However, it is not the early designation of the Angel (i.e., the “Angel of Yahweh”) that is presented in the New Testament, but rather Malachi’s designation “Angel of the Covenant.” A failure to see the progress of revelation, therefore, will tend to obscure the identification of Jesus as the Angel of Yahweh.

A second conclusion is that John the Baptist’s identity as the forerunner indirectly identifies Jesus as the Angel of the Covenant (i.e., Angel of Yahweh). None of the Gospel writers explicitly state that Jesus is the Angel of Yahweh, but each of them does present John the Baptist as the forerunner to Jesus Christ. In this way the Gospel writers assert Jesus’ identity as the Angel of the Covenant (Mal 3:1; Ex 23:20-23).

\(^{13}\) Mark opens his Gospel by quoting Jesus’ conflation of Exodus 23:20, Isaiah 40:3, and Malachi 3:1 (Mark 1:2-3; cf. Matt 11:10; Luke 7:27). He then expands on it by quoting Isaiah 40:3 and attributes everything to Isaiah. Mark’s quotation from Isaiah additionally points to the fact that the one whose way is being prepared is Yahweh Himself, because he quotes Isaiah’s prophecy, “Make ready the way of the LORD [Yahweh], Make His paths straight” (Mark 1:3b, NAU). Thus Mark’s quotation of Isaiah, Moses, and Malachi highlights the fact that the person of whom he is prophesying is Yahweh himself, a second Divine person. By highlighting Isaiah’s prophecy in particular, Mark has directly identified Jesus as the Divine Messiah, the Angel of Yahweh, the Messenger of the Covenant, and Yahweh himself. Furthermore, he has explained the sense of the phrase Son of God in the opening line of his Gospel (Mark 1:1). Gunther Juncker says that the quotation of Isaiah 40:3 “indicates precisely the kind of divinity that Mark understands the Son of God to possess and in doing so fills the title Son of God to overflowing with scriptural meaning.” He also says that the opening statements in Mark are a “christological tour-de-force comparable only with what is found in the opening lines of the Fourth Gospel or the Epistle to the Romans.” Jesus and the Angel of the LORD, 317-319.
The Theophanic Cloud in the Gospels

The association between Jesus and the theophanic or Shekinah cloud also indicates his identity as the Angel of Yahweh. In the Old Testament the Angel of God is in union with the cloud during the Exodus from Egypt, most notably in Exodus 13:20-21 as the children of Israel are departing from Egypt and in 14:19-24 as the Egyptians are following them. The cloud continues with them and stands over the tent of meeting when Moses meets with Yahweh at the tent of meeting (Ex 33:9-11). The most outstanding occasion where the cloud associated with God’s presence is mentioned in the New Testament is the transfiguration of Jesus Christ in the synoptic Gospels (Mark 9:1-13; Matt 17:1-13; Luke 9:28-36).

According to the synoptic Gospels, Jesus took Peter, James, and John into a high mountain to pray (Mark 9:2; Luke 9:28). As Jesus was praying, he was transfigured before his disciples (Matt 17:2; Mark 9:2-3). This transfiguration is explained in terms of visible changes to the appearance of both Christ’s face and his garments. Matthew says, for instance, that his face was shining like the sun (Matt 17:2; cf. Acts 26:13; Rev 1:16), while Luke says that his face was “different” (Luke 9:29). Matthew also says that Jesus’ garments became “white as light” (Matt 17:2), but Mark says that his garments were so “radiant and exceedingly white” that no launderer could reproduce it (Mark 9:3).

In addition to the changes to Jesus’ appearance, Moses and Elijah also appeared with him “in glory” (Luke 9:28) and spoke with Jesus about his “exodus”

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14 Luke summarizes what the disciples saw with the words “his glory” (τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ) (Luke 9:32), while Peter refers to it as “his majesty” (τῆς ἐκείνου μεγαλειώτητος) (2 Pet 1:16). John’s words in the opening of his Gospel also allude to this event: “We beheld His glory, the glory as the only begotten from the Father” (John 1:14).
(ἐξοδος),\(^{15}\) which he was about to accomplish in Jerusalem (Luke 9:31). When Peter, James and John woke from their sleep and saw the men, Peter made the ignorant suggestion that tents be made for all three individuals—Jesus, Moses and Elijah (Luke 9:33).

The cloud described in the remainder of the passage is not an ordinary cloud. Matthew says that it was a “bright cloud” (shining, radiant), indicating that the cloud was filled with light (17:5). As the cloud “overshadowed” the entire company, they “entered” into it (Luke 9:34). Peter’s suggestion to make three tents, one each for Moses, Elijah and Christ, is quickly corrected by a voice from within the cloud: “This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to Him!” (v.5, NAU).\(^{16}\) By this word the disciples must understand that Moses and Elijah are merely servants, while Jesus is the Son (cf. Heb 3:1-6). They must listen to him.

The response of the disciples is typical of the recipients of a theophany in the Old Testament: they fall to the ground and are extremely afraid (Matt 17:6; Mark 9:6; Luke 9:34; cf. Abraham in Gen 17:3). However, Jesus comes and touches them and tells them not to be afraid (Matt 17:7), and Elijah and Moses disappear (Luke 9:36).\(^{17}\) The cloud disappears as well, for no further mention of it is made.

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15 The translation of ἐξοδος as “decease” (AV) comes from the Latin root dēcessus, which means to depart. American Heritage Dictionary, 3rd Edition (Houghton-Mifflin, 1992). The Greek word ἐξοδος is also used in Hebrews 11:22, where the writer records Joseph’s belief in the ἐξοδος of Israel from Egypt. He certainly is not talking about the death of Israel but their departure from Egypt to go the Promised Land. In the context Jesus is referring to his departure into heaven.

16 Luke 9:35 says, “This is my Son, My Chosen One [ὁ ἐκλεξεν άνθρωπόν]; listen to Him!” (NAU).

17 The presence of Elijah in the scene was surely the impetus for the immediate question of the disciples about Elijah, “Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?” (Matt 11:14-15; cf. Mark 6:15; 8:28). Jesus’ answer emphasized that the Elijah had come and that they
The preceding discussion leads to the following observations. First, the presence of Moses and Elijah on this occasion is particularly reminiscent of the theophanies they received at separate times on Mount Sinai (Ex 34; 1 Kgs 19). Their presence in this scene is an essential aspect of what is being revealed about Christ. The fact that the scene takes place on a mountain (perhaps Mount Tabor) points to these Old Testament theophanies on Sinai. The cloud in particular points to the Exodus 34 theophany because on that occasion Yahweh descended to meet Moses in the Shekinah cloud. He also proclaimed the Name of Yahweh to Moses and repeated certain portions of the covenant to him (v.5-28).

The transfiguration of Jesus’ face and garments recorded by Matthew and Luke explain the identity of the one who appeared to Moses. The shining of Jesus’ face and garments along with the presence of Moses explains why Moses’ face was shining after he left the mountain (Ex 34:5-35). When Moses came down (the leaders of Israel) did not recognize him and did to him what they wished, just as they would cause the Son of Man (Jesus) to suffer (Matt 17:12).

Wayne S. Baxter suggests that the transfiguration in Matthew in particular is reminiscent of Exodus 24 and 34. He cites the following parallels: both mention “six days” (Matt 17:1; Ex 24:16), both take place on a mountain (Matt 17:1; Ex 24:15-16), Matthew 17 includes Peter, James, and John (v.1) while Exodus 24 includes Aaron, Nadab and Abihu (v.1), Moses’ radiant face after the Exodus 34 theophany (34:29-35) and Christ’s face during the transfiguration (Matt 17:2), the overshadowing cloud in Matthew (17:5) and the glory cloud in Exodus (24:15-18), the voice from within the cloud (Matt 17:5) and the voice from the cloud at Sinai (Ex 24:16). Finally, Baxter connects the command of the Father to the disciples to listen to Christ with the promise of Deuteronomy 18:15-18. “Mosaic Imagery in the Gospel of Matthew,” Trinity Journal (TJ), Spring 1999, 69-83. However, Juncker suggests that Exodus 34:4-9 is the better parallel because “these oft-noted parallels are less than exact.” He notes, “In Mark 9 the Transfiguration takes place on the sixth day; but in Exodus 24 it takes place on the seventh day. In Mark 9 the three named disciples are the only ones present with Jesus; but in Exodus 24 Joshua and seventy elders are also present with Moses. In Mark 9 Jesus ascends the mountain with his three disciples; but in Exodus 24 Moses ascends the mountain alone. And, finally, in Mark 9 it is Jesus who speaks with Moses (and God who speaks to the disciples); but in Exodus 25:1ff. it is God who speaks with Moses. This last point reveals that Jesus stands in the place of God on the mountain and not in the place of Moses (and/or Elijah who, it must be borne in mind, was also present).” Juncker does not exclude the possibility that there may be allusions to Exodus 24, but he does argue for the dominance of Exodus 34 as an Old Testament backdrop for the transfiguration. Jesus and the Angel of the LORD, 371.
from the mountain with his face shining, he had been with Yahweh for forty
days (v.29-34). However, an important difference between the transfiguration
accounts and that theophany is that Christ’s face is shining before the cloud even
appears (Luke 9:29; Matt 17:2). This indicates that it is not the presence of the
cloud or another person within the cloud that causes Jesus’ face to shine. Rather,
his face is shining because he himself is the Glory of God (cf. Heb 1:2).19 The
voice of the Father from the cloud distinguishing Christ as his Son further
testifies to this fact.

In light of the preceding observations, it is apparent that what is taking
place in the Transfiguration of Christ is that he is revealing himself as the Glory
of God, who is also the Angel of God, the one who finds his proper place within
the Shekinah cloud (Ex 14:19-24).20 The emphasis in the Transfiguration account
is also that this one who inhabits the Shekinah cloud bears a close association

19 It is true that Christ is the prophet like Moses (Deut 18:15-18; cf. Acts 3:22; 7:27), but he
is not a “new Moses.” Gunther Juncker writes, “The contrast with Moses is dramatic and
palpable. Moses reflected the glory of God in a wholly derived way and only after speaking with
God face to face. Jesus, on the other hand, radiates the glory of God from within himself. There is
no repudiation of Moses or the glory that he reflected. But there is in this surprising contrast the
sudden realization that Christ surpasses Moses as a Son surpasses a servant and as a Builder
surpasses what he has built. The dazzling glory that Christ radiates in his Transfiguration is the
glory of God himself and not merely the star-like brightness of heavenly beings or transformed
righteous individuals (cf. Dan 12:3).” Ibid., 373.

20 On certain occasions the glory of Yahweh, like the word of Yahweh, takes on a
personal character, and clear parallels can be drawn to the Angel of Yahweh. In Exodus 16:7 God
announces that the Israelites would see the glory of Yahweh, and in 16:10 Moses writes that the
glory of Yahweh appeared in the cloud. Because the cloud was already visible, the appearance of
the glory of Yahweh is something new. Furthermore, when the glory appeared, Yahweh spoke
(16:11). Similarly when the glory of Yahweh appeared on Mount Sinai, Moses went up, and
Yahweh spoke to him (24:16-17). At Aaron’s ordination to the priesthood, Moses instructed him
to be obedient to the rituals of the ordination process so that “the glory of the LORD may appear
to you” (Lev 9:6; cf. 9:23). In the book of Numbers the glory of Yahweh appeared on certain
occasions like when the people were thinking of stoning Moses and Aaron (Num 14:10), when
Korah and his brethren rebelled (Num 16:19ff.) and when there was no water in the wilderness of
Zin (20:6). Each time when the glory of Yahweh appeared, Yahweh spoke to them.
with the Father as his Son, and his message must be heeded (Matt 17:5; Mark 9:7; Luke 9:35).

A further connection is made by the context surrounding the Transfiguration in Matthew and Mark that integrates another significant line of Old Testament thought—the Son of Man. Matthew and Mark in their preface and conclusion to the Transfiguration account, and Luke in his preface only, include references to Christ’s identity as the Son of Man. Christ, as he conversed with his disciples prior to the Transfiguration, emphasized that some of the disciples would see the Son of Man in his Father’s glory before they died (Matt 16:27-28; Mark 9:1; Luke 9:26-27). More specifically, Matthew records Christ’s promise that they would “see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom” (i.e., the kingdom of the Son of Man) (Matt 16:28, emphasis added). After the Transfiguration has taken place, Christ tells his disciples not to tell anyone of the

21 The most outstanding Old Testament passage regarding the Son of Man in the Old Testament is Daniel 7. As Daniel recounts his apocalyptic vision of four beasts emerging from the sea, the first three resembled something he knew (a lion, a bear, and a leopard); the fourth he describes by its ferocious character and the presence of ten horns (7:1-8). Daniel then describes the surroundings of one called the Ancient of Days and all of the surrounding features of his presence (7:9-12). Immediately following that description he says, “I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. And to Him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed” (Dan 7:13-14). At least three aspects of Daniel 7:13-14 reveal the uniqueness of this individual. First of all, Daniel records that “all the peoples, nations, and men of every language” [lit. tongues] would serve him, which gives evidence to the fact that his reign will be universal. No group of people is excluded. Secondly, the word serve indicates that this individual is more than a ruler; he is worthy of worship. Nine of the ten occurrences of this Aramaic word occur in Daniel, and each occurrence is in the context of some kind of worship (Daniel 3:12, 14, 17, 18, 28; 6:17, 21). Finally, his reign is eternal. He receives from the Ancient of Days “an everlasting dominion which will not be destroyed.” In summary, Daniel’s prophecy indicates that this person will be a universal and eternal ruler who will be worshipped by all peoples, nations and languages. Such facts alone reveal that this individual is not merely human. He must be divine. This is consistent with the way in which Christ and the New Testament authors use this designation.
vision that they have seen until the Son of Man is risen from the dead (Matt 17:9, Mark 9:9-12).

By placing the Transfiguration contextually near these thoughts about the Son of Man, the Gospel writers are making the broader point that the Son of Man and the personal Glory of Yahweh (Jesus) are one in the same. The mention of the theophanic cloud is particularly significant because the passages that reveal the future glory of the Son of Man include the cloud. Jesus himself often referred to his future coming as the Son of Man with a cloud or the clouds of heaven (Matt 24:30-31; 26:64; Mark 13:26; 14:62; Luke 21:27; cf. Rev 1:7; 14:14). Luke 21:27 is notable among these passages because it describes the Son of Man coming again in a single cloud “with power and great glory” (NAU). The mention of the cloud in connection with the glory is thus reminiscent both of the Transfiguration and Old Testament “Glory” and the Old Testament display of power as the Angel of God looked down through the cloud upon the Egyptians and fought against them (Ex 14:19-24).

The “I AM”

The absolute “I AM” (ἐγώ ἐμέ) statements of Jesus embedded within the Gospel accounts also recall the Old Testament teaching about the Angel of Yahweh, particularly when the Angel of Yahweh reveals his name to Moses in Exodus 3:14. 22 These are sometimes called the “Absolute ‘I AM’ sayings,” and

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22 The other class of “I am” statements includes those that are combined with predicates. The following are found in John’s Gospel: “I am the Bread of Life” (John 6:35, 48), “I am the Good Shepherd” (John 10:11, 14), “I am the Light of the world” (John 8:12; 9:5), “I am the Door of [Gate for] the sheep” (John 10:7, 9), “I am the Resurrection and the Life” (John 11:25), “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life” (John 14:6), and “I am the true Vine” (John 15:1).
they do not contain a predicate at all. These statements of Christ provide strong evidence that he is the Angel of Yahweh.  

The first of the Absolute “I AM” statements is found in John 4:26, where Jesus speaks to the woman at the well. The particular point of focus in the narrative is the identity of Jesus. When the woman responds with surprise to Jesus’ request, he says that if she had known who he was, she would have asked him for living water (4:10). In response the woman says, “You are not greater than our father Jacob, are You, who gave us the well, and drank of it himself and his sons and his cattle?” (v.12). Jesus’ answer, informing her of the living water he is able to provide, is an indirect but affirmative answer to her question (4:13-14). He is greater than Jacob.

23 This does not mean that the first class does not testify to Jesus’ identity as Yahweh himself. David M. Ball writes, “Jesus claims to be the Bread of which the Old Testament spoke, the Light of which Isaiah spoke, the Shepherd of whom Jeremiah and Ezekiel spoke, and the Vine of which many Old Testament passages spoke. In addition there may be allusions to the Isaianic concept of the ‘way of the LORD’ in Jesus’ claim to be the Way, the Truth and Life.” ‘I AM’ in John’s Gospel: Literary Function, Background and Theological Implications (JSNTSup 124; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 259. Ball’s work on John’s Gospel emphasizes that the “I AM” sayings have their foundation in Isaiah, and he almost completely ignores any connection to Exodus 3:14. Similar sentiment toward using Exodus 3:14 as the background for John’s absolute “I AM” sayings is found in the work of Catrin H. Williams, I Am He: The Interpretation of ‘Anî Hû in Jewish and Early Christian Literature (WUNT 113; Tubingen: Mohr, 2000), 52-53. Juncker suggests that this development in modern scholarship toward identifying Isaiah as the primary background for the Absolute “I AM” sayings is detrimental: “A crucial background for both Jesus’ use of the “I AM” formula, no less than for Isaiah’s use, has been obscured if not denied outright. That background is Exod 3:14.” He argues that Exodus 3:14 is particularly the background for John 8. Jesus and the Angel of the LORD, 396.

24 It is possible that Jesus’ encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well is intended to parallel one or both encounters between the Angel of Yahweh and Hagar (Gen 16:7ff.). The parallels between the two passages include an encounter between a Divine person and a woman (Gen 16:13; John 4:26), the presence of a well (Gen 16:14; 21:19; John 4:6), the supernatural knowledge of the life circumstances of the woman (Gen 16:11-12; John 4:16-18), and the prophetic ministry of the Angel and Jesus (Gen 16:11-12; John 4:19).

25 David M. Ball says that “the discovery of Jesus’ true identity is the plot of the narrative.” ‘I AM’ in John’s Gospel, 64.
As the discussion continues, the woman perceives Jesus to be a prophet because of his intimate knowledge of her and asks him about the proper place of worship. After he answers her question, the woman declares her belief in the coming of the Messiah: “I know that Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ); when that One comes, He will declare all things to us” (v.25). Seizing upon this statement, Jesus makes a declaration that affirms his identity in a remarkable way: “I who speak to you am He” (v.26). His statement translated literally is “I am (εγώ εἰμι), the one speaking to you (ὁ λαλῶν σοι).” The words “I am” could simply indicate his claim to be the Messiah, a remarkable claim in itself, but the words “I am” imply more than that. He is claiming to be the Angel of Yahweh, the “I AM” who revealed himself to Moses.

26 The aorist verb προσκυνήσαν, translated “worshipped” here, indicates that she is referring to worship that took place in the past. The mountain that the woman is referring to is Mount Gerizim, sacred to the Samaritans because of the Samaritan temple that had been built there during the time of Alexander the Great. Wayne A. Brindle, “The Origin and History of the Samaritans,” GTJ (Spring 1984): 48-77. However, the choice of the location for the temple was very likely due to the fact that Abraham, Jacob, and Joshua had all built altars within close proximity to the mountain. Abraham and Jacob built an altar at Shechem, and Joshua built an altar on Mount Gerizim itself (Gen 12:6; 33:18; Deut 27:4ff.; Josh 8:30ff.). The woman’s reference to “our father Jacob” earlier in the discussion indicates that Jacob is at least one of those fathers, though probably not exclusively, that she had in mind. Alfred Edersheim notes that the Samaritan temple was built “at Shechem . . . on Mount Gerizim, which in the Samaritan Pentateuch was substituted for Mount Ebal in Deut. xxvii.4. It was Shechem also, with its sacred associations of Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph, which became the real capital of the Samaritans.” Alfred Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus Christ (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953), 1:397. Moses indicates that Jacob had indeed once worshipped nearby at an altar that he had named El Elohe Israel, which means, “God, the God of Israel” (Gen 33:19-20). Jacob, of course, worshipped and prayed to the Angel of Yahweh (Gen 32:23ff.; Gen 48:15-16).

27 The Samaritan belief about the Messiah was that he would “declare all things” to them. Such a belief stems from Deuteronomy 18:15-18, particularly verse 18: “I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him” (NKJ). The fact that the Samaritans regarded only the five books of the Pentateuch as canonical probably also excludes Isaiah’s “I am He” as the Old Testament background for what Jesus is saying to the woman. Cf. H. G. M. Williamson, “Samaritans” in NBD, 3rd Edition, eds. J. D. Douglas et al (Downer’s Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1996) 1052-53.
An immediate difficulty with identifying Jesus’ “I am” statement with the Angel of Yahweh’s revelation to Moses, “I AM THAT I AM” (אֶתְנַחַם אֲדֹנָי), is that if John is quoting from the Septuagint, he is not quoting accurately. The Angel in the Septuagint text of Exodus 3:14 says when revealing his name to Moses, “ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ὄν.” Thus, it is ὁ ὄν, not ἐγώ εἰμι, that is the name of the Angel of Yahweh. In the Septuagint as well the Angel uses the name ὁ ὄν as he tells Moses to tell the children of Israel who sent him (Ex 3:15, LXX). However, John may not be quoting from the Septuagint at all. He may be translating directly from Hebrew or Aramaic to Greek, as he does on other occasions.

Without a broader context, this first instance of Jesus’ use of the name I AM may seem to be just an unusual manner of speaking and not a name at all. However, in the broader context of John and the other Gospels, it is evident that Jesus is identifying himself here as the “I AM.” To do so, of course, is the same as identifying himself as the Angel of Yahweh, who revealed the divine Name to Moses.

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28 The phrase in Exodus 3:15 in the LXX is “οὐτως ἐρεῖς τοῖς υἱοῖς Ἰσραήλ ὁ ὄν ἀπέσταλκέν με πρὸς υμᾶς.”

29 Unless John was looking at another text of the Septuagint, the following quotations from the Old Testament do not correspond directly with the Septuagint: John 19:37 (Zech 12:10); John 15:25 (Psa 34:19, LXX); John 13:18 (Psa 40:10, LXX); John 12:40 (Isa 6:10, LXX). It is possible that John is translating freely from the Hebrew. John’s references to translation in John 1:38, 41, 42 and John 9:7 indicate that he was at least translating from Aramaic spoken words to the Greek in which he was writing. Richard Bauckham suggests this possibility when he says, “Like most New Testament writers, the Fourth Evangelist not only uses the Septuagint when referring to the Old Testament text; he also knows the Hebrew text. And when the point he is making requires it, he may allude directly to the latter. It is possible, therefore, that the absolute ‘I am’ sayings of John’s Gospel are based directly on the Hebrew of Exodus 3:14.” “Monotheism and Christology in the Gospel of John,” in Contours of Christology in the New Testament, ed. Richard N. Longenecker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 157-163. In spite of this admission, Bauckham suggests that the preferable OT background to the absolute “I AM” sayings is Isaiah 40-55.

30 Leon Morris describes the divide between scholars about Jesus’ statement: “Jesus’ ‘I am’ raises problems. It may be that we have nothing more than a simple affirmation. On the other hand, the use of the emphatic pronoun in this expression is the style of deity.” Leon Morris,
The second absolute “I AM” statement occurring in John’s Gospel (6:15-21) is found in other Gospels as well (Matt 14:23-34; Mark 6:46-53). Jesus had gone up a mountain to pray while his disciples went across the Sea of Galilee. Seeing his disciples straining in the wind, Jesus walks to them on the water. As he approaches the boat, the disciples cry out, thinking that they are seeing an apparition (Matt 14:27; Mark 6:49). Jesus immediately assures them, “It is I (ἐγώ εἰμι); do not be afraid” (John 6:20). At this word the disciples received him into the boat, and the boat immediately came to the land (John 6:21).

When this account is compared with the rescue of the Israelites from the Egyptians in the Red Sea during the Exodus, an Old Testament Angel of Yahweh text (Ex 14:19-24), several parallels may be seen. The timing of both events was in the early morning watch (morning watch, Exodus 14:24; fourth watch, Mark 6:48; Matt 14:25). Both involved a body of water that served as part of the peril (Red Sea, Sea of Galilee). Both accounts involve a rescue by a Divine person (Angel of God, Jesus). Such coincidences would seem insignificant, but in the light of at

The Gospel According to John (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 241. Of those who suggest that Jesus is using the words ἐγώ εἰμι in the style of deity, there is disagreement over whether the Old Testament background for the absolute “I am” statement is Isaiah or Exodus. David M. Ball, for instance, sees in Jesus’ statement a reference to Isaiah 52:12, where Yahweh says, “Therefore My people shall know My name; therefore in that day I am the one who is speaking, 'Here I am.'” He identifies the phrase I am the one who is speaking (ἐγὼ εἰμι αὐτὸς ὁ λαλῶν), as closely connected to what Jesus says in John 4:26: “I who speak to you am He” (ἐγώ εἰμι, ὁ λαλῶν σοι). He traces the “I am” statements of John to the Hebrew phrase ani hu, reasoning, “Through the use of ἐγὼ εἰμι of 4.26, Jesus’ identity as Messiah is therefore qualified by the phrase in which it is uttered. It is the whole phrase, and not only the words ἐγὼ εἰμι (ani hu), which points the reader to the Isaianic passage, which in turn defines what is meant by messiahship.” ‘I AM’ in John’s Gospel, 180. What is interesting, however, is that the context of Isaiah 52 speaks of a new Exodus of Israel from Babylon back to Jerusalem (52:4, 12). In at least one verse, in fact, a reference is made to nature of their departure, “But you will not go out in haste, nor will you go as fugitives; For the LORD will go before you, And the God of Israel will be your rear guard” (Isa 52:12). The reference to the LORD going before them and the God of Israel being the rear guard (cf. the tribe of Dan’s position as Israel journeyed in Num 10:25) refers to the activity of the Angel of God/Yahweh, who led the children out of Egypt and then turned to become their rear guard against the Egyptians (Ex 14:19-24). Of course, the same Angel of Yahweh had revealed himself to Moses as the “I AM” in Exodus 3:14. The very next verse prophesies of the Messiah himself, “My Servant will prosper, He will be high and lifted up and greatly exalted” (Isa 52:13).
least two other elements, it is apparent that something is happening on a deeper level here.

The first of these two elements arises from Mark’s statement that Jesus “intended to pass by” his disciples (Mark 6:48). Considering the circumstances, the thought that Jesus would simply continue walking right past his disciples is simply illogical. He had specifically left the mountain because he saw them straining at the oars, and he was walking on the water toward them to rescue them. A better understanding of the words recorded in Mark is that Jesus was revealing his glory to them. The words “pass by” describe the manner that God revealed himself to Moses and Elijah in theophany (cf. Exodus 33:22; 34:6; 1 Kings 19:11).\footnote{Juncker says, “What can it possibly mean that Jesus desired to pass by his disciples? The answer to this difficult question is found in the appearances of YHWH to Moses and Elijah in Exodus 33-34 and 1 Kings 19 where, in each case, YHWH’s theophany is described as a ‘passing by.’ No fewer than four times in Exod 33:18-34:8 does God say to Moses that He Himself (Exod 33:22; 34:6), his goodness (Exod 33:19), his glory (Ex 33:22), and his ‘back’ (cf. Exod 33:23) will pass by Moses.” Jesus and the Angel of the LORD, 351-52.}

The other element that highlights the significance of what is taking place is the absolute “I AM” statement recorded on this occasion. Jesus says to his disciples, “It is I, do not be afraid” ($\varepsilon\gamma\omega\ \varepsilon\iota\mu\nu\cdot \mu\heta\ \phi\omicron\omicron\varepsilon\iota\sigma\theta\epsilon$) (Matt 14:27; Mark 6:50; John 6:20). Like his revelation of himself to the woman at the well, the words he uses serve two purposes. First, he was revealing his identity as the one whom they knew as Jesus. In addition, he was revealing his true identity as the I AM.\footnote{The self-designation ‘I AM’ thus serves a dual purpose: to identify and to reveal. The divine self-identification is underscored by the command to “Fear not!” that immediately follows.} Their failure to believe fully that he was Yahweh is evident from their reaction once Jesus got into the boat and the wind stopped. The disciples were “utterly
astonished” (6:51). Mark explains their reaction in the light of their failure to believe the previous miracle: “For they had not gained any insight from the incident of the loaves, but their heart was hardened” (NAU, emphasis original). In other words, they had failed to recognize him for who he really is—Yahweh, who revealed his name “I AM” to Moses. Matthew concludes his narrative by recording that disciples did fully recognize Jesus as God. They worshipped him and said to him, “You are certainly God’s Son!” (Matt 14:33).

Jesus’ identification of himself as Yahweh by this miracle is further emphasized by the parallels between the Gospel accounts of this incident and the prophecy of Isaiah. Juncker lists the following from Isaiah 43:

1. “Do not fear, for I have redeemed you” (43:1)
2. “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you” (43:2)
3. “For I am the LORD your God” (43:3)
4. “Do not fear, for I am with you” (43:5)
5. “So that you may know and believe me and understand that I am He” (43:10)
6. “I, even I, am the Lord, and there is no savior besides me” (43:11)
7. “I am God, and also henceforth I am He; there is none who can deliver from my hand: I work and who can hinder it” (43:12-13, NAU).

While the parallels to Yahweh are clear enough, the parallel to the Angel of Yahweh is even clearer. Isaiah 43:1 in particular emphasizes Yahweh’s

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34 The teaching of Jesus in John 6 indicates that Jesus’ point in performing the miracle of the loaves and the fishes was to demonstrate his own identity as the Son of God who came out of heaven (John 6:35-38).

35 Juncker suggests that “Isaiah and Mark deliberately echo the same exodus deliverance narrative. The difference is that for Mark Jesus stands in the place of YHWH” (emphasis original). Jesus and the Angel of the LORD, 354.
presence with the children of Israel as they passed through the midst of the sea. In Exodus the Divine person who was immediately with the Israelites was the Angel of God in the cloud (Ex 14:19-24). The Exodus is also the backdrop for Isaiah 43:16-17 as well:

Thus says the LORD, who makes a way through the sea and a path through the mighty waters, who brings forth the chariot and the horse, The army and the mighty man (They will lie down together and not rise again; They have been quenched and extinguished like a wick).

These words also tie what Isaiah is saying to the Exodus account at the Red Sea, which is an Angel of Yahweh text. Thus it is the Exodus account that is the underlying subtext of Isaiah 43. Therefore, the “I AM” (יהוה) of Exodus 3:14 is also the “I AM HE” (איהוה) of Isaiah and the ἐγώ εἰμί in John’s Gospel.

Three more absolute “I AM” statements are found in John 8 (v.24, 28, 58) in a context where the identity of Jesus is again the central focus. It is hard to believe that John did not intentionally draw a parallel between the question of the woman at the well in chapter 4 and the question of the Jews here: “Surely you are not greater than our father Abraham, who died?” (John 8:53). However, the discussion about Jesus’ true identity had been the subject well before this question was asked.36

The context nearest to the first absolute “I AM” statement includes Jesus’ assertions that he was about to go away (v.21), that the Jews would die in their

36 Juncker is correct in saying that “John 8:31-59 is a unified whole within which Jesus unambiguously presents himself as a divine messenger.” However, the presentation of himself as a messenger from God begins earlier than verse 31. Verses 26-30 emphasize the same theme. On verses 8:31-59 Juncker explains, “He is divine because He is God’s Son. And he is God’s messenger because he repeatedly refers to his word (8:31, 37, 43, 51) and to speaking that which he has heard from his father in heaven (8:38, 40, 45-46; cf. 32, 47, 55). As God’s unique Son Jesus proceeds forth from God, comes from God, and was sent by God (8:42). Jesus is thus an agent, a messenger, whose function is to communicate a message. The word ‘angel’ is, of course, not used. But it is conceptually very close at hand.” Jesus and the Angel of the LORD, 398.
sins (v.21), that where he was going they could not come (v.21), that he had come
down from above (v.23), and that he was not of the world (v.23). His assertion
that the Jews would die in their sins was directly related to their failure to
recognize him for who he really was. He says, “Unless you believe that I am He,
you will die in your sins” (John 8:24). The first part of this statement is the
absolute “I AM” statement ἐγώ εἰμι, which is often translated, “I am He” (NAU,
KJV, ESV, NKJ). It is this statement that prompts a further question from the
Jews: “Who are you?” (John 8:25). This question is prompted by the very fact that
he had used no predicate when he said “ἐγώ εἰμι” (8:24). However, the
remainder of John 8 shows that his words were precisely intended to reveal his
identity. No predicate was needed, because he was asserting himself to be the
Angel of Yahweh, the “I AM” of Exodus 3:14.

Jesus’ immediate answer to their question of his identity is a question of
his own: “What have I been saying to you from the beginning?” (v.25). Then he
uses the same words he has used before with an additional reference to the Son
of man: “When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He (ἐγώ
εἰμι), and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the
Father taught Me” (v.28). Once again, Jesus is using these words ἐγώ εἰμι to
reveal his identity as the Angel of Yahweh.

Jesus further emphasizes his relationship to the Father by saying that he
always does what pleases him (v.29), at which point John observes the effect of
his words: “As He spoke these things, many came to believe in Him” (John 8:30).
John contrasts whose who believed that Jesus was the Messenger of the Father
(8:30) with those who did not believe (8:58). Between these two points Jesus
amplifies his identity as the Messenger of the Father within the framework of the appearances of the Angel of Yahweh to Abraham in Genesis.  

This framework of the Genesis account is evident not only by the number of times that Abraham is mentioned but also by specific references to Abraham’s relationship to Yahweh. Jesus points out two facts about Abraham that particularly contrast with the Jews’ response to him. The first is the fact that their deeds do not correspond with Abraham’s deeds (v.37-40). Specifically, they are trying to kill him (v.40), which he says Abraham did not do (v.40), implying that Abraham had met him and had, in fact, responded by honoring him and welcoming him with “exemplary hospitality” (cf. Gen 18:1ff.).

The second major contrast that Jesus points out between the Jews and Abraham is that “Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad” (John 8:56, NAU). This statement has been variously interpreted, but the response of the Jews shows what it implies—namely, that Abraham and Jesus

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37 Juncker points out the connections to Abraham: “John 8:31-59 is also a unified whole that is inextricably bound up with Abraham, a Pentateuchal figure, rather than with Isaiah and prophetic themes and language. Abraham is explicitly mentioned eleven times in these verses, elsewhere in the Fourth Gospel not at all. Nowhere else in the NT is there such a density of references to Abraham or any other (human) OT figure. This in itself is a significant clue to Jesus’ identity and, above all, to ‘the immensely impressive claim’ with which he climaxes and concludes his lengthy dialogue with the Jews. Note in light of these many references to Abraham the many echoes of Genesis 16-21 (an OT Angel of the LORD context) in the present passage. For example, there are echoes of Hagar, Ishmael, and Isaac in the contrast between the free sons of Abraham who remain in the house and slaves who, though sons of Abraham (John 8:37, 56), do not remain in the house.” Ibid., 399.

38 Juncker observes rightly that “Jesus is simultaneously making an important factual claim about himself—he was a contemporary of Abraham. He was the LORD who appeared to Abraham in Genesis 18.” Juncker also notes, “Interestingly, it is in Genesis 18 that the LORD himself appears to Abraham and is referred to as ‘a man’ (Gen 18:2). And it is here in John 8:40 that Jesus refers to himself as ‘a man.’ Such an unusual self-designation in the context of a discussion about Abraham is not likely to be coincidental.” Ibid., 400-401, Of course, the word man in Genesis 18:2 does not indicate essential humanity.
had encountered one another in the past. The particular point on which the Jews questioned Jesus next was whether he in fact had seen Abraham. “You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?” (John 8:57, NAU). Christ’s answer is a striking affirmation to their question. He had not only seen Abraham, but he was also the one who had seen and spoken to Moses. In John 8:58, Jesus says, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am (ἐγώ εἰμί).” Jesus words here clearly indicate that he is the “I AM” (ἐγώ εἰμί) who revealed himself to Moses and sent him to deliver the children of Israel out of Egypt. There could hardly be a clearer statement of the identity between Jesus Christ and the Angel of Yahweh! If we keep in mind that Jesus has already used these words twice, it is easy to see why the Jews now pick up stones to stone him (8:59). He has unequivocally identified himself as the preexistent “I AM” of the Old Testament.

The Jewish response to Jesus’ words in John 8:58 alone suggest that Jesus is communicating more than one thing with the words ἐγώ εἰμί. In each of the contexts thus far, ἐγώ εἰμί serves two purposes. In John 4:26, the phrase ἐγώ εἰμί reveals that he is the Messiah that the woman speaks of, but it also identifies him as the Angel of Yahweh, who revealed himself to Moses (Ex 3:14). In John 6:20, the phrase ἐγώ εἰμί reveals that he is Jesus to his disciples, but he is also revealing himself as the Angel of God who led the children of Israel through the Red Sea (Ex 14:19ff.). In John 8:58 the phrase ἐγώ εἰμί reveals that Jesus had indeed met

39 A. T. Hanson argues that Christ’s statement is “no doubt intentionally ambiguous.” Hanson argues that this statement of Jesus not only reveals Jesus as present with Abraham in Genesis 18-19, but it also may refer to the other theophanic passages where Yahweh revealed himself to Abraham. After examining several theophanic contexts in connection with Jesus’ statement, Hanson writes, “The language [of John 8:56] is intentionally ambiguous, but we must understand that Abraham saw Christ, and was justified, like all Christians, through faith in Christ.” Anthony Tyrrell Hanson, Jesus Christ in the Old Testament (London: SPCK, 1965), 125.
Abraham, but he also reveals that he as the divine Angel of Yahweh appeared to Abraham.

In examining the remaining instances of the absolute “I AM” sayings, it becomes much more difficult to suppose that the words ἐγώ εἰμι when used by Christ do not have the same force as these earlier ones, especially in light of the timing and reaction evoked from them. When the arresting company of Jews and Romans soldiers arrived in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus asked them, “Who are you seeking?” (John 18:4). Their response of “Jesus the Nazarene” (v.5) makes it evident that because of darkness or another reason they do not recognize him. Jesus’ simple response at this point, “I am,” (ἐγώ εἰμι) produces a remarkable result—the whole company who has come to arrest him draws back and falls down (John 18:5). Furthermore, John specifically points out that Jesus’ words were the cause that produced the effect. As Jesus repeats his initial question “Whom are you seeking?” and the company repeats their answer, Jesus again affirms, “I told you that I am He” (John 18:8).

What is more, the repetition of these words ἐγώ εἰμι must have registered with the disciples in part because of the presence of Judas with the soldiers. Jesus had told them in the upper room that he was about to be betrayed by one of them, and he said, “From now on I am telling you before it comes to pass, so that when it does occur, you may believe that I am He [ἐγώ εἰμι]” (John 13:19). For the disciples, the words ἐγώ εἰμι must have echoed in their minds not only that night but for years to come. They certainly did for John, who is writing of these words years after they were spoken by Jesus in his account.

40 Leon Morris says that Jesus’ answer is “the style of deity” and that the “threefold repetition [of John] is significant.” Leon Morris, The Gospel According to John, 658.
It also does not seem insignificant that between the upper room and the crucifixion Jesus used the words εγώ είμι on five different occasions, three of which produced a climactic effect (John 13:19; 18:5, 8; Mark 14:62; Luke 22:70). As Jesus was arrested and taken to the residence of the High Priest, he was asked the question, “Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?” Jesus, keeping silent at other questions (14:61), answered this question with “I am [εγώ είμι], and you shall see THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, and COMING WITH THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN” (Mark 14:62, emphasis original). Immediately the high priest rent his garments in response to what he perceived to be blasphemy. The following morning he was taken to the entire Sanhedrin and asked among other things, “Are You the Son of God, then?” (Luke 22:70). Jesus answer once again includes the phrase, “You say that I am [εγώ είμι]” (Luke 22:70b). These were the words that clinched his conviction of blasphemy before the council. In addition to owning the claims that Jesus had made by answering the questions of the Jewish leaders, moreover, Jesus’ use of εγώ είμι surely reminded those who had heard his claim recorded in John 8:58.41

The Angel of Yahweh in the Book of Acts

The Ascension of Christ and the speech of Stephen to the Sanhedrin in the book of Acts particularly recall the ministry of the Angel of Yahweh in the Old Testament. The Ascension as an event bears a similarity to the Old Testament

41 Jesus may have also alluded to his identity as the “I AM” in Luke 24:39. As he reveals himself to the disciples after the resurrection, he says to them, “See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself [ἐγώ είμι αὐτός]; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have” (NAU). Jesus’ words on this occasion, however, unlike the Absolute “I AM” sayings of John, add the predicate nominative αὐτός, as he says not simply “ἐγώ είμι” but “ἐγώ είμι αὐτός.” These exact same words are found in Isaiah 52:6 in the LXX: “ἐγώ είμι αὐτός ὁ λαλῶν πάρεμι.” The entire verse states, “Therefore My people shall know My name; therefore in that day I am [Lit., “I am He,” ἐγώ ἐστι] the one who is speaking, ‘Here I am’” (NAU). In the context of Isaiah 52, Yahweh himself is speaking.
ascent of the Angel of Yahweh into heaven and it also reminds of Yahweh’s ascent in the Shekinah cloud after meeting with Moses. The speech of Stephen, focusing as it does on the patriarchal period and the call of Moses in the Exodus, recalls numerous texts of Scripture in which the Angel of Yahweh appears.

The Ascension of Jesus Christ

Following the forty days of Jesus’ post-resurrection appearances to his disciples, Jesus ascended into heaven from the Mount of Olives. Luke writes that the disciples looked on while “a cloud received Him out of their sight” (Acts 1:9). The angelic messengers appearing in white garments then explained to the disciples that Jesus would return in the same manner that they saw him go into heaven (v.11). In other words, when he returns, the disciples will see him descending in a cloud (cf. Luke 21:27).

Although the record of the ascension of Jesus is very brief (Acts 1:9-11; cf. Luke 24:50-52), it is theologically significant to the present study for several reasons. First, the ascent of Jesus into heaven is described as an ascent into a cloud. The mention of the cloud obviously parallels the cloud at his baptism as well as the cloud in the transfiguration, but it also parallels the presence of the Angel of God (Angel of Yahweh) in the Shekinah cloud during the Exodus (14:19-24). Furthermore, Jesus’ ascent into the cloud parallels Yahweh’s ascent in a cloud after speaking with Moses (cf. Ex 33:7-34). One difference, of course, is


43 Moses describes the vertical ascent of the cloud from the tabernacle in terms of being “taken up” (Ex 40:34-35) or “lifted up” (Num 9:25-33). Whenever it was “taken up,” the children
that the cloud at the ascension disappeared from sight. The Shekinah cloud continued with the children of Israel as they journeyed through the wilderness (cf. Exodus 40:34-40).

A second observation that may be made from the ascension of Jesus into the cloud is that Jesus is visible before he ascends into the cloud. At the Transfiguration Jesus and his disciples entered the cloud, and the disciples saw his glory. At the Ascension Jesus ascends into the cloud again, but this time the cloud does not come down and surround him. The Glory of God has been revealed, and no cloud hides him as he ascends before his disciples. By ascending in this fashion, Jesus gives his disciples a view of the glory of God (see 2 Cor 4:6), and he also fully reveals himself as the Angel of Yahweh. No cloud hides him from view, as it did in the Old Testament. Jesus is fully revealed as the personal Glory of God (cf. Luke 2:32; John 12:41; 17:5; Acts 7:55; 2 Cor 4:6; Titus 2:13; Heb 1:2).

The departure of Jesus and the return of Jesus described by the angels also connects his identity as the Angel of Yahweh (Acts 1:11). The angelic testimony that he will return the same way that he left indicates that he will return in a cloud, just as Christ himself had predicted (Matt 25:31; cf. Matt 16:27; 24:30; 25:31; Mark 8:38; 13:26). However, the manner of Jesus’ ascent into heaven and the testimony of the angels regarding the return directly parallel the theophanies to Moses in particular, when the Shekinah cloud descended and ascended as Yahweh came down to meet with him (e.g., Ex 33:7-11).

of Israel would depart and follow it. The lateral movement of the cloud from one location to another is evident from Ezekiel 1:4ff. and 10:1ff.

The Angel in Acts 7

Stephen’s defense before the Sanhedrin includes several direct references to the Angel of Yahweh. Stephen is responding to the charges that he has spoken against Moses, the Mosaic Law, the temple, and God. He opens with the assertion that the God of glory appeared to Abraham and told him to leave Mesopotamia, which is likely his first mention of the Angel of Yahweh (Acts 7:2-3). However, it is not until later in his defense that he explicitly identifies the Angel. First he describes the appearance of the Angel of Yahweh to Moses at the burning bush (Acts 7:30-35), and then he highlights subsequent encounters between the Angel and Moses on Mount Sinai and in the wilderness (Acts 7:35-38).

Stephen’s description of the burning bush corresponds nearly exactly to the Exodus account, detailing the location as Mount Sinai and the appearance of the angel in the flame of fire in the bush (v.30). He also mentions Moses’ amazement at the sight and his approach toward the bush, as well as the voice of the Lord that spoke to Moses (Acts 7:30-31). Stephen also says that God spoke to Moses, which brought about Moses’ fear and his turning away his eyes (v.32), and that the Lord commanded Moses to take off his sandals because of the holy ground (v.33). Stephen also conflates the words of the Angel of Yahweh in Exodus 3:7 and 10 (Acts 7:34).

45 The phrase is literally “the God of the glory” (Ὁ θεὸς τῆς δόξης). Rackham says that the word translated “appeared” indicates that “this was a visible appearance. Probably he would have said in the person of his Angel.” Richard B. Rackham, The Acts of the Apostles (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1964), 103. Genesis 12 does not explicitly record the nature of that appearance but only the command of Yahweh to Abraham to leave and go to a land that he will show him (Gen 12:1-3). The only difference from other appearances of the Angel of Yahweh is that there is no description of Yahweh in human form (e.g., Gen 18:1ff.).

46 The mention of the Angel of Yahweh with only the word ἀγγέλος can be explained by the fact that the Jews did not use the Divine name Yahweh during New Testament times.
In addition to this one incident, Stephen describes the nature of the Angel’s extensive involvement in the Exodus (v.35). Stephen says, “This Moses whom they disowned . . . is the one whom God sent as both ruler and redeemer with the help of the angel [lit., “with the hand,” σῶν χειρί ἀγγέλου] who appeared to him in the thorn bush” (NAU). Stephen’s words here indicate two things. First, it was God himself who sent Moses to deliver the Israelites from the Egyptian bondage. Second, God did so “with the hand” of the Angel of Yahweh. In addition to his detailed description of the burning bush, Stephen’s statement draws directly on Exodus 3, where the Angel of Yahweh promises the involvement of his “hand” in the deliverance from Egypt: “So I will stretch out My hand and strike Egypt with all My miracles which I shall do in the midst of it; and after that he will let you go” (Ex 3:20; cf. 3:12, 21; 4:1ff.).

A further description of the Angel’s involvement in the Exodus is found in verse 38, where Stephen says that Moses was in the assembly in the wilderness together with the Angel who was speaking to him in Mount Sinai. The focal point of verse 38 is that Moses was the mediator between the Angel and the fathers of Israel. This mediation between the people and the Angel, according to Stephen, was both in the wilderness as well as on Mount Sinai.⁴⁷ Thus, the Angel of Yahweh was directly involved in the revelation of the Law at Sinai and the divine Mediator during the wilderness wanderings.

⁴⁷ The presence of the Angel on Mount Sinai is not explicitly stated in Exodus, nor is the presence of the Angel in the wilderness. It is certainly implied from Exodus 23:20-23, but the designation Angel of Yahweh gives way to the Divine Name. Nevertheless, as on other occasions, the Angel of Yahweh does not have to be mentioned as such to be present (Gen 28:11ff., 31:11-13). Since it is the Angel who spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai, the phrase “he who spoke to Moses” (ὁ λαλῶν τῷ Μωυσί) could also be taken to imply that the instructions for the tabernacle were also given by the Angel (7:44).
Stephen’s speech is a remarkable in many ways, but particularly as he draws attention to the Angel of Yahweh. Joseph Rybinski suggests that Stephen mentions the Angel of Yahweh’s appearance to Moses at Sinai in order to seize his opportunity to identify the Angel of Yahweh as Yahweh. He writes,

Der hl. Stephanus würde sicher die Gelegenheit nicht unbenutzt haben vorbegehen lassen, wenn er Christus mit dem auf Sinai erscheinenden Engel hätte indentifizieren und so einen starken Anknüpfungspunkt mit dem A.T. aufstellen können.\(^{48}\)

Indeed, it is remarkable that Stephen slows down and deliberately describes the encounter between Moses and the Angel of Yahweh at the burning bush in four verses (v.30-34). The detail he includes about this particular incident indicates the importance of this appearance of the Angel of Yahweh to Moses at the burning bush to his defense. By identifying the Angel as the Lord (i.e., Yahweh), Stephen is demonstrating the fact that the Angel is indeed God. At the same time, Stephen points out the distinction between the Angel and God in verse 35, when he says that God sent Moses with the hand the Angel of Yahweh to help him (Acts 7:35). Rybinski also says,

Daß der hl. Stephanus den Engel von Jahwe unterscheidet, ersieht man aus V.35: „Diesen Moses . . . sandte Gott als Oberhaupt und Erreter durch die Hand des Engels, der ihm im Dornbusche als erschienen war."\(^{49}\)

Thus Stephen’s statement is a bold assertion of the Triune nature of God before the Sanhedrin.\(^{50}\)

\(^{48}\) Der Mal’akh Jahwe (Paderborn, Germany: Ferdinand Shöningh, 1930), 69. English translation: “Saint Stephen was certainly not going to lose an opportunity unnecessarily; if he could identify that Christ appeared to them at Sinai as the Angel, he could thus establish a powerful link to the Old Testament.”

\(^{49}\) Ibid., 69. English translation: ‘That Saint Stephen distinguished the Angel from Yahweh one may see from verse 35: This Moses . . . God sent to be a leader and rescuer by the hand of the Angel who had appeared to him in the thorn bush’.
In addition to this bold claim, Stephen makes explicit what might have been inferred before—namely, that the Angel of Yahweh also participated in the giving of the Law (living oracles) at Sinai and was present in the wilderness. The presence of the Angel of Yahweh in the wilderness is indicated by Isaiah’s designation “Angel of his presence,” but it is also implied by Exodus 23:20-23. However, Stephen emphasizes as well that Moses was the mediator between the Angel and the fathers (v. 38). Thus as Moses received revelation at the tent of meeting in the wilderness (e.g., Ex 33:7-11; Lev 1:1ff.), he was mediating between the Angel of Yahweh and the people.

**The Angel of Yahweh in the Epistles**

Stephen’s mention of the Angel of Yahweh’s presence in the wilderness and the Gospels’ identification of Christ as the Angel of Yahweh correspond well with what the New Testament epistles reveal about Jesus. Certain titles within the epistles that correspond conceptually to Christ as the Angel of Yahweh include “the Image of God” (2 Cor 4:4) and “the Image of the Invisible God” (Col 1:15), “the exact representation of His nature,” and the “brightness of His [God’s] glory” (Heb 1:3). These titles suggest among other things that Christ is the visible

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50 Stephen’s mention of the Holy Spirit in verse 51 completes his Trinitarian view.

51 Because Stephen explicitly indicates that the Angel of Yahweh was with Moses on Mount Sinai, there is justification for considering the parallels between the descent of Yahweh upon Sinai and the description of the Christ’s descent from heaven at his coming (1 Thess 4:16-17). As Yahweh descended in the cloud upon Mount Sinai, so those who join Christ and those who come with him in the air will meet him in the clouds (1 Thess 4:16-17; cf. Ex 19:18). The trumpet of Exodus (i.e., ram’s horn, Ex 19:13, 16, 19) that signals God’s coming to the people also parallels the trumpet that sounds at the coming of Christ (1 Thess 4:16-17; cf. 1 Cor 15:52). A final parallel has to do with the presence of his holy ones (saints) with him (1 Thess 4:16-17). The holy ones at Sinai were not people but his holy angels (Deut 33:2-3; cf. Jude 1:14; Psa 89:5-7; Zech 14:7), a fact to which Stephen and Paul both testify (Acts 7:53; Gal 3:19). Likewise Christ comes with his holy ones with him in the clouds (1 Thess 4:16-17). The description of Sinai and the one whose voice shook the earth in Hebrews is likewise relevant to this discussion (Heb 12:18-29).
representation of God.\textsuperscript{52} In addition to these titles that correspond conceptually to the Angel of Yahweh in the Old Testament, Paul indicates that Christ was personally present during the Exodus. Jude likewise states that “Jesus” led the Israelites out of Egypt (Jude 1:5).

Christ in 1 Corinthians 10:1-10

The Old Testament background of 1 Corinthians 10:1-11 is the Exodus, particularly as the Israelites pass through the Red Sea (v.1-2) and journey through the wilderness (v.3-11). Paul says that all the people were “baptized into Moses and in the cloud and in the sea” (10:2, NAU). The cloud Paul mentions is the Shekinah cloud, which was present with them as they left Egypt and throughout their journeys (Ex 13:20-21; 14:19-24; 40:36-38). Paul also says that all of the Israelites partook of the “spiritual food” and the “spiritual drink” provided by the Rock who “accompanied” them.\textsuperscript{53} Paul then identifies the Rock as the source of the water in particular, and he identifies the Rock as Christ himself.

Paul exhorts the Corinthians not to “test Christ,” as some of the Israelites did and were destroyed by serpents. A textual variant in this verse makes the word \textit{Lord} and therefore the sense “Yahweh” a possibility, but it is likely that the


\textsuperscript{53} The verb \textit{avkolou\theta\epsilon\omega} does not demand the concept of one person following behind another. Acts 13:43 indicates that the Gentiles “followed” Paul and Barnabas after their message at the synagogue and had a conversation with them. The word means to accompany someone. Of course the cloud had followed them when the Egyptians attacked from behind, but the normal position of the cloud was ahead of them (Ex 13:20-21).
reading “Christ” is original.44 On that occasion the people spoke out against “God” and “Moses” (Num 21:5), and then Yahweh sent the serpents in judgment (Num 21:6). When Moses interceded for the people, Yahweh provided the bronze serpent as a means of deliverance (Num 21:8-9).

The most significant feature of this passage is that Paul boldly asserts Christ’s presence in the wilderness.55 His identification of Christ as the one who provided food and water as well as judging and delivering the people in the Exodus accords well with Stephen’s statement that Moses was with the Angel and the fathers in the wilderness (Acts 7:38).56 In addition Paul’s use of Old Testament passages points to specific instances when Moses acted as mediator between Yahweh (i.e., Angel of Yahweh) and the people.57

44 Bruce M. Metzger writes, “The reading that best explains the origin of the others is Χριστός, attested by the oldest Greek manuscript (46) as well as by a wide diversity of early patristic and versions witnesses (Irenaeus in Gaul, Ephraem in Edessa, Clement in Alexandria, Origen in Palestine, as well as by the Old Latin, the Vulgate, Syriac, Sahidic and Bohairic). The difficulty of explaining how the ancient Israelites in the wilderness could have tempted Christ prompted some copyists to substitute either the ambiguous κύριον or the unobjectionable θεόν. Paul’s reference to Christ here is analogous to that in ver. 4.” A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament, 2nd Edition (NY: United Bible Society, 1994), 494.

55 The fact that Paul never uses the designation Angel of Yahweh or even simply “Angel” but “Christ” instead is perhaps due to the fact that he is speaking to Gentiles.

56 Paul’s mention of the “destroyer” (ὁ λοθρευτής) in 1 Corinthians 10:10 is possibly another reference to the Angel of Yahweh. He says that the people who grumbled were destroyed (ἀπόλοντο) by the “destroyer.” Although the word λοθρευτής is a hapax legomenon in the Greek New Testament and does not occur at all in the Septuagint, it is closely related to the word in Hebrews (11:28) describing the one who destroyed the firstborn (ὁ ὀλοθρευτής). The LXX translators did not use either term, but they did use the closely related word ἔξολοθρεύω (to utterly destroy, root out), which occurs in various contexts suggestive of the presence of the Angel of Yahweh (e.g., Deut 6:15; 9:3, LXX). In 1 Chronicles 21:12 in the LXX the word is used to describe the activity of the Angel of Yahweh as he went “destroying” through Israel after David numbered the people. The only New Testament usage of this word ἔξολοθρεύω is found in Acts 3:23, where Peter uses it to describe what will happen to those who fail to heed the words of the Prophet like Moses (cf. Deut 18:15-18). See also Meredith Kline, “The Feast of Cover-Over,” JETS, 37:4, (December, 1994), 497-510.

57 For instance, on three separate occasions when the people needed water, they cried out to Moses, and then Moses cried to God, who informed Moses of the means of obtaining the water
The Angel of God in Galatians 4:14

The brief mention of Paul’s reception by the Galatians as the “angel of God, as Jesus Christ” (技术创新性) has caused some to wonder whether Paul is making a direct identification of Jesus as the Angel of God (i.e., the Angel of Yahweh).\(^{58}\) The exact syntax that Paul uses, the anarthrous ἄγγελον and the genitive θεοῦ, is unique in the Greek New Testament and the Septuagint, although it is paralleled by the phrase ἄγγελος κυρίου in the Old and New Testament.\(^{59}\)

It is possible to translate the phrase “the Angel of God,” according to Daniel Wallace, who says that a noun may be definite in spite of the fact that it is anarthrous.\(^{60}\) He also lists ἄγγελον θεοῦ as one of several “ambiguous examples” of this type of construction and discusses the possibility that it could be definite.\(^{61}\) If this is the case in Galatians 4:14, the phrase which is frequently translated “as an angel of God” (NAU, ESV, KJV) could be translated “as the

(Ex 17:1-7; Num 20:1-13; Num 21:16-18). In Exodus 17, when the people were asking Moses for water, Yahweh told him to go ahead of the people and take some of the elders to “the rock” at Horeb. He then told Moses that he would stand before them while Moses struck the rock. This is probably to be understood as an appearance of the Angel of Yahweh. The purpose of the Angel’s appearance would be to demonstrate to the elders that Yahweh himself was providing the water.


\(^{59}\) The problem with making the grammatical rule as the sole identifier of the Angel is that the phrase angel of the Lord also occurs in the New Testament, and in some cases it clearly does not refer to Christ. A notable example is Luke 1:11-20, where “the angel of the Lord” (ἄγγελος κυρίου) turns out to be the angel Gabriel (cf. Luke 1:26).

\(^{60}\) Wallace says that “it makes little semantic difference whether the construction is articular or anarthrous. Thus δὲ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ = λόγος θεοῦ.” Daniel B. Wallace, Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 250-52.

\(^{61}\) Wallace also lists “other theologically significant texts” such as Mark 15:39, 1 Corinthians 15:10, 1 Thessalonians 4:15-16, and 1 Thessalonians 5:2, the last of which is ἡμέρα κυρίου (the day of the Lord). Ibid., 250-52.
Angel of God,” thereby making the phrase appositional with the latter phrase “as Jesus Christ.” Nothing militates against such an interpretation, and the parallelism of the double \( \omega \zeta \) conjunction may also suggest it.\(^{62}\)

Christ in 1 Peter 3:20

Peter’s mention of Jesus’ preaching “in the spirit” to the spirits who are now in prison is an interesting passage in light of the present subject.\(^{63}\) Peter says,

For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison, who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water.

If the “spirits” in this passage are to be identified as the men who lived during Noah’s time, it would be natural to see the Angel of Yahweh (i.e., Christ preincarnate) as the one who went to preach to them. Those “spirits,” of course, were joined with their bodies then, but Peter speaks of them as “spirits in prison” because as he speaks their bodies are not yet resurrected.

This passage suggests various interpretations, including that Christ preached through Noah by his Spirit (the Holy Spirit) and that Christ preached to the spirits of Noah’s day after the cross by entering hell before the resurrection. However, it is also possible that the Angel of Yahweh preached to

\(^{62}\) Certainty on this point is difficult, because the parallelism Paul is using could be climactic instead of synonymous. In other words, the mention of receiving Paul as an angel of God is very commendable, but receiving him as they would receive Jesus himself is even better (cf. Matt 10:40).

\(^{63}\) See D. Edmond Heibert’s thorough exegetical study of this verse and its entire context. *BibSac* 139 (1982), 146-157.
the men living in Noah’s day. Before the time of Abraham, Yahweh walked in
the garden with Adam and Eve (Gen 3:8ff.), had a conversation with Cain (Gen
4:9ff.), spoke with Noah and his sons (Gen 6-9:17) and descended to inspect the
tower of Babel (Gen 11:4-5). That he would be preaching the gospel to lost men
during that time, moreover, is no different from his appearing to Abram when he
was an idolater in Ur (Gen 12:1-3; cf. Josh 24:2-3) to call him out of Ur based upon
the promises of the gospel (cf. Gen 12:1-3; Acts 7:2; Gal 3:8). There is no reason to
suppose that Christ, therefore, who was personally present and active in other
periods of Old Testament history, was not personally seeking to bring the people
of the antediluvian period to repentance (Gen 1-7). 64

Jesus in Jude 1:4-5

A striking statement about the relationship of Jesus to the Old Testament
comes from Jesus’ half brother Jude, who says that Jesus personally led the
Exodus. Jude 1:5 says,

Now I desire to remind you, though you know all things once for all, that
the Lord [or Jesus], after saving a people out of the land of Egypt,
subsequently destroyed those who did not believe.

According to Bruce Metzger, the “best attested reading” in verse 5 is not κύριος
but Ἰησοῦς. 65 If this is the proper reading, Jude is thus identifying Jesus as the one
who brought Israel out of Egypt and judged those in the wilderness who

64 D. G. Wohlenberg suggests that Christ in his preexistent state was preaching to the
men who rejected Noah’s preaching. Der erste und zweite Petrusbrief und der Judasbrief (Leipzig:
Deichert, 1923), 114-115.

65 Even if the reading κύριος is correct, Jude has just identified Jesus as “Lord” (κύριος)
in the verse 4.
sinned. In Exodus the Angel of Yahweh was the one who saved the people out of Egypt, and after Paul’s instruction in 1 Corinthians 10 it is not surprising that he is also responsible for the judgments upon the people in the wilderness. Along with Stephen’s testimony of the Angel in the wilderness and Paul’s testimony of Christ in the wilderness (1 Cor 10), Jude’s statement agrees with other evidence within the New Testament. Jesus is the Angel of Yahweh who delivered Israel and judged those who did not believe.

The Angel of Yahweh in Revelation

The Book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ contains many references to angels, and while the majority of them refer to created finite angels, some of them do not. In addition to the likelihood that the “angels of the seven churches” are human messengers to the churches, it is possible that the angel with the golden censer who offers the prayers of the saints (8:3-5; cf. Ezek 10:2; Luke 12:49; Gen 19:24) and the strong angel who descends from heaven clothed with a cloud are to be identified as Jesus Christ (Revelation 10:1ff.).

66 Bruce Metzger writes of this variant, “Critical principles seem to require the adoption of Ἰησοῦς, which admittedly is the best attested reading among Greek and versional witnesses (see above). Struck by the strange and unparalleled mention of Jesus in a statement about the redemption out of Egypt (yet compare Paul’s reference to χριστός in 1 Cor 10.4), copyists would have substituted (ὁ) κύριος or ὁ θεός.” A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament, 657.

67 See Jarl Fossum, “Kyrios Jesus as the Angel of the Lord in Jude 5-7,” NTS, 33 (Jan 1987), 226-43.

68 Stewart Custer says, “Angel (ἀγέλος) occurs sixty-seven times in the Greek text of Rev. God granted the revelation to Jesus Christ, who sent His angel to John to impart it to believers. It is possible that seven of those times refer to the human messengers of the churches. It is also possible that two of those contexts may refer to Christ manifesting Himself in angelic power (8:3-5; 10:1-5).” Stewart Custer, From Patmos to Paradise (Greenville, SC: BJ Press, 2004), 2. See also Joseph Seiss, Apocalypse: An Exposition of the Book of Revelation (New York: C.C. Cook, 1900; reprint, Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1987), 180-89, 223-254.
The “Strong Angel” of Revelation 10

One passage in Revelation bearing a resemblance to the Old Testament Angel of Yahweh texts is Revelation 10. John’s description of the seventh ἄγγελος, who is described first as “another strong ἄγγελος,” parallels descriptions of Christ and the Angel of Yahweh in numerous ways.69 The uniqueness of this ἄγγελος is indicated in part by the detailed description given to his person. None of the other six angels are described as 1) descending from heaven, 2) being clothed with a cloud, 3) having a rainbow on his head, 4) having a face that shines like the sun, and 5) having a voice like a lion’s roar (10:1).

The parallels to Christ and the Old Testament theophanic texts are striking. His descent from heaven is paralleled in the OT by the descent of Yahweh (e.g., Gen 11:5; Ex 3:8, Ex 19:11, 18; 33:9; 34:5). The ἄγγελος is also clothed with a cloud, which is reminiscent of the union of the Angel of God with the theophanic cloud in the Old Testament (Ex 14:19) as well as the cloud that

69 The immediate difficulty to a direct identification of this angel and the Angel of Yahweh/Christ is that the angel is called “another strong angel” (ἀλλόν ἄγγελον ἱσχυρὸν) (10:1; cf 5:2, 18:21) because these words seem to place the ἄγγελος on the same plane with the angels who preceded him as well as other “strong angels” in Revelation (5:2; 18:21). Henry Alford objects to identifying the “strong angel” in Revelation 10 as Christ because of the previous use of the phrase “strong angel” in Revelation 5:2. He says that supposing the angel is Christ would “break through the consistency of the apocalyptic analogy.” Then he emphasizes, “When St. John means to indicate the Son of God, he indicates Him plainly: none more so: when these plain indications are absent, and I find the name ἄγγελος used, I must take leave to regard the agent as distinct from Him.” GT, 649. The problem with such a hermeneutic is that in Revelation 10 the plain indications of the Son of God are present, but so is the word ἄγγελος. Alford unfortunately misunderstands the word ἄγγελος as denoting ontology. It can hardly be overemphasized that Christ himself is indeed an ἄγγελος, though he is by no means a created ἄγγελος. He is most definitely the ἄγγελος of the covenant who followed John (Mal 3:1; Matt 11:10), he is also the ἄγγελος of the Father (cf. John 8). It is apparent from the usage of the word ἄγγελος in the New Testament that understanding it only in terms of created angels is incorrect (e.g., Matt 11:10), just as understanding the term προφήτης in the Old Testament only in terms of created angels is incorrect.

70 Brian Hand says that the “confluence of these descriptive phrases indicates that the term angel in this context applies to His status as one who gives a message rather than as an ontological description of His person.” “A Christology of Revelation Based Upon Elements of Its Literary Composition” (Ph.D. diss., Bob Jones University, 2003), 150-51.
surrounded Christ at the Transfiguration and that Christ entered in his Ascension (Luke 9:34; Acts 1:9). The αγγελος has “the rainbow” (η ἱερα) around the head of the angel (Rev 10:1), a statement that recalls the rainbow surrounding the throne of God (4:3). The rainbow also recalls Ezekiel’s vision of the “Glory of Yahweh,” where he sees a humanlike figure sitting upon a throne (Ezek 1:1-28).71

The αγγελος also has a face like the sun, which is reminiscent of the face of the Son of God in the opening of Revelation (1:16), the face of Christ in Matthew’s ascension account (Matt 17:2), and Jesus’ revelation of himself to Paul (Acts 9:3; cf. 26:13). The αγγελος also has feet like pillars of fire, paralleling the description of Christ’s feet in Revelation 1:15 as well as the pillar of fire in the wilderness (e.g., Ex 14:24), and the figure in Ezekiel 1 and 40 who is described as having “an appearance of His loins and downward an appearance of something like fire” (1:27, NAU; cf. Ezek 8:2). Lastly, the voice of the angel like a lion’s roar (Rev 10:1) also reminds of the Lion of the Tribe of Judah and the voice of Yahweh in the Old Testament (Rev 5:5; cf. Rev 1:15; Jer 25:30; Hos 11:10; Amos 3:8).72

Further distinction is given to this αγγελος as he descends from heaven to stand on the earth with one foot on the land and the other on the sea.73

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71 Ezekiel’s vision includes a cloud (1:4), a humanlike figure on a throne (1:26), an appearance of fire “from the appearance of his loins and downward” (1:27), and a radiance all around him like a rainbow (1:28). Ezekiel identifies the one that he is seeing as the Glory of Yahweh.

72 Stewart Custer says that the noise of thunders following the voice of the Angel is probably an allusion to the voice of the Lord in the seven thunders of Psalm 29:3-9. From Patmos to Paradise, 115. John later writes that as the angel speaks, his voice is like the sound of a trumpet (Rev 10:7; cf. 1:10; 4:1). An analysis of the seventh angel reveals a close connection between his voice and the trumpet (cf. 8:6; 10:3, 7; 11:15). It is at the strong angel’s voice that the seven thunders respond (10:4).

73 Jesus is the only other person in the Scriptures who stands upon the sea by his own power (Matt 14:26; cf. Dan 12:7).
\[\text{\textit{a;ggeloj}}\] stands with his right hand toward heaven he swears\(^{74}\) by the one who created the heaven, the earth, the sea, and everything in them (Rev 10:6), and he says that there will be no more delay (Rev 10:6).\(^{75}\) As John is commanded by a voice from heaven to go the Angel who is standing on the sea and on the land, he is also instructed to take a scroll from the hand of the angel and eat it (cf. Ezek 3:1-3, 14). As he does this, John is told that he must prophesy to peoples, nations, tongues, and kings (Rev 10:11). Then John is given a reed, and he is told by the angel to rise and measure the temple of God, the court, and those who worship (Rev 11:1; cf. Ezek 40:3-5; Zech 2:1-2). Then the Angel informs John that the court outside the temple is not to be measured and that the Gentiles will trample the holy city for 42 months (Rev 11:2).

Following this prophecy the angel says to John, “I will grant authority unto my two witnesses” (v.3, emphasis original; cf. Zech 4:1ff.). This act conveys the inherent power and authority of the one speaking (cf. Rev 2:13).\(^{76}\) In addition the angel describes the power and ministry of the two witnesses, which among other

\(^{74}\) The fact that this angel swears in this manner or by the Creator does not militate against his identity as the Angel of Yahweh or Christ. Daniel records a similar incident in Daniel 12:7, where the man dressed in linen who stands upon the waters raises his right hand and swears by “him who lives forever and ever.”

\(^{75}\) Robert L. Thomas correctly links the words “that there will be no more delay” (\(\text{\textit{o\text{"}t\text{"}i \chi\text{"}r\text{"}\text{\char25}}\text{"}no\text{"} ouvke,ti \text{\char26}e\text{"}stai}\) in Revelation 10:6 with the words in Revelation 6:11 “yet a little time” (\(\text{\textit{e\text{"}ti \chi\text{"}r\text{"}\text{\char25}}\text{"}on\text{"} νεκρουν \text{\char26}μικρουν}\) ). “The Structure of the Apocalypse: Recapitulation or Progression,” *MSJ*, 4:1 (Spring, 1993), 43-67. A possible connection may be seen here between the Lamb and this \(\text{\textit{a;ggeloj}}\). In Revelation 6:11 the souls of those who had been beheaded cry out with a question of how long it will be before the Lamb judges the earth. In verse 12 they are told there will be a delay until their fellow servants and brethren are martyred as well. In Revelation 10:6, therefore, the strong angel (the Lamb, if the analogy is correct) says that there will no longer be a delay.

\(^{76}\) Stewart Custer concludes, “The speaker must be the Lord Jesus Christ; no mere angel would say, ‘my two witnesses.’ This is strong evidence for the identity of the ‘mighty angel’ who is giving this vision to John (Rev. 10:1).” From *Patmos to Paradise*, 123-124. The word authority does not appear in the context until verse 6, where the Angel speaks of the kind of authority that these witnesses have.
things include the power to turn water to blood and smite the earth with plagues. This investment of power directly parallels the Angel of Yahweh’s investment of power in Moses to perform the plagues upon Egypt (Ex 4:1ff.).

Several observations emerge from this comparison of the strong ἀγγελός in Revelation 10-11, to Christ in the New Testament, and to the Old Testament Angel of Yahweh. First, the strong parallels make it very unlikely that all three are not in fact one in the same. The deliberated description of the strong ἀγγελός of Revelation 10-11 especially, along with his actions such as granting authority to the two witnesses, suggest that his identity is important. Furthermore, the strong suggestion is that this is Christ himself.  

Second, the parallels in John’s vision of the strong angel point not only to Old Testament Angel of Yahweh texts but also to texts where one might suspect the Angel of Yahweh to be appearing. For example, no use of the designation “Angel of Yahweh” is found in Ezekiel’s prophecy, but the presence of a humanlike figure who is also divine is seen several times (e.g., Ezek 1:28; 3:23; 8:3; 10:4). In Ezekiel 1, Ezekiel sees a cloud coming towards him with a humanlike figure sitting on a throne and a rainbow-like radiance all around him. Then Ezekiel describes what he sees as the “glory of Yahweh” (Ezek 1:28). In this way Revelation 10 is further brought into association with a parallel expression to the Angel of Yahweh.

The “One Who Is” in Revelation 16:5

An additional reference to the Angel of Yahweh may be found in Revelation 16:5, where the angel of the waters praises the “One who is” for his

77 Joseph Seiss identifies Augustine, the Venerable Bede, Campegius Vitringa, and Johannes Cocceius as among those who held this opinion. Apocalypse, 223-224.
righteousness in his judgment of turning the waters of the earth to blood. In order to fully examine this text, some Old Testament background is necessary. When the Angel of Yahweh appeared to Moses at the burning bush, Moses asks for God’s name so that he could tell the people of Israel. The Angel of Yahweh responds to his request with the words, “I AM WHO I AM”; and He said, “Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you’” (Ex 3:14a). The Hebrew phrase “I AM WHO I AM” (יהוה הוא אביהם) is translated in the Septuagint ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ὁ ὁ, and the latter “I AM” in verse 14b is translated ὁ ὁ. Thus in the LXX the name of the Angel of Yahweh is ὁ ὁ (cf. Ex 3:14, LXX). In the Gospels the absolute “I AM” sayings of Jesus are likely translated directly from either Hebrew or Aramaic into Greek with the phrase ἐγώ εἰμι rather than ὁ ὁ. However, the phrase ὁ ὁ, the name of the Angel of Yahweh in the LXX, appears several times in Revelation referring to God himself.

The first time ὁ ὁ appears is in Revelation 1:4, which according to Stewart Custer is a “clear reference to God the Father.” Verse 4b says, “Grace to you and peace, from Him who is and who was and who is to come” (NAU). The reference to the seven Spirits who are before his throne and the emphasis on Christ in the following verse confirms Custer’s assertion (Rev 1:5). However, Revelation 1:8 says, “‘I am [ἐγώ εἰμι] the Alpha and the Omega,’ says the Lord God, ‘who is [ὁ ὁ] and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.’ No divine Person is specified, however, and the titles “Alpha and Omega,” the “Almighty,” and the “Lord God” appear in contexts that refer to both the Father and the Son (cf. 4:8; 15:3). This occurrence of ὁ ὁ, as well as the other four occurrences, are shown below.

78 Custer suggests that the entire phrase applies to the Father (ὁ ὁ και ὁ ὁ και ὁ ἐρχόμενος). Ibid., 2.
Table 8. "The One who is" in Revelation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Verse</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Ascribed to</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1:4</td>
<td>“Grace to you and peace, from Him who is [ὁ ὁπ] and who was and who is to come.”</td>
<td>God</td>
<td>Father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:8</td>
<td>“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is [ὁ ὁπ] and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”</td>
<td>God</td>
<td>God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:8</td>
<td>“HOLY, HOLY, HOLY is THE LORD GOD, THE ALMIGHTY, WHO WAS AND WHO IS [ὁ ὁπ] AND WHO IS TO COME.” 79</td>
<td>Four living creatures</td>
<td>God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:17</td>
<td>“We give You thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty, who are [ὁ ὁπ] and who were, because You have taken Your great power and have begun to reign.”</td>
<td>Twenty-four elders</td>
<td>God, possibly Christ (cf. v.15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16:5</td>
<td>“Righteous are You, who are [ὁ ὁπ] and who were, O Holy One, because You judged these things.”</td>
<td>Angel of the waters</td>
<td>Holy One (ὁ ὅσιος)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in the chart above, three of the five passages containing ὁ ὁπ refer to God and not one specific divine Person. In Revelation 16:5, however, during the third bowl judgment, the angel of the waters pours out his bowl upon the rivers of the earth, and they become blood. Upon the completion of this act, the angel says to the divine Person who gives the command from the temple (16:1), “Righteous are You, who are [ὁ ὁπ] and who were, O Holy One, because You judged these things; for they poured out the blood of saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink. They deserve it” (Rev 16:6). Two facts highlight the significance of what is being said here. First, the phrase ὁ ὁπ, which is applied to the Father (1:4) and the Triune God in other passages (1:8; 4:8; 11:17), is now applied to One who is called ὁ ὅσιος, “the Holy One.” This title is applied to Christ specifically by Peter in Acts 2:27 and Paul in Acts 13:35 as they quote from Psalm 16:10 (Psalm 15:10, LXX) to defend the doctrine of the Holy One.

79 Emphasis original.
resurrection of Christ. Second, the title ὁ ὅσιος, “the Holy One” is nowhere applied to either the Father or the Holy Spirit. Thus it seems that Christ alone is specifically called ὁ ὅν in Revelation 16:6, and that he is righteously judging the earth by turning its rivers and streams into blood.

In addition to the connection between Revelation 16:5 and Exodus 3:14 in the Septuagint (ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ ὅν), another link connects the Angel of Yahweh to the context of Revelation 16. In Revelation 16 the plague immediately preceding the statement of the angel of the waters is the turning the rivers of the earth to blood (Rev 16:4-5). This plague is particularly reminiscent of the plague upon Egypt that the Angel of Yahweh gave Moses. He first gave Moses the power to turn water from the Nile into blood as a sign to the children of Israel (Ex 4:9), and then he commanded Moses to turn the entire river into blood as the first plague in Egypt (Ex 7:17-21). Thus the Angel of Yahweh executes the same judgment on Egypt in the Old Testament as Christ will execute on the entire world in the New Testament.

The conclusion arising from this passage is that Christ himself is to be identified as ὁ ὅν, the one who is. While each person of the Trinity is identified as ὁ ὅν (e.g., Rev 1:8), the Holy One alone is identified as ὁ ὅν by the angel of the waters. This deliberate emphasis on this identification is apparent because this third angel speaks, whereas the other angels involved in the bowl judgments do not speak. Furthermore, the angel of the waters speaks of the Holy One with the precise name that was revealed as his “memorial” name, the name that he is to be remembered by throughout all generations (cf. Ex 3:14-15). This record in Revelation and the Gospel of John, therefore, reveal Jesus as both the ἐγὼ εἰμι and the ὁ ὅν, the Angel of Yahweh who revealed the divine Name to Moses (Ex 3:14).
Conclusion

After examining the biblical data in the New Testament, it is apparent that the New Testament writers were far from silent about the Angel of Yahweh. The Gospels emphasize Jesus’ identity as the Angel of the Covenant, and they do so by introducing him immediately after his forerunner messenger, John the Baptist. Furthermore, they take their cues from Jesus’ own teaching (e.g., Matt 11:2ff.). Additionally the Gospel writers identify Jesus as the Angel of the Covenant as they show his close association with the Shekinah cloud at his baptism, his transfiguration, and his ascension. The Gospels also, especially but not exclusively John, present a united testimony to the significance of Jesus’ repeated use of ἐγὼ εἰμί as a means of identifying himself as deity.

Stephen’s speech in Acts, in one of the first apologies for Christianity to the unbelieving Jews, brings the Angel of Yahweh to the very center of his defense to the Sanhedrin and identifies him with Yahweh (κύριος) (7:30-34). He also indicates the presence of the Angel at Sinai when the Law was given and in the wilderness with Israel as well (7:35). Paul further confirms Stephen’s last point as he teaches the Corinthians that Christ was present with the people in the wilderness wanderings, particularly involved in the judgment of the people for their sins (1 Cor 10:1-11). Jude likewise affirms Paul’s teaching as he identifies Jesus as the one who saved the people out of the land of Egypt and destroyed those who did not believe (v. 5-7). Christ’s identification of himself in the Gospels as ἐγὼ εἰμί is complemented by the angel of the waters’ ascription of Ὁ ὁνόμασθαι ὁ εἶναι “the one who is” to the one who judges the earth. By this ascription he is identified by the same name as the Angel of Yahweh in the days of the Exodus (Exod 3:14, LXX). Finally, the confluence of imagery in the description of the
strong Angel of Revelation 10 demonstrates the identity between the strong
Angel himself, Christ and the Angel of Yahweh.
The thesis of this dissertation is that a comprehensive biblical theology of the Angel of Yahweh demonstrates his primary role in the covenant history of the nation of Israel and his identity as Jesus Christ in the New Testament. Chapters one through three survey the historical interpretation of the Angel of the Lord since the first century, revealing two major and significantly different lines of interpretation of the Angel of the Lord to the present day. The earlier of these two lines is the Ante-Nicene, which identifies the Angel of the Lord as the preincarnate Jesus Christ. The other line originated with Augustine of Hippo and takes a non-Christological view of the Angel. Chapters four through nine examine the biblical theological evidence through the major periods of Israel’s history. This conclusion presents a summary of the results of the biblical theological investigation and provides suggestions for further study as well as some practical applications.

Summary and Analysis of the Biblical Theological Investigation

Chapter four systematically presents an analysis of the biblical data concerning the Angel of Yahweh in the book of Genesis. The Angel of Yahweh is consistently identified as Yahweh and God in Genesis from the first passage, in which he appears to Hagar, to the last explicit mention of him in the prayer of Jacob for his grandsons (Gen 16:7-14; 48:15-16). As the Angel appears, he claims and exhibits divine power and prerogatives such as giving life and building nations. He claims to be the object of Abraham’s worship and the God of the
patriarchs (Gen 22:10; 31:11-13). The Bethel theophany in particular links the Angel with the name God Almighty (Genesis 28:13; 31:11-13; 48:3). Those who see the Angel memorialize the place where he appears by either naming the location, building an altar, or both. Thus the Angel of Yahweh receives the same honor as God (cf. Gen 12:7).

Genesis also distinguishes between the Angel of Yahweh and another divine person named Yahweh. On certain occasions the Angel speaks of God in the third person, and he also declares the oath of Yahweh to Abraham (Gen 22:16). Thus, although the Angel of Yahweh is never called a prophet in Genesis, he functions as such. A final significant conclusion from the biblical data in Genesis is that the Angel appears exclusively in connection with participants in the Abrahamic covenant.

Chapter five presents an analysis of the biblical data concerning the Angel of Yahweh from his appearance to Moses at the burning bush to his appearance to Joshua on the eve of the battle of Jericho (Ex 3-4; Josh 5-6). The data from this period of the Exodus and wilderness wanderings further emphasize the Angel’s identity as God, his connection to the covenant, and his concern for his people. The Angel of Yahweh identifies himself as the God of the patriarchs and shows his divine authority by calling Moses to lead his people out of Egypt. The Angel of Yahweh also reveals his name “I AM” to Moses, and then invests Moses with miraculous power. By sending Moses directly to Pharaoh with a message to let his people go, the Angel of Yahweh also acts with sovereign authority over Pharaoh. Pharaoh’s resistance is met by the Angel’s punishment in the plagues (Ex 3:20), and following the plague of the firstborn, Pharaoh finally submits to the Angel’s demand.
Upon the departure of the children of Israel from Egypt, the Angel of Yahweh leads them triumphantly in the theophanic cloud (Ex 13:21-22; Ex 14:19ff.). When Egypt approaches Israel from behind, the Angel protects and delivers them at the Red Sea (Ex 14:19ff.). After the Angel leads Israel to Sinai, Yahweh enters into another covenant with his people. He promises to give them the land promised to the patriarchs and lead them to the land by the agency of his Name-bearing Angel (Ex 23:20-23). As the covenant is ratified and Yahweh gives instructions for his tabernacle so that he may dwell among them, Israel breaks the covenant by its idolatry (Ex 32). Yahweh responds to this sin by telling Moses that he will send the Angel ahead of Israel instead of with them, but Moses intercedes for the people, and Yahweh relents from his threat. He promises Moses that his presence (i.e., his Angel) will go with them (Ex 33:14).

The fulfillment of the promise of the continuous presence of the Angel of Yahweh with Israel is evident through the presence of the Shekinah cloud with them (Ex 40:36-38). The fulfillment of the promise of protection from Israel’s enemies is demonstrated by the Angel of Yahweh’s protection of Israel from the threat of Balaam and Balak. The Angel of Yahweh thwarts the plot of Balak by turning Balaam’s curse into a blessing for Israel and a curse for Moab (Num 22-24). A final indication of the continuous presence of the Angel of Yahweh with Israel is his appearance to Joshua on the eve of the battle of Jericho (Joshua 5-6). As the Angel appears to Joshua, he identifies himself as the Commander of Yahweh’s army and instructs Joshua concerning the strategy of the battle of Jericho (Josh 5-6).

An analysis of the biblical data in chapter six demonstrates that the ministry of the Angel of Yahweh to Israel continues from time of the Judges to the establishment of the temple. The Angel of Yahweh’s ministry to Israel is
evident as he judges Israel for its failure to conquer all of the land (Jdg 2:1-5), as he directs Israel to curse the city of Meroz for failing to aid Israel in a battle against its enemies (Jdg 5:23), and as he calls leaders such as Gideon, Samson, and Samuel to lead them (Jdg 6, 13; 1 Sam 3; cf. Moses Ex 2:23ff.). He also establishes the location of the temple by appearing to David on Mount Moriah in Jerusalem at the threshing floor of Ornan after judging Israel for David’s numbering of the people (2 Sam 24; 1 Chron 21).

The divine identity of the Angel of Yahweh is further emphasized in this period as individuals and the nation as a whole offer sacrifice to him (Jdg 2, 6, 13; 2 Sam 24) and as the narrator and characters in the book of Judges directly identify him as Yahweh or God (Jdg 6:14; 13:21-22). In addition, the evidence from this time period suggests that the Angel’s identity is well established in the consciousness of the nation. Gideon and Manoah’s knowledge of the Angel as he appeared to them, as well as the mention of the Angel in the speech of the wise woman of Tekoa and Mephibosheth, indicates that the Angel of Yahweh is a unique personality and that the people were quite aware of him.

Chapter seven presents an analysis of the biblical data during the time of the divided kingdom in Israel, and it demonstrates that the Angel of Yahweh continued his ministry as the Covenant Angel to both the northern and the southern kingdom. His ministry to the northern kingdom is evident from his judgment of Ahaziah, king of Israel, and his ministry to Judah may be seen in his protection of Hezekiah and Jerusalem from the armies of Sennacherib. During this time Isaiah identifies the Angel of Yahweh as the Angel of his presence who led them out of Egypt (Isa 63), and Hosea prophesies of the Angel who bears the name Yahweh, God of hosts (Hos 12).
Chapter eight presents the ministry of the Angel of Yahweh in the exilic and post-exilic periods of Israel’s history. In the exilic period the Angel of Yahweh delivers Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego from the fiery furnace when they demonstrate faithfulness to the covenant by refusing to worship Nebuchadnezzar’s idol (Dan 3). The parallels between that deliverance and the deliverance of Daniel from the lion’s den by an angel (Dan 6) suggest that the Angel of Yahweh is also the one who delivered Daniel.

In the post-exilic period the prophet Zechariah identifies the Angel of Yahweh’s primary role in the nation’s restoration to the land of Israel. He sees the Angel of Yahweh interceding for the return of Judah and then cleansing Joshua the son of Jehozadak from his sin before installing him as the high priest of Israel (Zech 1, 3). Zechariah also prophesies that Yahweh of Hosts will send another person named Yahweh (i.e., the Angel of Yahweh) to dwell in Jerusalem as the glory in their midst (Zech 2). Malachi’s prophecy concludes the Old Testament presentation of the Angel of Yahweh by prophesying of a future day when the Angel of Yahweh, identified as the Lord and the Angel of the Covenant, will suddenly come to his temple and purify the people (Mal 3:1). He will send a messenger ahead of him in order to prepare the people for his coming (Mal 3:1). This prophecy, which finds its foundation in Isaiah’s prophecy (Isa 40:3ff.), thus converges the doctrine of the Angel of Yahweh and the doctrine of the Messiah.

Chapter nine presents an analysis of the New Testament evidence concerning the Angel of Yahweh. Picking up where Malachi concluded, each of the Gospel writers identifies John the Baptist as the forerunner to the divine Angel of the Covenant (Mal 3:1). By identifying John as Jesus’ forerunner, the Gospel writers identify Jesus as the Angel of Yahweh. Jesus’ use of the words ἐγώ...
εἰμὶ further attests to this identification (e.g., John 8:24, 28, 58), and the accounts of the Transfiguration (Matt 17, Mk 9, Luke 9) and the Ascension (Acts 1) show that he properly inhabits the Shekinah cloud. Stephen likewise identifies the Angel of Yahweh as Yahweh and distinguishes him from Yahweh in his speech to the Sanhedrin (Acts 7).

The Epistles as well indicate that Christ led the children of Israel out of Egypt and was present with them through the wilderness (1 Cor 10:1ff.; Jude 1:5-7). The Apostle John identifies Jesus Christ as ὁ ὑιός in the book of Revelation (16:5), which is an indication of his personal identity as the Angel of Yahweh. Finally, Revelation identifies a “strong angel” who uniquely resembles Jesus Christ and the Angel of Yahweh in appearance, actions (10:1ff.), and authority (11:1ff.).

Suggestions for Further Research

This dissertation has demonstrated the covenantal ministry of the Angel of Yahweh to his people, but more could be done to link the actual structure of the covenants with the operation of Jesus as the Angel of the Covenant. In other words, an analysis of the covenant framework combined with the recognition of Jesus as the Angel of the Covenant could elucidate the covenantal significance of his actions and parables within the Gospels. Gunther Juncker has made a step in this direction by treating the Lord’s cleansing of the temple with respect to Malachi’s prophecy of the Messenger of the Covenant (Mark 11:15-19; Matt 21:12-13; Luke 19:45-46; John 2:14-16; cf. Mal 2:1-5). He likewise brings out the significance of Jesus’ forgiveness of the sins of the lame man in the light of the Angel of the Covenant in Exodus 23:21 (Mark 2:1-12; cf. Matt 9:1-18; Luke 5:17-
Meredith Kline has also provided some helpful direction in this regard by tracing connections between the book of Exodus and the Gospels in *The Structure of Biblical Authority*.  

Another theme that this dissertation touched upon was theophany within the Old Testament. However, many theophanies in the Old Testament Scriptures were omitted. The omission of these is due partly to the limitation of focusing on the designation “Angel of Yahweh” and on passages that are observably connected to the Angel. Much more could be learned from focusing on the Angel of Yahweh along with the details of the theophanic Glory of Yahweh (Ezek 1), the theophanic Word of Yahweh (1 Kgs 19), as well as other theophanic descriptions of Yahweh (e.g., Psalms 50, 84, 94; Isa 6; Amos 9).

A closely related area to this last one is a biblical theology of appearance. Appearance is a broad concept that has both a Godward and a manward perspective. In other words, sometimes God appears to man and sometimes man appears before God. Some of God’s appearances are announced (Lev 9:4ff.; Mal 3:1ff.; Isa 60:2), and some are not (Num 14:10, 16:19, 42). When God announces

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3. From the human standpoint, the offering of a sacrifice was inherently connected to appearing before God (Lev 9:3-4). In addition, the Israelite men were to appear before God three times a year (Ex 23:17), and they were not to appear with empty hands (Ex 23:15; 34:20; Deut 16:16). However, to appear before God was to be not dreaded but desired. The Psalmist expresses, “My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; When shall I come and appear before God?” (Psa 42:2, NAU; cf. Psa 43:4; Psalm 84). The one “in whose heart are the highways to Zion” is the one who desires to appear before Him (Psalm 84:5-7).
that he will appear, he expects his people to prepare (Lev 9:6; Mal 3:1), and when he appears to a man, he holds man more accountable (1 Kings 11:9).4

The post-resurrection appearances of Jesus are also significant in this respect, because each one confirms his resurrection (Acts 1:1-8). In addition, Christ’s disappearance at the Ascension was followed immediately with an announcement of his reappearance in the future. When he reappears, furthermore, he will cause his people to appear before him at the judgment (Rom 14:10-12; 2 Cor 5:10). At his second appearing, moreover, Jesus completes the eschatological salvation of his people (Heb 9:28; Col 3:3-4).

Application

In the writing of this dissertation, the following practical lessons appeared. First, the biblical theology of the Angel of Yahweh exhibits the continuity between the Old and the New Testaments. The continuity is seen as a divine Agent intervenes in human history on behalf of his people because of his covenant relationship with them. Believers should recognize that divine authorship of the Scriptures presents a unified testimony to the divine Mediator between God and man.

Second, the biblical theology of the Angel of Yahweh emphasizes the importance of correctly interpreting the word *angel* in the Scriptures. In particular, the English word *angel*, along with the Hebrew words יְנֵס and the Greek word ἄγγελος, should not be interpreted rigidly as referring to ontological makeup of the person but his function. English Bible translations should at least make a note of the meaning of the word in the margin, or perhaps a better

4 Jerusalem’s destruction in A.D. 70 is clearly linked with its rejection of Jesus (Luke 19:41-44).
translation would be the English word *messenger*.\(^5\) Such a translation would guard against the error that Christ is an angel (cf. Heb 1-2), and it would focus the reader’s attention on the proper denotation of the original word.

Third, since the Angel of Yahweh is identified as Christ in the New Testament, the systematic theological studies of Christology, Theology Proper, and the Trinity should include the doctrine of the Angel of Yahweh. Failing to recognize the Angel of Yahweh as Christ will unfortunately truncate the data for any one of these areas of study. Furthermore, placing the study of the Angel of Yahweh as a subheading of Angelology demonstrates a fundamental misunderstanding of biblical theology of the Angel of Yahweh.

Fourth, the true significance of the incarnation of Christ may be seen against the backdrop of the biblical theology of the Angel of Yahweh. The incarnation of Jesus Christ shows his condescension to become a human being and be crucified on the cross, not to suddenly involve himself in human history. The Old Testament records Christ’s condescension as the Angel of Yahweh to involve himself in the lives of his people.

Fifth, the biblical theology of the Angel of Yahweh in the Old Testament aids in understanding Jesus in the New Testament. For instance, it explains Jesus’ repeated use of the phrase *I AM* in the Gospels, and it provides a theological and historical backdrop for events in Jesus’ life such as the Transfiguration and the Ascension. Because the New Testament authors do not fully explain the Old Testament background, they assume that the reader of their writings would become familiar with the Old Testament. Believers should therefore read and study the Old Testament to understand the New Testament in a greater way.

Last, the biblical theology of the Angel of Yahweh demonstrates that the doctrine of the Trinity is not confined to the New Testament. Benjamin B. Warfield says,

After all is said, in the light of the later revelation, the Trinitarian interpretation remains the most natural one of the phenomena which the older writers frankly interpreted as intimations of the Trinity; especially of those connected with the descriptions of the Angel of Jehovah . . . . This is not an illegitimate reading of New Testament ideas back into the text of the Old Testament; it is only reading the text of the Old Testament under the illumination of the New Testament revelation. The Old Testament may be likened to a chamber richly furnished but dimly lighted; the introduction of light brings into it nothing which was not in it before; but it brings out into clearer view much of what is in it but was only dimly or even not at all perceived before. The mystery of the Trinity is not revealed in the Old Testament; but the mystery of the Trinity underlies the Old Testament revelation, and here and there almost comes into view. Thus the Old Testament revelation of God is not corrected by the fuller revelation which follows it, but only perfected, extended and enlarged.  

Because Christ appeared in the Old Testament as the Angel of Yahweh, believers may with good conscience appropriate the doctrine of the Angel of Yahweh as an evidence for the doctrine of the Trinity.

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APPENDIX A: THE NATURE OF THEOPHANY

James Barr made an observation regarding the appearances of the Angel of Yahweh that indicates a fundamentally important point about the subject of the present dissertation. “The voice and presence of the mal’ak alternates in a number of stories so much with the voice and appearing of Yahweh that it is hardly possible to understand his place as a substitute for the latter.”¹ In other words, the appearances of the Angel of Yahweh and the appearances of Yahweh are so intricately connected that it is easy either to confuse them or identify them as One. An illustration of this point is found in the statement of the Angel of God who appears to Jacob in a dream. The Angel of God unequivocally says to Jacob, “I am the God of Bethel” (Gen 31:13, KJV).

What James Barr has observed of the presentation of the Angel of Yahweh in Scripture is a fascinating aspect of God’s revelation of himself. When God reveals himself, he also conceals himself in some measure. This is a means by which God draws attention to himself in Scripture and by which he communicates his transcendence and his immanence to his people.² Nevertheless, God obviously purposes to reveal himself clearly as God. When Scripture writers record such expressions as “I am the God of Bethel” in bold


² I am indebted to Geerhardus Vos’s observations for this thought. Biblical Theology (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1975), 72-76.
relief and attribute the speech to the Angel of Yahweh, the purpose is not to confuse but to reveal. In addition, the purpose is to reveal with a theological precision that leads to a greater understanding of God. Obviously such statements lead the reader to identify God with the Angel of God, and Yahweh with the Angel of Yahweh. This is obviously the point of the revelation. They are to be identified with one another. However, they are also obviously distinct from one another. This phenomenon is meant not to confuse but to reveal God for who he really is.

One cannot obtain a full understanding of the Angel of Yahweh by looking at him alone. Although not every statement about the Angel of Yahweh occurs in a theophanic context, the association of the Angel of Yahweh with theophany in Scripture is so strong that the two subjects cannot fully be understood apart from one another. In fact, a biblical theological investigation of the Angel of the Lord is so inextricably intertwined with the subject of theophany that any attempt to separate the two will result in an incomplete treatment of either subject. Although complete investigation of the subject of theophany is beyond the scope of this work, some consideration of this matter is necessary.

**The Problem of Definition**

The term *theophany* is a theological term used to categorize certain observable phenomena associated with the presence of God in Scripture.³

³ The term *theophany* and similar terms such as *epiphany* and *Christophany* are theological and analytical but not biblical. John W. Van Diest examines these terms and suggests that an understanding of the term *theophany* is critical to this subject. He writes, “A correct identification of the theophanies is dependent upon an understanding of the terms involved as well as an examination of the texts of the appearances. A study centered in these two areas is not only necessary to determine the occasion and number of the theophanies but also the identity of the person and form of the appearance of the theophanies.” *A Study of the Theophanies of the Old Testament* (Th.M. Thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1966), 17. Thus an improper definition of theophany results in finding too many or too few theophanies.
Because of the variety of forms that God used in the process of self-disclosure, it has often been defined broadly to include visual appearances or audible sounds of God himself as well as the attendant circumstances of his appearing. The word *theophany* comes from two Greek words, \( \theta\epsilon\omicron\omicron\varsigma \), meaning “God,” and \( \phi\alpha\iota\upsilon\nu\omicron\alpha \), meaning “to appear.” Wick Broomall thus defines it simply as “a visible manifestation of God.”\(^4\) However, his definition is insufficient in that it focuses on sight, but it does not specify the object of sight. Obviously the most pure form of theophany would involve seeing a vision of God himself. However, many would define the events at Mount Sinai to which Moses and the children of Israel were witness as theophany, in spite of the fact that they did not see the form of God (Deut 4:12). The objects of sight at Sinai were rather the effects of God’s personal presence on the mountain, such as a thick cloud, lightning, and the quaking of the mountain (Ex 19). Another definition, offered by Motyer, goes a step further in describing theophany as “a theological term used to refer either to a visible or auditory manifestation of God.”\(^5\) The inclusion of the term *auditory* in Motyer’s definition allows for the possibility that God may also have revealed himself audibly in order to manifest his presence. This is certainly an appropriate addition, for Moses and the children of Israel were also witness to thunder, the sound of a ram’s horn, and God’s own voice—all effects of his presence (Ex 19).\(^6\)


\(^6\) Following his line of thinking, an example of a visible theophany would include God’s revelation of himself to the sight of his people by means of the theophanic cloud or pillar of fire (Ex 13:21), whereas an auditory theophany would involve something like the “still small voice” of God that spoke to Elijah at Horeb (1 Kgs 19:13). The sights and sounds that the people heard at the base of Mount Sinai are an example of the more common combination of the two (Gen 19:9ff.).
While Motyer’s definition certainly includes more theophanies than Broomall’s, it nevertheless does not include what others consider as two additional forms of theophany—dreams and visions. Including these two forms of revelation may seem to blur the lines of distinction between these forms of revelation, but a biblical theological study of the subject reveals otherwise. R.B. Chisholm has incorporated these two forms of revelation into the following definition of theophany:

Many times in biblical history God appeared in human form or revealed himself through the elements of nature. Sometimes he appeared to people when they were fully awake; at other times he revealed himself in a dream to someone asleep or in a trance. Such tangible instances of divine self revelation are called theophanies.\(^7\)

Chisholm’s focus when he mentions dreams and visions is important. It is not any dream or any vision, but theophanic dreams and theophanic visions. Such a definition is more precise than Motyer’s, and some would argue that Chisholm has gone too far. Writers such as James Borland, J. Van Imschoot, E. Kautzsch, and John Van Diest argue against including such forms of revelation as part of the definition of theophany.\(^8\)

James Borland argues that dreams and visions are not to be categorized as theophanies because God himself distinguishes them from more direct means of communication. Borland writes, “God Himself distinguished these from His

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more personal, physical manifestations to Moses (Num. 12:6-8).”

John Van Diest likewise maintains, “Dreams and audible expressions from God do not fulfill all the requirements of true theophany.”

According to Van Diest, a “true theophany” is “a manifestation of God in visible and bodily form to conscious man perceptible by human senses, before the Incarnation.”

Both Borland and Van Diest quote from S. Van Imschoot, who defines theophany as follows:

Theophany is a technical term in Biblical studies to designate, not any appearance of God in visions or dreams, but a manifestation of Himself in a manner perceptible to the external senses, and especially in the midst of grandiose and awesome natural phenomena.

Emil Kautzsch additionally suggests that “theophany in reality presupposes that somehow the person of God enters into relation with man in terms of space.”

Borland’s use of the term physical indicates not a human body but human form. For a fuller discussion on this point, see James A. Borland, Christ in the Old Testament: Old Testament Appearances of Christ in Human Form (Ross-Shire, Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 2001), 17, 21-22. The interpretation of Numbers 12:6-8, which Borland uses to support his distinction, is essential to Borland’s point. Keil & Delitzsch translate verse 8b, “Mouth to mouth I will speak to him, and as an appearance, and that no in enigmas; and he sees the form of Jehovah.” The term used to describe the means by which God revealed himself to Moses is יָשֵׁר. It is the noun form of the verb יָשֵׁר, meaning “to appear.” As is shown below, the term appeared in the Old Testament sometimes refers to what happens in a dream. Yahweh “appeared” twice to Solomon in separate dreams. Jacob likewise said that God Almighty appeared to him at Luz in the land of Canaan. He made this statement without referring to the form of the appearance, although it was in a dream (Gen 48:3). Thus, although there is a distinction between the dreams and visions and appearances to the direct sight of the recipient, the distinction is between one type of theophany and another, not between theophany and non-theophany. Yahweh is communicating to Aaron and Miriam that an appearance to the direct sight of the individual involves more privilege than a dream or a vision.

A Study of the Theophanies of the Old Testament, 22.

Ibid., 24.

“Theophany,” EDB.

The concern of these writers is valid. Placing limits on the definition of *theophany* is important in maintaining its distinction from other forms of revelation. Broadening the definition of *theophany* to include auditory manifestations of God in particular would make the idea of theophany virtually indistinct from other verbal communications when God speaks to man. However, a biblical theological definition of *theophany* must be as broad as the Scripture, and it is possible to broaden the definition with a finer distinction within the realm of revelation.

**Theophanic and Non-Theophanic Dreams and Visions**

Not every dream or vision in the Scripture is of the same type. Heathen men such as Abimelech and Nebuchadnezzar were the recipients of dreams in Scripture (Gen 20:3ff.; Dan 2:3ff.), but so was Daniel the prophet (Dan 7:1ff). Balaam saw a vision of God (Num 24:4), and so did Isaiah and Ezekiel (Isa 1:1ff.; Ezek 1:1ff.). In addition, some dreams and visions involve a visible or auditory manifestation of God within the dream or vision, while others did not. Examples of dreams or visions in Scripture that were a means of non-theophanic revelation include Joseph’s dreams (Gen 37:5, 9) and the dreams of the Egyptian butler and baker (Gen 40:5ff., 41). The dream of Pharaoh is also an example of a non-theophanic dream. On such occasions God gave no theophanic revelation, but he did give revelation through pictorial means. Thus, the primary difference between theophanic dreams and non-theophanic dreams is that theophanic dreams include a manifestation of God’s presence visibly or audibly within the dream. In addition, the biblical writer or the recipient of the dream refers to the event as “an appearance of God.”

The dream theophany of Jacob at Bethel is an illustration of the last point. Jacob’s dream of a ladder ascending to heaven and Yahweh standing at the top
later was called an appearance of God by God himself and by Jacob. The event as initially described is a dream (Gen 28:11ff.), yet God says later, “And God said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there: and make there an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother.” Later Jacob himself says, “God Almighty appeared unto me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and blessed me” (Gen 48:3, KJV). Solomon’s two dream theophanies were likewise called “appearances” (1 Kgs 3:5ff.; 9:1ff.). After Solomon sinned against Yahweh, the sacred writer says, “And the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the LORD God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice” (1 Kgs 11:9, KJV). It is significant that the biblical writers do not distinguish significantly between the appearances of God in dreams and visions and appearances to the direct sight of the recipient. In the end, *an appearance is still an appearance*. In other words, a theophany is still a theophany whether in a dream to Solomon (1 Kings 3:5ff.; 9:1ff.) or directly to Abraham (Gen 18).

The preceding considerations lead to a biblical theological definition of theophany that must include appearances that occur within visions and dreams. Although dreams and visions are not observed with physical eyes nor heard directly with human ears, they nonetheless sometimes served as a means of God’s self-disclosure to man. This more indirect self-disclosure of God to a human being in a dream may not be as much of a privilege as when one sees him, but it is nonetheless an appearance of God (i.e., a theophany).14

14 J. Barton Payne’s suggestion that dreams in the patriarchal period were for the immature or heathen must not be pressed too hard. God revealed himself to Abram (later Abraham, Gen 17) in a vision, but during the course of the vision he fell into a deep sleep. This indicates that the rest of the revelation was in a dream state (see Gen 15:12). Prophets who dreamed were rebuked by Jeremiah, but the prophet Daniel also was the recipient of a
The Definition of Theophany

As with any definition of *theophany*, the difficulty with the proposal of a definition is marking out a clear distinction between an “audible” theophany and God’s revelation to man known by the familiar Old Testament phrase “word of the LORD” or “word of Yahweh.” The “word of Yahweh” refers to a common way in which God communicated revelation in the Old Testament. James Thomson indicates the importance of this type of revelation in the following statement:

> It is clear from the Old Testament that the Word of the Lord was not only primarily a medium of revelation, but also that it was the most important medium. Even in human experience the word is the most important means of revealing the personality.\(^\text{15}\)

Charles Gieschen suggests an additional thought that may seem to make the distinction between the “word of Yahweh” and an audible theophany even more difficult. Gieschen argues that although many times the “word of Yahweh” refers to a verbal communication from the LORD to a prophet or another person, several occurrences of the phrase “word of Yahweh” seem to suggest a personal “Word of Yahweh.” Gieschen argues, “Too often we treat this designation as an abstraction rather than as a title for YHWH’s visible image that is much like Angel, Glory, or Name.”\(^\text{16}\) Citing the call narratives of Samuel and Jeremiah (1


Sam 3; Jer 1), Gieschen contends that the text supports the presence of a personal being known as the “Word of Yahweh” and not merely an abstract verbal revelation.

Upon further investigation, the call narrative of Jeremiah is a particularly striking illustration of Gieschen’s point. The passage reveals that Jeremiah not only carries on a dialogue with the “Word of Yahweh,” but he also addresses him personally and calls him Adonai Yahweh (Jer 1:6). The verb translated “came” (נָאָה) in Jeremiah’s description, “Now the word of the LORD came to me saying” (v.4, ESV), does not indicate an actual spatial movement from one place to another but rather refers to a real transaction between him and Yahweh. The description of the interaction that Jeremiah had with the “Word of Yahweh” is intensely personal and focuses on a physical or tactile experience. At one point during this interaction Jeremiah describes the “Word of Yahweh” reaching out his hand to touch Jeremiah’s mouth (Jer 1:9). This description could be figuratively interpreted, but the most natural reading of the text is that the personal “Word of Yahweh” touched him in the context of theophanic revelation.17 James Thomson’s observation of this personal interaction between the “Word of Yahweh” and Jeremiah underscores its significance for the study of theophany:

So far as he [Jeremiah] is concerned the Word of the Lord came to him with all the immediacy of an objective experience, an experience which he describes in terms of a dialogue between him and God. Jeremiah’s description of the coming of the Word underlines the personal, face-to-

17 Charles A. Gieschen, “The Real Presence of the Son Before Christ,” 9. Gieschen suggests that Jeremiah 1 and 1 Samuel 3 exhibit the “real presence” of Christ in the Old Testament. In his final point on the theophanies of the “Word of Yahweh” he asserts: “In spite of the popularity of the Logos tradition within the Greco-Roman world of the first century, it is this OT theophanic background that is the primary foundation of its usage in NT Christology.” Ibid., 9.
face nature, of his communion with God, and also the authoritative nature of the Word that come to him in the form of dialogue between him and the Lord.\(^{18}\)

Although Gieschen did not refer to Genesis 15, the theophanic vision of Abraham in this chapter further supports his thesis. The phrase *Word of Yahweh* occurs only twice in Genesis, and both occurrences may be found in the context of one theophanic vision to Abraham (Gen 15:1, 4). Genesis 15 begins, “After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, ‘Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield to you; your reward shall be very great.’” Abram responds to the “Word of Yahweh” by addressing him twice as *Adonai Yahweh* (אֲדֹנַי יְהוָה, Gen 15:2, 4), the same address that Jeremiah used (Jer 1:6). In almost the exact wording of verse 1, verse 4 begins, “Then behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying” (NAU). The text, however, takes a remarkable turn when the writer says, “Then He [the Word of Yahweh] brought him [Abram] outside” (v.5). Such a statement clearly indicates that the “Word of Yahweh” is personal in this context. The “Word of Yahweh” is personally acting and speaking, and he also leads Abram outside to look at the stars. Abram’s interaction with the “Word of Yahweh” concludes when he falls into a deep sleep, and the remainder of the revelation takes place in a dream.

Such theophanic revelation given by the personal “Word of Yahweh” may be rare in the Old Testament (Gen 15; 1 Sam 3; Jer 1), but Gieschen’s suggestion needs to be kept in mind as the “Word of Yahweh” is examined throughout the Old Testament.\(^{19}\) It is likely that the majority of contexts in the Old Testament to

\(^{18}\) *Old Testament View of Revelation*, 61.

\(^{19}\) Two other passages are 1 Kings 19:9ff., where the “Word of Yahweh” speaks with Elijah, and 1 Kings 18:31, where the “Word of Yahweh” is described as having given Jacob his name Israel. 1 Kings 18:31 is particularly important because it is the very text where the “Word of Yahweh” is identified as the “Angel of Yahweh.” A similar passage to these two is 2 Samuel 7:4ff.
the “word of Yahweh” could not sustain the idea of a theophanic personal “Word of Yahweh,” but some passages do exhibit characteristics of theophany.

Perhaps the greatest single indication of the presence of the theophanic “Word of Yahweh” within a context as opposed to the abstract “word of Yahweh” is the presence of personal interaction between the personal “Word of Yahweh” and the recipient of the theophany. One example of this personal interaction is a two-sided conversation between the “Word of Yahweh” and the individual. Often the abstract “word of Yahweh” comes to man in the form of one sided communication from God to man (e.g., 1 Sam 15:10-11). In addition, some reference is made to visual, spatial or tactile interaction or movement on the part of the “Word of Yahweh” in the context.²⁰ It stands to reason that an abstract “word of Yahweh” cannot come, stand, and call someone (1 Sam 3:10). Likewise an abstraction cannot touch someone’s mouth (Jer 1:6). The thought of an abstraction taking someone outside to show him the stars is also absurd (Gen 15:5).

The difference between theophanic and non-theophanic revelation cannot be made based upon the means of the revelation itself. When the Scripture writers detail God’s self-disclosure in a form that describes his personal contact with a human by visual, audible, or tactile means, (i.e., directly to the senses), or when there is a description of the spatial movement of God in proximity to a human being (e.g., “God went up,” Gen 17:22), this is the language of theophany.

²⁰ Spatial or tactile interaction includes the touching of Jeremiah’s mouth (Jer 1:9) and Yahweh’s bringing Abram outside to look at the stars (Gen 15:5) as well as Abram’s bringing the sacrifice to him (Gen 15:9-11).
Moreover, whenever such descriptions of God’s manifestation of himself are found within the context of a vision or dream, this too is the language of theophany. Therefore, a proposed definition of theophany is a manifestation of God’s presence or form to a human being by visual, audible, or tactile means or by means of a dream or vision, primarily for the purpose of Divine self-disclosure. This definition thus maintains the distinction between theophany and non-theophany. Not every dream contains a manifestation of God’s presence, nor does every vision. Sometimes God communicates his will without showing a vision of himself or without any personal interaction between himself and the recipient. Pictorial dreams (e.g., those of Joseph, Pharoah, and Nebuchadnezzar) and abstract verbal revelation are examples of such revelation.

Conclusion

The theophanies in Scripture are varied both in their form and content. Some of the forms that God took within theophany exhibit close similarities, but no two are exactly alike. In addition to the form of the theophany, the medium of communication is also varied. God sometimes came within direct sight and hearing of an individual, while at other times he revealed himself directly to the mind of the recipient of the theophany. Sometimes the mind was in a sleep state, while others the mind was conscious but transported beyond his material environment within the vision. This is not to say that every dream in Scripture is a theophanic dream, nor is every vision a theophanic vision. In order for a dream

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21 The use of the word “tactile” is included because of the Jabbok theophany where Jacob wrestled with the Angel of Yahweh (Gen 32:25-31 MT; Hos 12:4-5). The phrase “primarily for the purpose of Divine self-disclosure” also does not indicate that no other subordinate purpose is involved in each theophany. Indeed, some other revelatory content always accompanies the theophany.
or vision to be categorized as theophanic, God must manifest himself in some way within the vision or dream.
### APPENDIX B: TWO PRIMARY VIEWS OF THE ANGEL OF YAHWEH

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BIBLIOGRAPHY


