

Angels: God's Invisible Army, Part 2

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

Code: 1362

INTRODUCTION

The Old Testament speaks of one special angel who doesn't fit the mold of other angels. He is called "The Angel of the Lord" or "The Angel of Jehovah." His appearances are unique to the Old Testament. His first appearance is to Abraham and His last appearance is in Zechariah.

A. The Deity of the Angel of the Lord

1. Genesis 16:7-13--"The angel of the Lord ... said, Hagar, Sarai's maid, from where camest thou? And where wilt thou go? And she said, I flee from the face of my mistress, Sarai. And the angel of the Lord said unto her, Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands. And the angel of the Lord said unto her, I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude. And the angel of the Lord said unto her, Behold, thou art with child, and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael; because the Lord hath heard thy affliction. And he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren. And she called the name of the Lord who spoke unto her, Thou God seest me." The angel of the Lord is called God.

2. Exodus 3:1-4, 6--"Moses kept the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law, the priest of Midian; and he led the flock to the west side of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb. And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush; and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. And Moses said, I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush" (vv. 1-4). Verse 2 tells us that the angel of the Lord was in the bush; verse 4 tells us that God called to Moses out of the midst of the bush. Verse 6 tells us what the angel of the Lord/God said to Moses: "I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God."

3. Judges 6:11-13--"There came an angel of the Lord, and sat under an oak which was in Ophrah, that pertained unto Joash the Abiezrite; and his son, Gideon, threshed wheat by the winepress, to hide it from the Midianites. And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him, and said unto him, The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valor. And Gideon said unto him, O my Lord." Here the angel of the Lord is referred to as the Lord.

4. Judges 13:21-22--"The angel of the Lord did no more appear to Manoah and to his wife. Then Manoah knew that he was an angel of the Lord. And Manoah said unto his wife, We shall surely die, because we have seen God."

In four separate incidents the angel of the Lord is equated with God.

B. The Distinction of the Angel of the Lord

1. Zechariah 1:12-13--"The angel of the Lord answered and said, O Lord of hosts.... And the Lord answered the angel." Here is a conversation between the Lord of hosts and the angel of the Lord, whom we have already identified as God.

2. Zechariah 3:1-2--"He [the Lord] showed me Joshua, the high priest, standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. And the Lord said unto Satan, The Lord rebuke thee." Here again another distinction is made between the angel of the Lord and the Lord

God.

C. The Identity of the Angel of the Lord

Who is the Angel of the Lord if He is God, yet distinct from God? I believe He is the Second Person of the Trinity--the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. The appearance of the Second Person of the Trinity in human form is known as a theophany, or more specifically, a Christophany (a pre-incarnation appearance of Christ).

1. His manifestation

The only member of the Trinity who ever manifests Himself is the Second Person. The Bible says that "God is spirit" (John 4:24, NASB) and that "no man hath seen God at any time" (John 1:18). The Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Trinity, is of a spiritual essence as well. He is never manifested visually. In the Old Testament the Second Person of the Trinity appears as the Angel of the Lord. But in the New Testament He appears as the man Christ Jesus, God in human flesh. The Angel of the Lord doesn't appear in the Bible after Zechariah because He became the incarnate Son in the New Testament (cf., Phil. 2:6-8).

2. His ministry

The ministry of the Angel of the Lord in the Old Testament parallels the ministry of Jesus Christ in the New Testament:

a) He revealed God's Word (Ex. 3:2-6; John 1:18). b) He called leaders like Moses, Gideon, and Samson into God's service just as Christ called His disciples (Ex. 3:6-10; Judg. 6:14-16; 13:1-5, 24-25; Matt. 10:1-4). c) He is delivered His people through Moses, Gideon, and Samson just as Christ delivered His people through His work on the cross (Ex. 14:19-20; Jud. 6:14-16; Gal. 5:1). d) He protected His people. Psalm 34:7 says, "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about those who fear him, and delivereth them." Christ protects us as well. e) He interceded for Israel (Zech. 1:12). Similarly Christ is our intercessor (Heb. 7:25). f) He defended believers against the attacks of Satan (Zech. 3:1-6), which is precisely what Christ does (1 John 2:1-2). g) He confirmed the covenant with Abraham (Gen. 22:15-18), and Christ sealed the New Covenant with His blood (Matt. 26:28). h) He comforted Hagar (Gen. 16:7-11), which is reminiscent of how Jesus comforts us (Matt. 11:28-30). The Old Testament manifestation of Christ as the Angel of the Lord shows us that God has always existed as the Trinity. God hasn't assumed different roles in history; He has always been one, yet exists as three distinct Persons.

REVIEW

I. THE EXISTENCE OF ANGELS

II. THE ORIGIN OF ANGELS

III. THE NATURE OF ANGELS

LESSON

IV. THE MINISTRY OF ANGELS

A. To God

1. As ministers of worship

a) Isaiah 6:3--The seraphim "cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts." b) Revelation 4:6, 8-9--"Before the throne there was a sea of glass like crystal; and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind.... They rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come. And those living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him that is seated on the throne, who liveth forever and ever." The primary ministry of angels is to worship God. c) Revelation 5:8-9, 11-12--"The four living creatures [cherubim] and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of saints. And they sang a new song.... And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and

the living creatures and the elders, and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb."

Because of God's infinite worth and glory, and because of His excellence and beauty, the angels praise Him forever. I imagine all the angels praise Him, but there are some set aside who do nothing but praise God.

2. As ministers of service

a) They offer priestly service Hebrews 1:7 says, "[God] maketh his angels spirits [winds], and his ministers a flame of fire." The Greek word translated "ministers" (*leitourgos*) gives us the English word *liturgy*. It refers to worship--to priestly service in the presence of God. That angels are like wind refers to their speed, and "a flame of fire" refers to their fervency and intensity. b) They deliver divine messages Psalm 103:20 says, "Bless the Lord, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word." Angels are noted for their strength and obedience. (1) The birth of Christ From Luke 1:19 it appears as though angels wait until God gives them specific orders to carry out: "The angel ... said ... I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God." Apparently Gabriel stood in God's presence until he received orders. His order in Luke 1:26-38 was to announce to the virgin Mary that she would soon bear the Son of God. (2) The law of Moses Galatians 3:19 says about the law, "It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels." What part did angels have in establishing the law? (a) Acts 7:38--"[Moses] was in the church [Gk. *ecclesia*, "a specially called-out group"] in the wilderness with the angel who spoke to him in Mount Sinai." We learn that angels were present on Mount Sinai, where Moses received the law. (b) Acts 7:53--The prophets "received the law by the disposition of angels." (c) Hebrews 2:2--"If the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord." The "word spoken by angels" refers to the law. The point the writer of Hebrews was making is that since no one could get away with disobeying the law spoken by angels, how could anyone think he could disobey the gospel spoken by Christ Himself? Those references show us that angels were involved in the giving of the law. Apparently God authored the law (Ex. 31:18) and then delivered it to Moses through angels. After Moses broke the stone tablets in anger over the Israelites' sin, God rewrote them (Ex. 34:1-5). It is possible that angels again delivered it. c) They assist God's rule on earth Angels assist God in plans He has for world governments. (1) By restraining wickedness We understand the Holy Spirit to be the restrainer of wickedness (2 Thess. 2:7), but angels also restrain people. Whereas the Holy Spirit's restraint is primarily internal, angels externally prevent people from doing evil. As an example consider Genesis 19:1: "There came two angels to Sodom at evening; and Lot sat in the gate of Sodom: and Lot seeing them rose up to meet them." Their arrival created much interest on the part of the homosexual men in the city. When the men came near to breaking down the door of Lot's house, where the angels were staying, the angels "put forth their hand, and pulled Lot into the house to them, and shut the door. And they smote the men that were at the door of the house with blindness, both small and great; so that they wearied themselves to find the door" (vv. 10-11). The angels restrained the evil of the Sodomites by blinding them. (2) By controlling the elements (a) Revelation 7:2-3--John said, "I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God; and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads." Those angels were preparing to bring God's plagues on the world by letting go of their control of the elements (v. 1). (b) Revelation 8:7-8, 10, 12--Here the angels blow the trumpets of judgment: "The first angel sounded, there followed hail and fire mixed with blood.... The second angel sounded, and, as it were, a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea.... The third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as though it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters.... The

fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars." Terrible catastrophes will occur in judgment as a result of the angels' power over the elements.(c) Revelation 16:3-4, 8, 10-12--Here is a sampling of the bowl judgments: "The second angel poured out his bowl upon the sea, and it became like the blood of a dead man; and every living soul died in the sea. And the third angel poured out his bowl upon the rivers and fountains of waters, and they became blood.... The fourth angel poured out his bowl upon the sun, and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire.... The fifth angel poured out his bowl upon the throne of the beast, and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds. And the sixth angel poured out his bowl upon the great river, Euphrates, and its water was dried up."Angels have God-given power over the elements. The Lord will use them to bring about the most terrible catastrophes in the Great Tribulation.(3) By controlling the nationsAngels are active behind the scene of governments. Demons fight to control nations and societies. The holy angels counteract their control. Daniel said, "I saw in the visions of my head upon my bed, and, behold, a watcher and an holy one [an angel] came down from heaven.... This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones, to the intent that the living may know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men" (4:13, 17). Even the worst officials in government are there because God has allowed it. But angels watch over them all and carry out God's plan.

B. To Christ

How did angels minister to Jesus Christ, and how will they serve Him in the future?

1. At His birth

a) They predicted itLuke 1:26-31 tells us about the prediction: "The angel, Gabriel, was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou who art highly favored, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered in her mind what manner of greeting this should be. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary; for thou hast found favor with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus."

Angels were the first to tell Mary and Joseph that the Messiah would be born to them (Matt. 1:20-

21).b) They announced itLuke 2:8-14 says, "There were ... shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, an angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shown round about them; and they were very much afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.... And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

2. During His life

A study of the life of Christ reveals that angels provided Him with protection and care. A beautiful expression of God's love is seen in the tender care He showed toward Christ in dispatching angels to minister to Him. That ought to give us great confidence, for God also dispatches angels to care for us.

a) Matthew 2:19-20--"When Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel; for they are dead who sought the young child's life." Previously an angel appeared to Joseph and told him to go to Egypt to escape Herod, who planned to kill the child (v. 13). So an angel warned them to leave Israel, and an angel told them to return.b) Matthew 4:6--"It is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone." The devil quoted that Old Testament promise from Psalm 91 in

the hopes of getting Jesus to abuse God's protection by jumping off the roof of the Temple. The devil was right--God's angels do protect Jesus. Be warned: the devil knows Scripture, and he will use it to his advantage to disarm the undiscerning.c) Matthew 4:11--After Jesus had been tempted following His forty-day fast, "the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered to him." What did the angels do for Him? Probably brought Him food and did whatever they needed to comfort Him and meet His needs.d) Luke 22:42-43--Jesus agonized in the Garden of Gethsemane, praying, "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me, nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him."

3. After His resurrection

Notice we just went from Christ's earthly life to the resurrection. Angels were absent while Christ was crucified--a time when He could have used their help the most. But He purposely didn't (Matt. 26:53). If Jesus had circumvented God's redemptive plan by calling twelve legions of angels to rescue Him, we wouldn't be here as members of Christ's church. We'd be destined for eternal hell (1 Cor. 15:17). In Matthew 28:1-6 we see angels announce the resurrection of Christ: "In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulcher. And, behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow; and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men. And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not; for I know that ye seek Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay" (cf. Luke 24:4-7).

4. At His second coming

a) They predicted itAs Jesus ascended into heaven and the disciples gazed up at Him, "two men stood by them in white apparel; who also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:10-11). Those angels predicted the second coming of Christ.b) They will participate in itMatthew 25:31 says, "When the Son of man shall come in his glory ... all the holy angels [will come] with him."

C. To believers

Angels minister to believers in many ways. Hebrews 1:14 says they are "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation." We are the heirs of salvation, and God sends His angels to minister to us.

Did you know that angels love you? An angel addressed Daniel, saying, "O Daniel, a man greatly beloved" (Dan. 10:11). The angel loved Daniel because God loved Daniel. Since angels love what God loves, angels love us because God loves us. That means they are not unwilling in their service to us; they minister to us out of love. They love us so much, they rejoiced when we came to Christ (Luke 15:10). We have the Holy Spirit indwelling in us ministering to our spiritual needs, and we have angels around us taking care of our physical needs.

1. Watching

Angels keep watch over us. I doubt we are ever out of sight of the watchful eye of angels.

a) They watched the apostles--In 1 Corinthians 4:9 Paul says, "I think that God hath set forth us, the apostles, last ... for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men."b) They marvel at the church--Ephesians 3:10 says, "Now, unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God." The angels watch us to see God's wisdom on display. As a result of seeing how wise He is, they worship and praise His name.c) They look for evidence of a wife's submission to her husband--In 1 Corinthians 11:3, 10 Paul says, "I would have you know the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.... For this cause ought the woman to have authority on her head because of the angels." This passage conveys the idea that wives are to submit to their husbands' authority.

Angels watch to see that they are submissive.d) They watch the preacher--In the context of pastoral instruction, Paul exhorted Timothy not to ordain anyone too soon, to take a little wine for medicinal purposes, to see that elders rule well, to make sure the elders are fairly compensated, and not to accuse an elder (1 Tim. 5:17-20, 22- 25). In the midst of that discussion Paul said, "I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality" (v. 21, emphasis added).e) They will witness the reward of believers--Matthew 16:27 says, "The Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels, and then he shall reward every man according to his works."

2. Revealing

Angels reveal truth. Much of Daniel and Revelation were delivered through the revelatory work of angels (Dan. 9:20; 12:13; Rev. 1:1). God was the author, the Holy Spirit provided the inspiration, and angels were the agents who delivered it. Let me add this: if someone suggests they received a revelation from God or an angel, don't believe him. The angels are no longer delivering God's Word (Heb. 1:1; 2:2- 3).

3. Guiding

The Holy Spirit takes an internal role in guiding the believer, but the angels take an external role.

a) To ministryAs Philip preached to large crowds in Samaria, he performed miracles to support the authority of his message (Acts 8:5- 6). During the course of his ministry, "an angel of the Lord spoke unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert. He arose and went; and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority" (vv. 26-27). Philip had a wonderful conversation with him and led him to Christ (vv. 29-39). An angel guided Philip out of one ministry into a different one for the Lord.b) To salvationIn Caesarea a devout man named Cornelius saw "an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius. And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God. And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter" (Acts 10:3-5). Later we see Peter's account of the same incident: "He [Cornelius] showed us how he had seen an angel in his house, who stood and said unto him, Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter, who shall tell thee words, by which thou and all thy house shall be saved" (Acts 11:13-14).c) To

chasteningIncluded in the guiding ministry of angels is chastening. When the Lord guides us, He may have to discipline us to keep us in line. Let's look at how chastening was necessary for David in the following incident: "Satan stood up against Israel, and enticed David to number Israel" (1 Chron. 21:1). David's sin was in depending not on God, but on the number of people he had in his army. The narrative continues: "David's heart smote him after he had numbered the people. And David said unto the Lord, I have sinned greatly in what I have done; and now, I beseech thee, O Lord, take away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly.... So [the prophet] Gad came to David and told him, and said unto him, Shall seven years of famine come unto thee in thy land? Or wilt thou flee three months before thine enemies, while they pursue thee? Or wilt thou that there be three days' pestilence in thy land? Now consider, and see what answer I shall return to him who sent me. And David said unto Gad, I am in deep distress; let us fall, now, into the hand of the Lord; for his mercies are great. And let me not fall into the hand of man. So the Lord sent a pestilence upon Israel from the morning even to the time appointed; and there died of the people, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, seventy thousand men. And when the angel stretched out his hand upon Jerusalem to destroy it, the Lord repented of the evil, and said to the angel who destroyed the people, It is enough; stay now thine hand" (2 Sam. 24:10, 13-16). God had to send an angel to take life to chasten His servant David.

4. Providing

When Elijah heard that the evil queen Jezebel was after him for destroying the priests of Baal, panicked and ran out of town (1 Kings 19:1-3). Verse 4 picks up the story: "He himself went a day's

journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree. And he requested for himself that he might die, and said, It is enough! Now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers. And as he lay and slept under a juniper tree, behold, an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise, and eat. And he looked, and, behold, there was a cake baked on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head. And he did eat and drink, and lay down again. And the angel of the Lord came again the second time, and touched him, and said, Arise and eat, because the journey is too great for thee. And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights unto Horeb, the mount of God" (vv. 4-8). An angel provided support for the physically and emotionally exhausted prophet.

Angels watch us. In the past they revealed God's truth. In the present they guide us, even if they must lead us into chastisement. God also sends them to meet our needs.

Focusing on the Facts

1. With whom is the Angel of the Lord identified in the Old Testament?
2. How is the Angel of the Lord distinguished from God in Zechariah?
3. What is a Christophany? How does that apply to the Angel of the Lord?
4. How do the ministries of the Angel of the Lord and Christ parallel each other?
5. How do angels minister to God?
6. What message did Gabriel deliver in Luke 1:26-38?
7. What does the book of Revelation tell us about angels' control over the elements?
8. In what way are angels and demons active in the unfolding plan of history?
9. What two things did angels do in regard to Christ's birth?
10. How did the angels protect Jesus as a child (Matt. 2:19-20)?
11. What is significant about the absence of angels at the crucifixion?
12. What displays the wisdom of God to angels (Eph. 3:10)?
13. What do angels look for in Christian wives? in pastors?
14. In what ways do angels guide us?
15. What did an angel provide for Elijah (1 Kings 19:4-8)?

Pondering the Principles

1. Do your own in-depth study on angels by examining Hebrews 1-2. Divide a piece of paper in half and list the qualities attributed to the Son of God on one side and the corresponding qualities of angels on the other. As you analyze chapter 1, consider Christ's relationship to the angels. In chapter 2 consider why Christ was for a time made lower than the angels.
2. Like Elijah, other faithful servants of God have become shortsighted and filled with despair. When our faith in God's power is gone, we lose our confidence and run from that which really shouldn't intimidate us. Opposition can paralyze us with fear and prevent us from proclaiming God's truth. Read Matthew 10:24-33. What did Jesus tell the disciples? If you have an antagonistic co-worker, neighbor, or relative, pray that God will give you boldness to speak the truth in love.

Available online at: <http://www.gty.org>

COPYRIGHT (C) 2026 Grace to You

You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (<https://www.gty.org/about#copyright>).