

# RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH

[Home](#)   [The Papers](#)

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## WHO IS THE ANGEL OF THE LORD?

The “Angel of the Lord” is the messenger of Jehovah. I believe that Jesus Christ is the “Angel of the Lord“. Jehovah is spirit and as such we can know nothing of Him. But He has, in His matchless grace revealed Himself in many offices. For example Jehovah is our Savior, He is our Redeemer etc. . Each of His offices manifest, to some degree, Who He is. As the paper on Jehovah will also prove, Jesus Christ fulfills all the offices of Jehovah. Because Christ fulfills every office of Jehovah, it is most logical to assume that He also fulfills the office of Angel of the Lord.

### PASSAGES WHICH PROVE THAT CHRIST IS THE ANGEL OF THE LORD

The first occurrence of the term “Angel of Jehovah” is found in Gen.16. We read in verses 7-11, “And the Elohim of Jehovah found her (Hagar) by a fountain....and He said, ‘Hagar, Sarai’s maid, whence comest thou? and whither 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 unto thy mistress Sarai’....’ “And the angel of the Lord said unto her, ‘I will multiply thy

seed exceedingly, that it should not be numbered for multitude'. And the Angel of the Lord said unto her, 'Behold thou art with child and shall bare a son and shall call his name Ishmael; because the Lord hath heard thy affliction'. Note that the Angel said "I will multiply thy seed". Only God can do that, so only God could have said that. Then in verses 13-14 we read, "And she called the name of the Lord that spake unto her, "Thou El seest me....wherefore the well was called Beer-lahai-roi....". Hagar proclaims that El (one of the many titles of Jehovah) had seen her and she then named the well where this had taken place "Beer-lahai-roi". Dr. E. W. Bullinger gives the following translation of that name, "the well of living after seeing". There are two things in this passage that point to the Angel of the Lord being Jehovah in His office of Angel of the Lord. 1) Hagar's proclamation that she had seen Jehovah in His office of "El". 2) The naming of the well points to the fact that Hagar recognized that this was no ordinary angel with whom she was speaking. That is to say, angels often appeared to men but there had been no fear of death associated with those appearances. Hagar knew that she was speaking to one of the many manifestations of Jehovah, Who is spirit, and named the place where this happened accordingly. Because Christ, as mentioned above and is proved in the paper on Jehovah, fulfills all the offices of Jehovah, including "El" and because Hagar had seen "El", we may conclude that she had seen and spoken with Christ.

Gen. 21:17, "And God (Heb. "Elohim") heard the voice of the lad (Hagar's son Ishmael); and the Angel of God (Heb. "Elohim") called to Hagar out of heaven". In verse 18 the Angel from heaven said to Hagar, "Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thine hand; for I will make him a great nation". Only God can make of anyone a great nation. Because it was the Angel of God that spoke these words, we may conclude that it was Christ in His office of Angel of God.

Now let us consider Gen. 22:11 and 15. This passage tells of Abraham's attempt to offer his son, Isaac, as a sacrifice to God. In verses 15-16 we read that "the Angel of the Lord called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time. (The following phrase is key in determining Who this Angel was). "And said, 'By Myself have I sworn, saith Jehovah....'". If one is tempted to consider that the Angel of the Lord was simply representing

Jehovah, this passage, in my opinion, puts that notion to rest. That is to say, Jehovah said to Abraham, “By Myself I have sworn”. A simple messenger could not have said that, this could have been said only by Jehovah. And that is Who did say those words, Jehovah manifested , i.e. Christ.

Gen. 31:11, And the angel of God spake unto me in a dream....”. Verses 12-13 record what the angel of God said to Jacob, “I am the God of Beth-el where thou anointedst the pillar, and where thou vowest a vow unto Me...”. The vow alluded to here is the vow recorded in Gen. 28:20-21, “And Jacob vowed a vow saying, ‘If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on so that I come again to my father’s house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God”. I believe it is clear that the Angel of God is indeed God to Whom Jacob had made a vow.

Gen. 48:15-16, “And he blessed Joseph, and said, ‘God, before Whom my fathers Abraham, and Isaac did walk, the God Which fed me all my life long unto this day. The Angel Which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads....”. The title “Angel of the Lord” is not used here but I believe that it is Christ, the Angel of the Lord that is spoken of because it comes in the same context as God Which had fed Jacob. That is to say, to feed Jacob and to redeem him from evil is related, which leads me to conclude that it was the same One Who redeemed Jacob from evil that had fed Him, i.e. God.

Ex. 3:2, “And the Angel of the Lord appeared unto him (Moses) in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush...”. In verse 4 we learn that “God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, ‘Moses, Moses’....”. In verse 3 we read that it was the Angel of the Lord that was in the midst of the burning bush, and in verse 4 we read that it was God who was in the midst of the burning bush. As we continue with verses 5-6 we read, “And He said, ‘Draw not nigh hither; put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground’. Moreover, He said, ‘I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob...’”. This passage tells us quite specifically that the Angel of the Lord Who is Jesus Christ, is God, i.e. God in one of His many offices.

Ex. 14 records Israel's miraculous escape from Egypt when they crossed the Red Sea on dry ground. We read in verses 19-20 of the scene before that crossing of the sea. "And the Angel of God (Christ), Which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them. And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these; so that the one came not near the other all the night". So the Angel of God, i.e. Christ, is said, in this passage, to be the pillar of the cloud. We have in this scene the picture of our Lord, Jesus Christ, in His office of Angel of God protecting Israel from destruction (this will be further proved in the paragraphs below that consider passages from Exodus).

Ex. 23:20-22, "Behold, I send an angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions; for My name is in him. But if thou shalt indeed obey His voice and do all that I speak....". I believe that as we combine the phrases, "obey His voice" and "do all that I speak" we may conclude that the Angel is indeed God. That is to say, if God will speak and the voice (not the words, which might indicate only a messenger) is to be obeyed is the Angel, the voice must be God's voice as it was heard from Him in His office of Angel.

Let us consider Ex. 14 which also speaks of the Angel sent before Israel. We read in Ex. 14 of the Angel of God, i.e. Christ, Who was the pillar of the cloud when Israel crossed the sea on dry ground. That cloud had been "before their face" before moving behind them for protection. Surely the phrase "before their face" tells us that He was leading them. If the Angel of God had been leading Israel before they crossed the sea, I see no reason to think that He would not do the same after they crossed it. And we read in Ex. 13:21, "And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way: and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light". In this verse we learn that the Lord was in the pillar of a cloud. In other words, God, in His office of Angel of God (see Ex. 14:19-20 ) was in the

pillar of a cloud. The Angel of God is Christ, so Christ was in the pillar of smoke that led Israel through the wilderness.

Let us add one more piece of the puzzle which, I believe also leads to the conclusion that the Angel Who led Israel in the wilderness was Christ. We read in the passage from Ex. 23 the phrase “For My name is in him”. What does that mean? Let us consider Is. 42:8, “I am Jehovah, that is My Name...”. Please note this verse begins, “I am Jehovah”. This verse tells us much more than what God is called, which is the usual reason for a name. It is important to understand that “name” is sometimes used as a figure of speech Metonymy of Adjunct, which is defined in the Companion Bible as, “When something pertaining to the subject is put for the subject itself”. In this verse the phrase “My Name” is used as that which pertains to Jehovah, Who is the subject. It is used as a figure of speech for Who God is. Figures of speech are used to enhance a truth. What truth is being enhanced by the use of the figure of speech in Is. 42:8? In my opinion, it is used to enhance the truth of Who God is. A definition of “Jehovah” might be helpful in making this point. Dr. Bullinger gives the following definition of the word “Jehovah” in the Companion Bible: “Jehovah means the Eternal, the Immutable One, He Who Was and IS and IS TO COME”. So when we read “I am Jehovah, that is My Name” we are reading, I am “the Eternal, the Immutable One, He Who Was and IS and IS TO COME”, that is Who I am. I believe that when God told Israel that His name was in the Angel, He was saying that the Angel is the personification of Who God is. Only God could fulfill that role. Therefore, combined with all the other clues found in this passage, I believe that it was Christ who led Israel in the wilderness.

Ex. 23:23, “For Mine angel shall go before thee....”. Because this comes in the same context as does verses 20-21 I believe this verse also is in reference to Christ.

Ex. 32:34, “Therefore now go lead the People unto the place of which I have spoken unto thee; behold, Mine angel shall go before thee...”. We read in Ex. 23:20-21, quoted above, of the angel that will lead. As

explained above, I believe it is Christ in His office of the Angel of God Who led Israel. So too, this verse also is in reference to Christ.

Ex. 32:1-2, “And the Lord said unto Moses, ‘Depart, and go up hence..... unto the land which I swear with Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying ‘Unto thy seed will I give it’. And I will send an angel before thee. Please see the note on Ex. 23:20-21.

Numbers 20:26 records, in part, Moses’ entreaty to the King of Edom, “And when we cried unto the Lord, He heard our voice, and sent an Angel, and hath brought us forth out of Egypt.....”. Judges 2:1 quoted below, also speaks of One who brought Israel out of Egypt. Please see the note on that verse, as it proves that it is Christ Who had brought them out.

Numbers 22:21-35 is a record of Balaam’s journey to see the princes of Moab. On this journey, which the Lord said he should not take (see vs. 12), Balaam saw the Angel of the Lord blocking his way. We read in verse 35, “And the Angel of the Lord said unto Balaam, ‘Go with the men: but only the word that I shall speak unto thee, that thou shalt speak’”. Then in verse 38 we read, “And Balaam said unto Balak, ‘Lo, I am come unto thee: have I now any power at all to say anything? the word that God putteth in my mouth, that shall I speak’”. In short, verse 35 speaks of the word that the Angel of the Lord shall give Balaam to speak, and in verse 38 it is the words that God (Elohim) shall give him to speak, thus equating the Angel of the Lord with Jehovah in His office of Elohim.

Judges 2:1, “And an Angel of the Lord came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said, ‘I make you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I swear unto your fathers; and I said, I will never break My covenant with you’. Who was it that had promised Joshua’s fathers the land? That question is answered in Gen. 17. We read in 17:1, “And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, Jehovah appeared to Abram...”. We read in verse 8 part of that covenant God made with Abram, “I will give

unto thee and to thy seed after thee the land wherein thou art a stranger....". So it is Jehovah that promised the land to Joshua's fathers and in Judges 2:1 we read that it was the Angel of the Lord, Who had made that promise. We must conclude therefore that the Angel of the Lord is Jehovah, i.e. Christ. Judges 2:1-4 is a passage where the Angel of Jehovah speaks to the "children of Israel" (verse 6) where, again, the words spoken could not have been spoken by anyone but Jehovah. What He said is recorded in verses 1-3, "An Angel of the Lord ....said, 'I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I swear unto your fathers; and I said, I will never break My covenant with you.....". No ordinary messenger could have uttered these words, they could have been spoken only by Jehovah.

Judges 6:11-23 is yet another passage where the Angel of the Lord appears, in this case to Gideon, Verses 22-23 are of particular interest. "And when Gideon perceived that He was an Angel of the Lord, Gideon said, 'Alas, O Jehovah Adonai! for because I have seen an Angel of the Lord face to face: and the Lord said unto him, 'Peace be unto thee; fear not: thou shalt not die". As when the Angel of the Lord appeared to Hagar, Gideon too was afraid for his life because he had seen Jehovah "face to face". Here too, Gideon would not have been afraid for his life if he had "perceived" that he had been talking with an ordinary messenger from Jehovah. I believe that Gideon was speaking face to face with Christ as the Angel of Jehovah. And Gideon recognized that this Angel was a manifestation of Jehovah, Who is spirit.

Let us consider Judges 13:3-18 in our study of the Angel of Jehovah. In verse 3 we read that "the Angel of Jehovah appeared unto the woman" (Samson's mother). When she tells her husband (Manoah) of this encounter she says in verse 6, "A Man of Elohim (one of the many titles of Jehovah) came unto me, and His countenance was like the countenance of an Angel of Elohim, very terrible.....". Skipping to verse 16 we read, "And the Angel of the Lord said unto Manoah, 'Though thou detain Me, I will not eat of thy bread: and if thou wilt offer a burnt offering, thou must offer it unto Jehovah". Does this suggest that the Angel of Jehovah is not Jehovah? As stated above, Jehovah is spirit. As He makes Himself known to man, Jehovah takes on several offices. Each of Jehovah's offices allows

Him to be seen in a different way, fulfilling a different characteristic of Himself. The Angel of the Lord is yet a different office of Jehovah. So, the Angel of the Lord does not reveal all that Jehovah is, any more than any of His offices reveal all that He is. But because the Angel of the Lord is not Jehovah, Who is spirit, but fulfills one of His offices, the Angel of the Lord told Manoah to sacrifice to Jehovah rather than to Jehovah's Angel.

Verses 17-18 offer, what is, in my opinion, the strongest Scriptural evidence that points to Christ as being the Angel of Jehovah. "And Manoah said unto the Angel of the Lord, 'What is Thy name, that when thy saying comes to pass we may do Thee honor?' And the Angel of the Lord said unto him, 'Why askest thou thus after My name, seeing it is *secret*?' " It is the Hebrew word translated "secret" that is so compelling. That Hebrew word is "pilee". This Hebrew word is used only once, other than in Judges 13, and that is in Ps.139:6, "such knowledge is too *wonderful* (*Heb. "pilee"*) for me". "Pilee" is from the same root as is the word "pehleh". "Pehleh" is the word translated "Wonderful" in Isaiah 9:6. "For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder; and His name shall be called *Wonderful*...". Obviously, Is. 9:6 is referring to Christ. And this verse tells us that one of Christ's Names shall be "Wonderful". In other words, in answer to the question as to what is the Name of the One to Whom Manoah is speaking, the Angel of the Lord says that His Name is "Wonderful". Christ's Name will be "Wonderful" according to Is. 9:6. This is not accidental. I believe that the Angel of the Lord is telling all those who study God's Word that He, the Angel of the Lord, is Christ, the Child that was to be born and the Son that was to be given.

Ps. 34:7, "And the Angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them". Here it is debatable if this refers to Christ. I would suggest that it does because we read in Ps. 91:11, "For He shall give His angels charge over thee....". That is to say, we know from Ps. 91 that angels do care for those who fear God, but Ps. 34 speaks of one Angel. Could that One be Jehovah/Christ in His office of Angel of the Lord?



Ps. 35:5-6, “let them be as chaff before the wind; and let the Angel of the Lord chase them. Let their way be dark and slippery; And let the Angel of the Lord persecute them”. Psalm 34 is about those who fear God, while Ps. 35 is mostly about those who do not. I believe there is a contrast in these two Psalms. Therefore, if Ps. 34 speaks of Christ in His office of Angel of the Lord then so too would Ps. 35. However, because it is debatable if Ps. 34 is about Christ in His office of Angel of the Lord, the same must be said of Ps. 35.

Is. 63:9, “In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the Angel of His presence saved them: in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bare them, and carried them all the days of old”. I believe this is in reference to the Angel of the Lord as he brought Israel out of Egypt and led them in the wilderness. (Please see notes above on Ex. 3:2 and 14 and Ex. 23:20-21.)

Hosea 12:4-5, “Yea, he (Jacob) had power over the Angel, and prevailed; he wept, and made supplication unto Him; He found him in Beth-el, and there He spake with us; even the Lord God of Hosts (Heb. Jehovah Elohim)”. This is, of course a reference to Jacob wrestling with God as recorded in Gen. 32. In Gen. 32:24-30 we read of Jacob’s physical struggle with “a Man”. And then in verse 30 we read, “. . . I have seen Elohim face to face and my life is preserved”. Hosea tells us that Jacob had prevailed over “the Angel”, but we learn in Gen. 32 that Jacob had wrestled with Elohim. We learn from this that the Angel was Jehovah in His office of Elohim, in His office of Angel of Elohim.

Zech. 1:8-20 is another passage when carefully considered shows us that the Angel of the Lord is one of the titles of Jehovah. We read in verse 8 of a Man Who “stood among the myrtle trees“. In verse 9 we read that the angel spoke with Zechariah. Then in verse 10 we read that the Man who answered Zechariah was the One who had “stood among the myrtle trees”. And in verse 11 we read that it was the Angel of the Lord who was standing among the myrtle trees. So we have the Scriptural evidence that the Man among the myrtle trees is the Angel of the Lord. Going on then to verse 12, we read that the Angel of the Lord said to “The lord of Hosts,

‘How long wilt Thou not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which Thou hast had indignation these three score and ten years?’ We read then in verse 14, “And the Lord answered the angel that talked with me with good words and comfortable words”. Then in verses 19-20 we read, “And I said unto the angel that talked with me, ‘What be these?’ And He answered me, ‘These are the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel and Jerusalem.’ And Jehovah shewed me four carpenters...” In my opinion, it is more natural to conclude that the One with Whom Zechariah was speaking is the One who showed the four carpenters, rather than One Who had not been involved with the conversation up to this point. Because Jehovah is the One who showed the carpenters, Jehovah is the Angel who had been among the myrtle trees and Jehovah is manifest in this context as the Angel of the Lord.

Zech. 12:8, “In that day shall the Lord defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the Angel of the Lord before them”. Here “God” is equated with “the Angel of Jehovah”. Only God can be equated with God, therefore, I believe that this verse also points to the fact that the Angel of Jehovah is Jehovah manifest in bodily form, i.e. Christ.

#### PASSAGES THAT ARE NOT ABOUT CHRIST AS THE ANGEL

Gen. 24:7 records Abraham speaking to his servant in sending him out to bring back a wife for Isaac, and reads, “The Lord God of heaven Which took me from my father’s house, and from the land of my kindred, and Which spake unto me, and That sware unto me saying, ‘Unto thy seed will I give this land; He shall send His angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife for my son from hence’”. I find nothing in the context that would lead me to conclude that it is Jehovah in His office of Angel of the Lord that is being spoken of in the verse.

Judges 5:23, “”Curse ye Meroz, said the Angel of the Lord...””. Please see note on Gen. 24:7.

I Sam. 29:9, “And Achish answered and said to David, ‘I know that thou art good in my sight, as an angel of God...’”. In this verse David, a man, is compared with an angel. In my opinion, this rules out the possibility of the verse speaking of God, in His office of Angel.

II Sam. 24 records the events concerning David’s numbering of Israel and Judah (vs. 1) and the subsequent punishment of that act. (It should be noted that in I Chron. 21 which records the same event, we learn in verse 1 that it was Satan who had tempted to number Israel and Judah.) We read in II Sam. 24:16-17, “and when the angel stretched out his hand upon Jerusalem to destroy it, the Lord repented Him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed the People, ‘It is enough, stay now thine hand’”. The reason I do not think that the angel in this context is Christ is because in I Chron. 21:27, which is the parallel passage, we learn that “The Lord commanded the Angel; and he put up the sword again into the sheath thereof”. In my opinion, Jehovah would not have “commanded” the angel if the angel was fulfilling one of His offices. (See also I Chron. 12-30.)

I Kings 13:18, “He said, ‘I am a prophet also as thou art; and an angel spake unto me by the word of the Lord, saying, ‘Bring him back with thee into thine house....’”. Obviously this angel was not Christ because the words he had delivered were in direct contradiction to what the Lord had commanded the man of God, which is proved by the fact that the man of God was slain as he went on his way.

I Kings 19:5, “And as he (Elijah) lay and slept under a juniper tree, behold then an Angel touched him and said unto him, ‘Arise and eat’”. And we read in verse 7, “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’”. There is nothing in the context that leads me to conclude that the angel of this verse is Christ.

II Kings 1:3-4, “But the Angel of the Lord said to Elijah the Tishbite, ‘Arise, go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria. And say unto them, ‘Is it not because there is not a God in Israel that ye go to enquire of

Baal-zebub the god of Ekron? Now therefore, thus saith the Lord.....". In the passages quoted in the section above that tell of Christ as the Angel of the Lord, the Angel, when He speaks, speaks for Himself. But in this passage the angel of the Lord said to Elijah, "thus saith the Lord". For that reason I believe that this passage is not about Christ. (Verse 15 also speaks of this same angel.)

Ecc. 5:6, "Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the angel that it was an error; wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the works of thine hands". I find nothing in the context that would lead me to believe that this is in reference to Christ in His office of the angel of the Lord.

## THE ANGEL OF THE LORD IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

There are two reasons I do not believe that the New Testament speaks of Christ in His office of Angel of the Lord.

1) The context is never clear that it is God Who is the subject when an angel of the Lord appears.

2) The definite article is not used in the Greek before the word "angel" except in referring to the angel of the context. For example, we read in 1:20, "But while he (Joseph) thought on these things *the* angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream....". The definite article "the" does not appear in the Greek. In verse 24 however, we read, "Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him....". In this case the definite article is used, but in my opinion, it is in reference to the angel who had spoken to Joseph earlier.

I find it difficult to believe that God in His office of Angel would be referred to as "an angel". I must say however, that we read in Acts 7:30, "and when forty years were expired, there appeared to him (Moses) in the wilderness of mount Sina an angel of the Lord in a flame of fire in a bush,

Saying, 'I am the God of thy fathers...'. Here too there is no definite article before "angel" but obviously does refer to Christ in the office of Angel of the Lord. In this case, unlike any other occurrence of the term "Angel of the Lord" the parallel passages do make it clear that the term is indeed used of God.

**This paper is written by Joyce Pollard.** I would be happy to hear your response to this paper.

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