

*There was a great question about the designation of the Angel of the Lord as the pre-incarnate Christ after week 5. We won't have time to dig in depth into that answer in class, so I've provided some seminary dogmatics notes that list passages about the Angel of the Lord – see what conclusion you come to and God bless your study! Pastor Dave Scharf*

## **The Angel of the Lord**

### **a) In the New Testament “angel of the Lord” denotes a created angel.**

Matthew 1:20,24 But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.”<sup>24</sup> When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife.

Matthew 2:13 When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. “Get up,” he said, “take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.”

Luke 1:11,19 Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense.<sup>19</sup> The angel answered, “I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news.”

Luke 2:9,10 An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.<sup>10</sup> But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.”

Acts 8:26 Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.”

Acts 10:3 One day at about three in the afternoon he had a vision. He distinctly saw an angel of God, who came to him and said, “Cornelius!”

Acts 12:7 Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him up. “Quick, get up!” he said, and the chains fell off Peter’s wrists.

### **b) In the Old Testament during the time of the prophets “angel of the Lord” also denotes a created angel or a human messenger.**

2 Samuel 24:16 When the angel stretched out his hand to destroy Jerusalem, the LORD was grieved because of the calamity and said to the angel who was afflicting the people, “Enough! Withdraw your hand.” The angel of the LORD was then at the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite.

1 Kings 19:5,7 Then he lay down under the tree and fell asleep. All at once an angel touched him and said, “Get up and eat.”<sup>7</sup> The angel of the LORD came back a second time and touched him and said, “Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you.”

2 Kings 19:35 That night the angel of the LORD went out and put to death a hundred and eighty-five thousand men in the Assyrian camp. When the people got up the next morning—there were all the dead bodies!

Psalms 34:7/8 The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them. [?]

Psalms 35:5 May they be like chaff before the wind, with the angel of the LORD driving them away.

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Haggai 1:13 Then Haggai, *the LORD's messenger*, gave this message of the LORD to the people: "I am with you," declares the LORD.

Malachi 2:7 "For the lips of a priest ought to preserve knowledge, and from his mouth men should seek instruction—because he is *the messenger of the LORD Almighty*.

### **c) Before the time of the prophets (and at its close) "Angel of the Lord" often denotes the Son of God.**

Genesis 16:9,10,13 Then the angel of the LORD told her, "Go back to your mistress and submit to her."<sup>10</sup>The angel added, "I will so increase your descendants that they will be too numerous to count."<sup>13</sup>She gave this name to the LORD who spoke to her: "You are the God who sees me," for she said, "I have now seen the One who sees me."

Genesis 21:17,18 God heard the boy crying, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, "What is the matter, Hagar? Do not be afraid; God has heard the boy crying as he lies there."<sup>18</sup>Lift the boy up and take him by the hand, for I will make him into a great nation."

Genesis 22:11,12,15-18 But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied.<sup>12</sup>"Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son."<sup>15</sup>The angel of the LORD called to Abraham from heaven a second time<sup>16</sup> and said, "I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son,<sup>17</sup> I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies,<sup>18</sup> and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me."

Exodus 3:2-6 There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up.<sup>3</sup>So Moses thought, "I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up."<sup>4</sup>When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, "Moses! Moses!" And Moses said, "Here I am."<sup>5</sup>"Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground."<sup>6</sup>Then he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob." At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.

Judges 6:11-24 The angel of the LORD came and sat down under the oak in Ophrah that belonged to Joash the Abiezerite, where his son Gideon was threshing wheat in a winepress to keep it from the Midianites.<sup>12</sup> When the angel of the LORD appeared to Gideon, he said, "The LORD is with you, mighty warrior."<sup>13</sup> "But sir," Gideon replied, "if the LORD is with us, why has all this happened to us? Where are all his wonders that our fathers told us about when they said, 'Did not the LORD bring us up out of Egypt?' But now the LORD has abandoned us and put us into the hand of Midian."<sup>14</sup> The LORD turned to him and said, "Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian's hand. Am I not sending you?"<sup>15</sup> "But Lord," Gideon asked, "how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I

am the least in my family.”<sup>16</sup> The LORD answered, “I will be with you, and you will strike down all the Midianites together.”<sup>17</sup> Gideon replied, “If now I have found favor in your eyes, give me a sign that it is really you talking to me.”<sup>18</sup> Please do not go away until I come back and bring my offering and set it before you.” And the LORD said, “I will wait until you return.”<sup>19</sup> Gideon went in, prepared a young goat, and from an ephah of flour he made bread without yeast. Putting the meat in a basket and its broth in a pot, he brought them out and offered them to him under the oak.<sup>20</sup> The angel of God said to him, “Take the meat and the unleavened bread, place them on this rock, and pour out the broth.” And Gideon did so.<sup>21</sup> With the tip of the staff that was in his hand, the angel of the LORD touched the meat and the unleavened bread. Fire flared from the rock, consuming the meat and the bread. And the angel of the LORD disappeared.<sup>22</sup> When Gideon realized that it was the angel of the LORD, he exclaimed, “Ah, Sovereign LORD! I have seen the angel of the LORD face to face!”<sup>23</sup> But the LORD said to him, “Peace! Do not be afraid. You are not going to die.”

Judges 13:3-23 The angel of the LORD appeared to her and said, “You are sterile and childless, but you are going to conceive and have a son.<sup>4</sup> Now see to it that you drink no wine or other fermented drink and that you do not eat anything unclean,<sup>5</sup> because you will conceive and give birth to a son. No razor may be used on his head, because the boy is to be a Nazirite, set apart to God from birth, and he will begin the deliverance of Israel from the hands of the Philistines.”<sup>6</sup> Then the woman went to her husband and told him, “A man of God came to me. He looked like an angel of God, very awesome. I didn’t ask him where he came from, and he didn’t tell me his name.<sup>7</sup> But he said to me, ‘You will conceive and give birth to a son. Now then, drink no wine or other fermented drink and do not eat anything unclean, because the boy will be a Nazirite of God from birth until the day of his death.’”<sup>8</sup> Then Manoah prayed to the LORD: “O Lord, I beg you, let the man of God you sent to us come again to teach us how to bring up the boy who is to be born.”<sup>9</sup> God heard Manoah, and the angel of God came again to the woman while she was out in the field; but her husband Manoah was not with her.<sup>10</sup> The woman hurried to tell her husband, “He’s here! The man who appeared to me the other day!”<sup>11</sup> Manoah got up and followed his wife. When he came to the man, he said, “Are you the one who talked to my wife?” “I am,” he said.<sup>12</sup> So Manoah asked him, “When your words are fulfilled, what is to be the rule for the boy’s life and work?”<sup>13</sup> The angel of the LORD answered, “Your wife must do all that I have told her.<sup>14</sup> She must not eat anything that comes from the grapevine, nor drink any wine or other fermented drink nor eat anything unclean. She must do everything I have commanded her.”<sup>15</sup> Manoah said to the angel of the LORD, “We would like you to stay until we prepare a young goat for you.”<sup>16</sup> The angel of the LORD replied, “Even though you detain me, I will not eat any of your food. But if you prepare a burnt offering, offer it to the LORD.” (Manoah did not realize that it was the angel of the LORD.)<sup>17</sup> Then Manoah inquired of the angel of the LORD, “What is your name, so that we may honor you when your word comes true?”<sup>18</sup> He replied, “Why do you ask my name? It is beyond understanding.” [*or* Wonderful]<sup>19</sup> Then Manoah took a young goat, together with the grain offering, and sacrificed it on a rock to the LORD. And the LORD did an amazing thing while Manoah and his wife watched:<sup>20</sup> As the flame blazed up from the altar toward heaven, the angel of the LORD ascended in the flame. Seeing this, Manoah and his wife fell with their faces to the ground.<sup>21</sup> When the angel of the LORD did not show himself again to Manoah and his wife, Manoah realized that it was the angel of the LORD.<sup>22</sup> “We are doomed to die!” he said to his wife. “We have seen God!”<sup>23</sup> But his wife answered, “If the LORD had meant to kill us, he would not have accepted a burnt offering and grain offering from our hands, nor shown us all these things or now told us this.”

Zechariah 3:1-4 Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right side to accuse him.<sup>2</sup> The LORD said to Satan, “The LORD rebuke you, Satan! The LORD, who has chosen Jerusalem, rebuke you! Is not this man a burning stick snatched from the fire?”<sup>3</sup> Now Joshua was dressed in filthy clothes as he stood before the angel.<sup>4</sup> The angel said to those who were standing before him, “Take off his filthy clothes.” Then he said to Joshua, “See, I have taken away your sin, and I will put rich garments on you.”

Genesis 28:12-15 He saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. <sup>13</sup>There above it stood the LORD, and he said: "I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. <sup>14</sup>Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. <sup>15</sup>I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."

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Genesis 31:11,13 The angel of God said to me in the dream, "Jacob." I answered, "Here I am." <sup>13</sup>"I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a pillar and where you made a vow to me. Now leave this land at once and go back to your native land."

Exodus 13:21 By day the LORD went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night.

Compare Exodus 14:19 Then the angel of God, who had been traveling in front of Israel's army, withdrew and went behind them. The pillar of cloud also moved from in front and stood behind them.

Isaiah 63:9 In all their distress he too was distressed, and the angel of his presence saved them. In his love and mercy he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.

Joshua 5:13–6:2 Now when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went up to him and asked, "Are you for us or for our enemies?" <sup>14</sup>"Neither," he replied, "but as commander of the army of the LORD I have now come." Then Joshua fell facedown to the ground in reverence, and asked him, "What message does my Lord have for his servant?" <sup>15</sup>The commander of the LORD's army replied, "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did so. <sup>6:1</sup>Now Jericho was tightly shut up because of the Israelites. No one went out and no one came in. <sup>2</sup>Then the LORD said to Joshua, "See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands, along with its king and its fighting men".

#### **d) The special Angel of the Lord is clearly distinguished from a created angel.**

Exodus 33:2-3, 12-17 "I will send an angel before you and drive out the Canaanites, Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. <sup>3</sup>Go up to the land flowing with milk and honey. But I will not go with you, because you are a stiff-necked people and I might destroy you on the way." <sup>12</sup>Moses said to the LORD, "You have been telling me, 'Lead these people,' but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. You have said, 'I know you by name and you have found favor with me.' <sup>13</sup>If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways so I may know you and continue to find favor with you. Remember that this nation is your people." <sup>14</sup>The LORD replied, "My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest." <sup>15</sup>Then Moses said to him, "If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here. <sup>16</sup>How will anyone know that you are pleased with me and with your people unless you go with us? What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?" <sup>17</sup>And the LORD said to Moses, "I will do the very thing you have asked, because I am pleased with you and I know you by name."

Compare Isaiah 63:9 In all their distress he too was distressed, and the angel of his presence saved them. In his love and mercy he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.

Malachi 3:19 "See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come," says the LORD Almighty.

Heinrich Vogel (d 1982): The unity of Scripture would be broken if the central point of Old Testament revelation was a created angel, while that of the New Testament is the incarnation of the God-man. The Angel of the LORD is obviously one of the persons of the Trinity, for in several of these passages He is identified as God, He performs divine acts, receives divine worship, and displays divine attributes. He is not God the Father, who is the person of the Trinity who sends the Angel of the LORD. There are then two remaining possibilities. He is either the second person of the Trinity, the Son of God, or the third person, the Holy Spirit. The latter possibility is virtually excluded by the fact that there are many rather direct references in the Old Testament to the Holy Ghost, the third person of the Trinity, and that these references are easily recognizable as they designate Him simply as the Spirit of God ("The Angel of the Lord," 1976 essay, p 6. Also *WLQ* 1976, p 105-118).