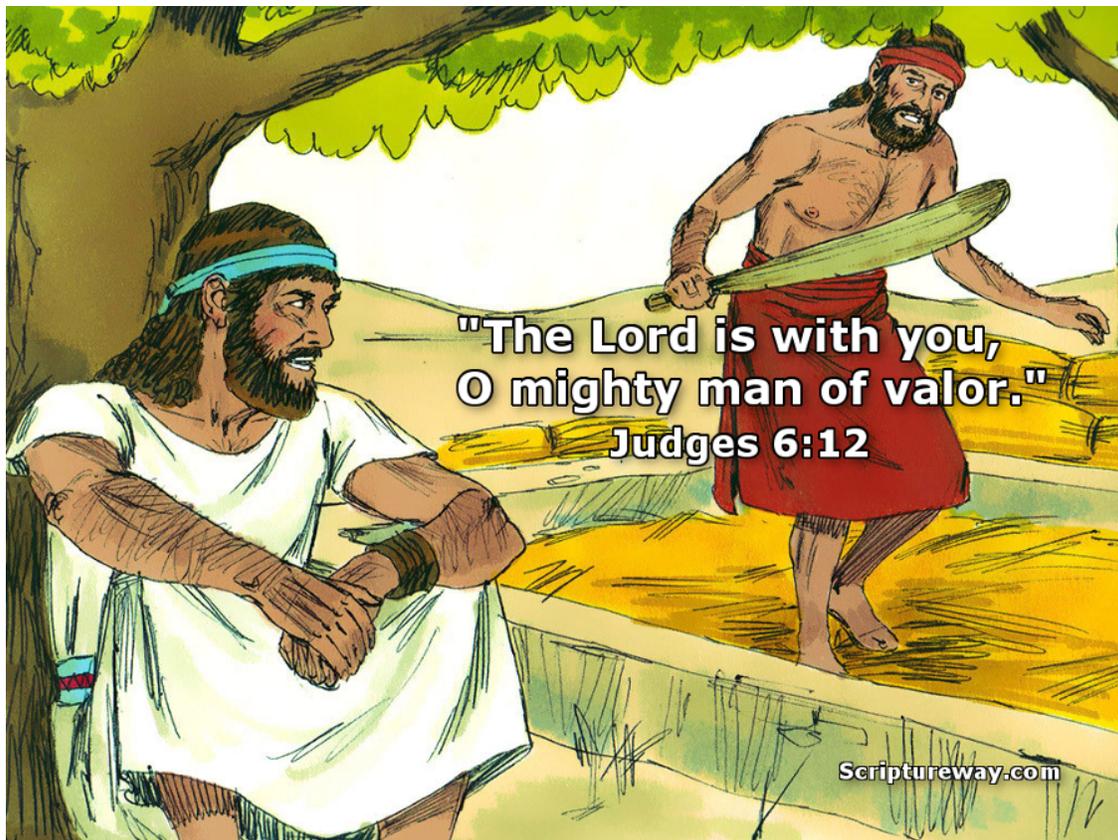


“Who Is the Angel of the Lord?”

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The Angel of the Lord Appears to Gideon -- Judges 6:12 -- FreeBibleImages.org -- Used under license

"Now the angel of the Lord came and sat under the terebinth at Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, while his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the winepress to hide it from the Midianites. And the angel of the Lord appeared to him and said to him, 'The Lord is with you, O mighty man of valor.'" (Judges 6:11-12)

"He [the beloved Son of God - Col. 1:13] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation." (Colossians 1:15, brackets added)

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This lesson teaches that the angel of the Lord who appeared in the Old Testament to Hagar, Moses, Gideon, and others is the preincarnate Lord Jesus Christ. The angel of the Lord in the Old Testament bears the unmistakable marks of deity and speaks as "the Lord" and as "God" (Ref. 1 below). This lesson describes 1) Who is the angel of the Lord?, 2) What is the main characteristic of the angel of the Lord that indicates deity?, and 3) Where in scripture has the angel of the Lord appeared?

Consider. Do you believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, appeared visibly in the Old Testament?

The scripture quotations in this lesson are taken from the English Standard Version (ESV) unless noted otherwise (Ref. 2).

1. Who Is the angel of the Lord in the Old Testament?

The Preincarnate Christ -- Jesus in the Old Testament

The angel of the Lord who appeared to men and women in the Old Testament was the preincarnate Lord Jesus Christ. These temporary appearances of Christ in the Old Testament are called "preincarnate" because they occurred before Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit in Mary (Luke 1:30-35) and before "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14).

Do not be surprised that Jesus Christ, the beloved Son of God (Colossians 1:13), has appeared in the Old Testament. He is the creator of all things, and therefore predates the creation of all things (Colossians 1:16-17, John 1:1-3). Micah the prophet wrote, "But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, *Too* little to be among the clans of Judah, From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth [*appearances*] are from long ago, From the days of eternity" (Micah 5:2 NASB 1995, brackets added from a NASB 1995 footnote).

Keep also in mind that Jesus is the visible expression of God (Colossians 1:15, Hebrews 1:3). Whenever a person in the Old Testament visibly saw God (for example, Gideon recognized the angel of the Lord as the Lord God

in Judges 6:19-23), it was Son sent forth by the Father -- the second person of the Trinity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:16-17, Matthew 28:19, Ref. 3 below).

2. What is the main characteristic of the angel of the Lord that indicates deity?

As you read through the scripture references below in Section 3, consider the main "clue" that indicates the angel of the Lord is deity:

- After the scripture introduces the speaker as the angel of the Lord, the scripture then refers to the speaker as "The Lord" or "God." The angel of the Lord speaks with the authority of God.

3. Where in scripture has the angel of the Lord appeared?

The angel of the Lord speaking as the Lord himself appears throughout the Old Testament beginning with Genesis 16:1-13 (appearance to Hagar) through Zechariah 3:1-10 (appearance to Joshua the high priest). For your reference and further study, the page, "Bible Verses About the Angel of the Lord in the Old Testament" provides more than 15 scripture references about the angel of the Lord.

Subsections a, b, and c below discuss three appearances of the angel of the Lord -- to Hagar, Moses, and Gideon.

a. Example 1 -- The angel of the Lord appears to Hagar

Read Genesis 16:1-14. Genesis 16:7 is the first mention of the angel of the Lord in the Old Testament. Hagar was in distress because of harsh treatment from Sarai, Abram's wife, and Hagar had fled from Sarai's presence (Genesis 16:6).

(1). In Genesis 16:7 the angel of the Lord took the initiative and "found" Hagar. The initiative of the angel of the Lord in Genesis 16:7 is similar to the initiative the Lord Jesus takes during his ministry in the New Testament. In Luke 15:3-6, Jesus gives the example of seeking and finding the "lost

sheep." In Luke 19:10, Jesus referred to himself and said that he came "to seek and to save the lost."

(2). Hagar recognized that the one speaking with her was the Lord. Genesis 16:13 tells us, "She called the name of the Lord who spoke to her, 'You are a God of seeing, for she said, 'Truly here I have seen him who looks after me.'"

b. Example 2 -- The angel of the Lord appears to Moses in the burning bush

Read Exodus 3:1-14. The people of Israel were sighing and crying out to God for help because of their bondage in Egypt (Exodus 2:23). God heard their groaning (Exodus 2:24). The verses in Exodus 3:7-12 tell us why the Lord came down -- to deliver his people out of the hand of the Egyptians (Exodus 3:8) and to appoint Moses to go to Pharaoh that he might bring God's people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt (Exodus 3:10).

(1). Exodus 3:2 identifies the one appearing to Moses in the burning bush as the angel of the Lord.

(2). Exodus 3:4 identifies the one speaking to Moses as "the Lord" and as "God." See also Exodus 3:7 and 3:14.

(3). In Exodus 3:5 God tells Moses to remove his sandals, for he is standing on "holy ground." The presence of God made the ground holy. The removal of sandals or shoes still is the usual mark of reverence upon entering a mosque, or other holy place, in the East (Ref. 4).

(4). In Exodus 3:6, God also says to Moses, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Moses realizes that it is God who is speaking to him, and Moses hides his face.

(5). In Exodus 3:10, God tells Moses his mission -- "Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt." Then, in Exodus 3:12 God tells Moses, "I will be with you."

(6). In Exodus 3:14, God tells Moses God's name, "I AM WHO I AM." And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel: 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

(7). Recall that in John 8:58, Jesus said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM" (John 8:58 NKJV). The Lord Jesus -- the Son of God -- is the same I AM who appeared to Moses as the angel of the Lord in the burning bush and who spoke with Moses.

c. Example 3 -- The angel of the Lord appears to Gideon

Read Judges 6:11-24. After Joshua's death (Judges 2:6-8), the Israelites fell into a repetitive pattern of sin (Judges 2:11, 3:5-7 NLT) followed by temporary rescue through human judges the Lord raised up to save them (Judges 2:16-19, 3:9-11 NLT). Before the angel of the Lord visited Gideon, "The people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord gave them into the hand of Midian seven years" (Judges 6:1 NASB).

(1). In Judges 6:11 NASB, the angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon as a man sitting under an oak tree. Judges 6:21 tells us that the angel of the Lord had a staff in his hand. A staff was the ordinary accompaniment of an Eastern traveler (Ref. 5, Genesis 32:10, Exodus 12:11, Mark 6:8).

(2). In Judges 6:12 NASB, the angel of the Lord called Gideon a "valiant warrior" [literally, *a mighty man of valor*] (Ref. 6, Ref. 7). The angel of the Lord told Gideon, "The Lord is with you" (Judges 6:12 NASB). Note that the Lord later worked with Gideon *to make him into a valiant warrior* by strengthening Gideon's faith (Judges 6:36-40 - sign of the fleece, Judges 7:9-15).

(3). In Judges 6:14 the Lord gave Gideon his mission assignment. "Go in this might of yours and save Israel from the hand of Midian; do not I send you?"

(4). In Judges 6:17-19 NASB, Gideon asked the angel of the Lord not to depart until Gideon prepared an offering.

(5). In Judges 6:20-21, the angel of the Lord accepted Gideon's offering, touched it with the tip of his staff, and fire sprang up from the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened cakes. The angel of the Lord then vanished from Gideon's sight.

(6). Gideon then realized that the one who had appeared to him was the Lord himself. "Then Gideon perceived that he was the angel of the Lord. And Gideon said, 'Alas, O Lord God! For now I have seen the angel of the Lord face to face'" (Judges 6:22 NASB). Yes, Gideon indeed had seen the Son of God face to face. It is the Lord Jesus, the second person of the Trinity, who makes the invisible God visible (Colossians 1:15).

(7). After the angel of the Lord revealed himself as the Lord God to Gideon (Judges 6:22 NASB), the Lord strengthened Gideon's faith with the sign of the fleece (Judges 6:36-40). The Lord also gave instructions to Gideon to reduce the number of men who were with Gideon so that they would depend on the Lord rather than themselves (Judges 7:2). The Lord also provided the equipment the men would need to accomplish their mission (Judges 7:8). A takeaway for us today is that when the Lord Jesus calls us to a mission, he will strengthen our faith and will equip us to accomplish that mission.

4. Other Appearances of Christ in the Old Testament

The page, "[Bible Verses About the Angel of the Lord in the Old Testament](#)" provides several additional references about the angel of the Lord. For example, see Judges 13:1-4 (appearance to Manoah and his wife, the parents of Sampson), 1 Chronicles 21:1-17 (appearance to David), and Zechariah 3:1-10 (appearance to Joshua the high priest).

The Old Testament also provides examples where the Lord appears visibly to men and women, yet the title, "the angel of the Lord" is not mentioned:

Genesis 3:8-24 -- The Lord comes walking in the garden seeking Adam and Eve after they had sinned.

Genesis 18:1-33 -- The Lord appears to Abraham.

Exodus 33:9-11 -- The Lord speaks face to face with Moses.

Joshua 5:13-15 -- The "commander of the army of the Lord" appears to Joshua. He accepts worship from Joshua (Joshua 5:14). (A "regular angel" would not accept worship - Revelation 22:8-9, Hebrews 1:13-14). The presence of the Lord makes the ground holy (Joshua 5:15, Exodus 3:4-5).

5. Note about "an angel of the Lord" versus "the angel of the Lord" in the KJV New Testament

In the Old Testament, the references to the angel of the Lord bear the marks of deity, and the angel of the Lord speaks as God ("the Lord said ..." or "God said ..."). The Old Testament references discussed in this lesson refer to the preincarnate Lord Jesus Christ. The preincarnate Christ does not appear after the conception and birth of Christ (Luke 1:26-35, John 1:14).

In the New Testament, after the conception of the Son of God in Mary (Luke 1:26-35), the King James Version (KJV) says "the angel of the Lord" appeared to Joseph in a dream (Matthew 1:20 KJV). I respectfully suggest that in the KJV this would have been better translated as "an angel of the Lord" instead of "the angel of the Lord." The angel who appears to Joseph in a dream informs Joseph that the child conceived in Mary is of the Holy Spirit, to take Mary as his wife, and to name the child Jesus (Matthew 1:20-21 KJV). The angel acts and speaks as a ministering spirit as described in Hebrews 1:13-14 KJV rather than speaking as the Lord himself. Later English translations such as ESV, NIV, NASB, and NKJV all translate Matthew 1:20 saying "an angel of the Lord" instead of "the angel of the Lord." The same comments about an angel of the Lord apply to the KJV in Matthew 2:13, Matthew 28:2, Acts 12:7, Acts 12:23, and Acts 27:23.

Summary. The angel of the Lord who appeared in the Old Testament to Hagar, Moses, Gideon, and others is the preincarnate Lord Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19). Whenever a person in the Old Testament saw the angel of the Lord, it was the Son sent forth by the Father to help people in need such as Hagar

and to recruit people such as Moses and Gideon for mighty missions. Since the beginning (Genesis 1:1), the Son of God is the visible image of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15).

Prayer. Thank you, Lord Jesus, for "seeing" us like Hagar, and coming to us when we are in distress and need your care. Thank you, Lord Jesus, for giving us our mission assignments like Moses and Gideon, and for equipping us to accomplish what you have in mind for us. Thank you, Lord Jesus, for strengthening our faith to serve you "faith-fully" all our lives as we depend on you.

Related Lessons

"Who Is Jesus? (The Same God Who Spoke to Moses)" - John 8:58

"The Authority of Jesus" - Matthew 28:18

"You Shall Call His Name Jesus (Matthew 1:21)"

References

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