

The Angel of the Lord

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Throughout the entirety of the Bible there are numerous appearances of and interactions with angels, fallen angels, demons, spiritual beasts/creatures, Nephilim/Rephaim, and God himself in his multiple forms. One such being that we see pop up again and again in scripture is one known as and titled “the angel of the LORD.” Many scholars and theologians have debated who exactly this individual is, and what knowing the answer means to the Christian world and the narrative of the Bible as a whole. I’ve read and heard compelling arguments that claim “the angel of the LORD” to be Jesus Christ himself or an Old Testament preincarnate form/manifestation of Him. However compelling these arguments are, I understand the bulk of them to be cursory glances into this topic and not as exhaustive or intensive a look for my liking. So when beginning my research I started out with the hypothesis that the Old Testament angel of the Lord is Jesus Christ. Early research quickly shifted this hypothesis into a plausible theory, and in my research to follow in this deep dive I believe will supply you with sufficient evidence in favor of my aforementioned hypothesis. So hang on tight as we tumble down this rabbit hole and have some fun in the process. As per the usual, the gauntlet of the Berean Challenge has been thrown down at your feet. Born of Acts 17:11 the Berean Challenge dictates to you to not simply take my word for anything that I present to you (however compelling) as fact without doing your own digging into the topic at hand to see if the things you have been told are so. You’ll be enriched by the experience and come out more spiritually headstrong as a bonus. Additionally, unless otherwise stated, we will be pulling scripture from the NASB translation of the Bible almost exclusively in this presentation. The ESV translation will also be used. All right tie your napkin round your neck and don your literary eating gloves as we chow down on The Word.

THEORY: The Angel of the Lord (also known as the Angel of God or the Angel of Yahweh) is an Old Testament rendering or manifestation of Jesus Christ himself.

SIDE NOTE: Author and scholar Brian Godawa of Godawa.com supplies the following - “Some readers may assume “Angel of Yahweh” means an Angel *from* Yahweh. But it doesn’t usually. It often means “Angel, the being of Yahweh” or “Yahweh as an Angel” because it is used interchangeably with Yahweh himself (Gen 31:11-13; Exodus 3:2-6).” So bear that in mind as we make our way through each appearance and encounter.

The Angel of the Lord

Old Testament appearances - Genesis 16, 21, 22, 31; Exodus 3; Numbers 22; Judges 2, 5, 6, 13; 2 Samuel 24; 1 Kings 19; 2 Kings 1, 19; 1 Chronicles 21; Psalm 34, 35; Isaiah 37; Zechariah 1, 3

SIDE NOTE: There is also a New Testament encounter with “an angel of the Lord” in Matthew 1. In Matthew 1:18-25 Joseph (betrothed to the pregnant Virgin Mary) is visited by an angel of the Lord who tells him not to be afraid to take Mary as his wife, as the child she had conceived was of the Holy Spirit. The angel who appears to Joseph is not “*the* angel of the Lord” from the Old Testament, as the scripture states that it was simply “*an* angel of the Lord” who visited him.

“*The angel of the Lord*” is an actual title, and is reserved for the preincarnate Christ who appears in the Old Testament. The angel from the OT and the angel from Mathew 1 are not the same being. Also given the presupposition that Jesus Christ is the angel of the Lord, he could not have come with a message to Joseph being that he was currently undergoing fetal development in Mary’s womb.

There are many accountings of the angel of the Lord in the Bible, and we will be dissecting almost every single one in order thoroughly throughout the course of this deep dive. Let’s kick things off with our first encounter in the book of Genesis, chapter 16.

Between Genesis 14 & 15 following the war of the kings, the kidnapping of Abram’s nephew Lot, the successful acquisition and saving of Lot and his family by Abram and his 318 trained warriors, and an encounter with Melchizedek (the priest of God most high), the Lord makes a promise to Abram. God promised Abram, who was advanced in years and childless, that an heir would come from his own body, that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars, and that his descendants would be given the promised land of Canaan to live in.

*****Genesis 16*** (NASB) **Sarai and Hagar****

“**1** Now Sarai, Abram’s wife, had not borne him a child, but she had an Egyptian slave woman whose name was Hagar. **2** So Sarai said to Abram, “See now, the Lord has prevented me from bearing children. Please have relations with my slave woman; perhaps I will obtain children through her.” And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai. **3** And so after Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, Abram’s wife Sarai took Hagar the Egyptian, her slave woman, and gave her to her husband Abram as his wife (a legally binding marriage in the Hebrew world). **4** Then he had relations with Hagar, and she conceived; and when Hagar became aware that she had conceived, her mistress was insignificant in her sight. **5** So Sarai said to Abram, “May the wrong done to me be upon you! I put my slave woman into your arms, but when she saw that she had conceived, I was insignificant in her sight. May the Lord judge between you and me.” **6** But Abram said to Sarai, “Look, your slave woman is in your power; do to her what is good in your sight.” So Sarai treated her harshly, and she fled from her presence.

7 Now the angel of the Lord found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, by the spring on the way to Shur. **8** He said, “Hagar, Sarai’s slave woman, from where have you come, and where are you going?” And she said, “I am fleeing from the presence of my mistress Sarai.” **9** So the angel of the Lord said to her, “Return to your mistress, and submit to her authority.” **10** The angel of the Lord also said to her, “I will greatly multiply your descendants so that they will be too many to count.” **11** The angel of the Lord said to her further,

“Behold, you are pregnant, And you will give birth to a son; And you shall name him Ishmael [I.e. God Hears], Because the Lord has heard your affliction. **12** But he will be a wild donkey [ass] of a man; His hand will be against everyone, And everyone’s hand will be against him; And he will live in defiance of all his brothers.”

13 Then she called the name of the Lord who spoke to her, “[Heb *Elroi*] You are a God who sees me”; for she said, “Have I even seen Him here and lived after He saw me? [Lit *His seeing me*]”

14 Therefore the well was called Beer-lahai-roi [I.e., the well of the living one who sees me]; behold, it is between Kadesh and Bered.

15 So Hagar bore a son to Abram; and Abram named his son, to whom Hagar gave birth, Ishmael. **16** Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to him [Lit *Abram*].

There are a few key things to point out about “the angel of the Lord” in this the 16th chapter of Genesis. Firstly - the angel said to Hagar, “I will greatly multiply your descendants so that they will be too many to count.” He didn’t say “*thus says the Lord*, I will greatly multiply your descendants so that they will be too many to count.” A claim made in the first person like this is a claim that only God himself could make. Secondly - if the angel speaking to Hagar was indeed speaking for the Lord, then he would have been required to convey as much to her. Whenever someone in the Bible (that isn’t God himself) is speaking for or delivering a message from the Lord, be it man or angel, it is always indicated with words like: “Thus says the Lord”, “the Lord has said”, “the Lord says”, such and such “says your God”, such and such “declares the Lord”, “This thing has come from the lord”, “this comes from the Lord”, “I have heard a message from the Lord”, “Hear the word of the Lord of hosts”, or “the Lord God of Israel declares.” Thirdly - Genesis then says that Hagar went on to call “the name of the *Lord* who spoke to her” *Elroi*. In verse 13 Hagar is blown away that she lived after seeing God face to face. This is significant, because according to Exodus 33:20 no one could look on the face of God and live. It stands to reason from this passage and other passages that we will dissect, that “the angel of the Lord” was God in a physical form that could commune with his creation without resulting in his creation dying from gazing upon his heavenly face. Within verse 13 is the Bible’s explicit claim that when Hagar was speaking with “the angel of the Lord”, she was indeed speaking with God. Encounter one in the books!

Next up is Abraham’s test, which he passes with flying colors. At this point Abraham’s wife Sarah has given birth to his only begotten son Isaac. All things considered life is going well for Abraham, until the Lord makes an extremely tough request of him.

*****Genesis 22:1-19*** (NASB) **The Offering of Isaac****

1 Now it came about after these things, that God tested Abraham, and said to him, “Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.” **2** Then He said, “Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you.” **3** So Abraham got up early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him and his son Isaac; and he split wood for the burnt offering, and set out and went to the place of which God had told him. **4** On the third day Abraham raised his eyes and saw the place from a distance. **5** Then Abraham said to his young men, “Stay here with the donkey, and I and the boy will go over there; and we will worship and return to you.” **6** And Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and laid it on his son Isaac, and he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So the two of them walked on together. **7** Isaac spoke to his father Abraham and said, “My father!” And he said, “Here I am, my son.” And he said, “Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?” **8** Abraham said, “God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.” So the two of them walked on together.

9 Then they came to the place of which God had told him; and Abraham built the altar there and arranged the wood, and bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. **10** And Abraham reached out with his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son [I.e., following prescribed ritual]. **11** But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, “Abraham, Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.” **12** He said, “Do not reach out your hand against the boy, and do not do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God [Or *revere*; Lit *are a fearer of God*], since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.” **13** Then Abraham raised his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram caught in the thicket by its horns; and Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering in the place of his son. **14** And Abraham named that place The Lord Will Provide, as it is said to this day, “On the mountain of the Lord it will be provided.”

15 Then the angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven, **16** and said, “By Myself I have sworn, declares the Lord, because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son, **17** indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed [descendants] as the stars of the heavens and as the sand, which is on the seashore; and your seed [descendants] shall possess the gate of their [his] enemies. **18** And in your seed [descendants] all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.” **19** So Abraham returned to his young men, and they got up and went together to Beersheba; and Abraham lived in Beersheba.”

Alright let’s get into this one. Following the birth of Abraham’s (retitled from Abram by God) son Isaac by his wife Sarah (retitled from Sarai by God), God tests Abraham’s devotion by demanding Isaac to be given to him in sacrifice.

SIDE NOTE: We are going to briefly sidetrack for a moment or two and then come right back to the topic at hand. A lot of people tighten up when they read or hear about Abraham having to offer Isaac as a burnt sacrifice to God. To most rational people, including unread Christians, this seems like a barbaric thing for God to demand of Abraham. However, if you’ve done your homework then you know that one of only two possible outcomes would occur at the appointed sacrificial time. One – God would intervein (which He inevitably did) keeping Abraham from killing and sacrificing Isaac. or Two – Abraham would kill and sacrifice Isaac, and then God would have to resurrect him. Why are these the only two options possible? It is because of the promise that God made to Abraham concerning Isaac back in Genesis 17.

Genesis 17:15-21 (ESV) Isaac's Birth Promised

“**15** And God said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah [meaning *princess*] shall be her name. **16** I will bless her, and moreover, I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall become nations; kings of peoples shall come from her.” **17** Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed and said to himself, “Shall a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?” **18** And Abraham said to God, “Oh that Ishmael might live before you!” **19** God said, “No, but Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac [meaning *he laughs*] I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him. **20** As for Ishmael, I have heard you; behold, I have blessed him and will make him fruitful and multiply

him greatly. He shall father twelve princes, and I will make him into a great nation. **21** But I will establish my covenant with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this time next year.”

Isaac isn't even married to his wife Rebecca until Genesis 24, and yet we see God promising Abraham that He would make an everlasting covenant with *Isaac* for *his offspring after him*. The only logical thing that could have taken place concerning the potential sacrifice of Isaac was as I illustrated already: he could have been sacrificed and then subsequently raised from dead by God, or God would have to stay Abraham's hand. Abraham knew that, and remembering the promise that God made to him, I believe that he was counting on that promise to save Isaac. In fact, in a conversation between God and Abraham concerning his future offspring while he was yet still childless in Genesis 15, we see Abraham's trust in God and His promises confirmed.

Genesis 15:5-6 “**5** And he (God) brought him (Abraham) outside and said, “Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” **6** And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness.”

The Apostle Paul confirms Abraham's belief in Romans 4 as well.

Romans 4:1-3 “**1** What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? **2** For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. **3** For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.””

Knowing that Abraham trusted God to say what He meant and mean what He said takes the alleged barbarism out of God's request to see if his servant would give up that which was most precious to him. Alright, back to it.

In Genesis 22 (which we read) Abraham has taken measures to carry out the grim task that God has placed before him. The designated place for the sacrifice has been reached, an alter has been erected, wood brought for the burnt offering has been laid on the alter, Abraham's son Isaac has been bound and laid atop the wood, and Abraham has his knife in position to kill Isaac in sacrifice to God. At the last second the angel of the Lord commands Abraham to stay his hand. Right out the gate we see the angel of the Lord speaking in the first person as he says to Abraham in verse 12, “I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.” This clearly indicates that God is speaking. However, the angel of the Lord speaks a second time in the third person in what seems to be a contradictory manner to our claim that he is God himself. Verses 15-17 “Then the angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven, and said, “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,”. As already established, when in scripture we see someone speaking for God, it is indicated with a phrase like, this and that “declares the Lord.” And that is exactly what we see the angel of the Lord doing here in these verses. This seems to present us with a conflict, so let's rectify it. There are a number of places in the Bible where God refers to Himself in the third person:

- **Once** in His covenant with David that He dictates to the prophet Samuel in 2 Samuel 7:8-

- **Once** as He condemns false prophets in Ezekiel 13:1-7
- **Once** as He gives Israel a dressing down in Ezekiel 16:23-29
- **Twice** as He yearns over His people in Hosea 11
- **Twice** in His rebuke of Israel in Amos 4
- **Twice** in His warning to Amos concerning Israel in Amos 8:11-14
- **Once** as He condemns the sinners of His people Israel in Amos 9:7-10
- **Four** times in His pronouncement over Israel concerning Jerusalem's eminent attack in Zechariah 12
- **Thrice** in His foretelling of the new covenant in Hebrews 8:7-13 with **one** reiteration in Hebrews 10:15-18

Of course we know well that people speaking for God in the Bible refer to Him in the third person even when speaking His words in the first person. From these 17 occurrences spanning the Old & New Testaments, the good Lord is clearly not above doing the same. Additionally we must note that the angel of the Lord is calling to Abraham from heaven – a far off distance from him as opposed to face to face. Now assuming that Abraham could not see God calling to him, and knowing that at this point in his life Abraham has conversed with both God and angels (Genesis 18), the angel of the Lord in a practical decision makes it known to Abraham that the voice he is hearing call to him from heaven (where both God and angels reside) is the voice of God. This denotation by God as the speaker is not dissimilar to how when calling someone on the phone (whom we can't see or handle) who may not know the number from which we are calling, we will most often greet the person on the other end of the line by saying something like: Hi, this is Eric. or Hi this is Jessica. Of course the Lord varies up His method when making it known to people that He is speaking to them, however we see Him adopt this same third person denotation when He engages with Hagar a second time in Genesis 21, which we are gonna hop backwards to next. Only you'll see in this instance of the angel of the Lord calling to a person from heaven, He refers to Himself in the third person and first person all within the same instance of speaking.

Back in Genesis 21, 14 years have gone by since Hagar's initial run-in with the Lord, and following the birth of Isaac (to Sarah) earlier in Genesis 21, we see Sarah at odds again with Hagar over her son Ishmael.

*****Genesis 21:9-21*** (NASB) Sarah Turns against Hagar**

“**9** Now Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, mocking Isaac. **10** Therefore she said to Abraham, “Drive out this slave woman and her son, for the son of this slave woman shall not be an heir with my son Isaac!” **11** The matter distressed Abraham greatly [Lit *was very grievous in Abraham's sight*] because of his son Ishmael. **12** But God said to Abraham, “Do not be distressed [Lit *Do not let it be grievous in your sight*] because of the boy and your slave woman; whatever Sarah tells you, listen to her, for through Isaac your descendants shall be named [Lit *your seed will be called*]. **13** And of the son of the slave woman I will make a nation also, because he is your descendant [Lit *seed*].” **14** So Abraham got up early in the morning and took bread and a skin of water, and gave them to Hagar, putting them on her shoulder, and gave her the boy (now 14 years old at this point), and sent her away. And she departed and wandered about in the wilderness of Beersheba.

15 When the water in the skin was used up, she left [Lit *cast*] the boy under one of the bushes. **16** Then she went and sat down opposite him, about a bowshot away, for she said, “May I not see the boy die! [Lit *look at the death of the child!*]” And she sat opposite him, and raised her voice and wept. **17** God heard the boy crying; and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, “What is the matter with you, Hagar? Do not fear, for God has heard the voice of the boy where he is. **18** Get up, lift up the boy, and hold him by the hand, for I will make a great nation of him.” **19** Then God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; and she went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink.

20 And God was with the boy, and he grew; and he lived in the wilderness and became an archer. **21** He lived in the wilderness of Paran, and his mother took a wife for him from the land of Egypt.”

In this encounter it is made known to us fairly quickly that God in his angelic form is the one calling to Hagar, when he says to her regarding her son Ishmael: “I will make a great nation of him.” As an aside, I find it incredibly thought provoking to note just how often Jesus refers to himself in the third person in the New Testament. He does this 30 times in Matthew, 14 times in Mark, 25 times in Luke, and 11 times in John. Given that we are making a case for Jesus being the angel of the Lord, whom we’ve now seen speak of himself in the third person twice, I find it more than just coincidental that referring to himself in the third person is the modus operandi of Jesus Christ. The angel of the Lord saves the day.

Alright, up next we’ll turn our attention to Abraham’s grandson, Jacob, as he packs up to leave his uncle’s employ and move to Canaan.

*****Genesis 31:1-21*** (NASB) **Jacob Leaves Secretly for Canaan****

1 Now Jacob heard the words of Laban’s sons, saying, “Jacob has taken away all that was our father’s, and from what belonged to our father he has made all this wealth [Lit *glory*].” **2** And Jacob saw the attitude [Lit *face*] of Laban, and behold, it was not friendly toward him as it had been before. **3** Then the Lord said to Jacob, “Return to the land of your fathers and to your relatives, and I will be with you.” **4** So Jacob sent word and called Rachel and Leah to his flock in the field, **5** and said to them, “I see your father’s attitude [Lit *face*], that it is not friendly toward me as it was before, but the God of my father has been with me. **6** You know that I have served your father with all my strength. **7** Yet your father has cheated me and changed my wages ten times; however, God did not allow him to do me harm. **8** If he said this: ‘The speckled shall be your wages,’ then all the flock delivered speckled; and if he said this: ‘The striped shall be your wages,’ then all the flock delivered striped. **9** So God has taken away your father’s livestock and given them to me. **10** And it came about at the time when the flock was breeding that I raised my eyes and saw in a dream—and behold—the male goats that were mating [Lit *leaping upon the flock*] were striped, speckled, or mottled. **11** Then the angel of God said to me in the dream, ‘Jacob’; and I said, ‘Here I am.’ **12** He said, ‘Now raise your eyes and see that all the male goats that are mating [Lit *leaping upon the flock*] are striped, speckled, or mottled; for I have seen everything that Laban has been doing to you. **13** I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a memorial stone, where you made a vow to Me; now arise, leave [Lit *go out from*] this land, and return to the land of your birth.” **14** Rachel and Leah said to him, “Do we still have any share or inheritance in our father’s house? **15** Are we not regarded by him as foreigners? For he has sold

us, and has also entirely consumed [I.e., enjoyed the benefit of] our purchase price [money]. **16** Surely all the wealth which God has taken away from our father belongs to us and our children; now then, do whatever God has told you.”

17 Then Jacob stood up and put his children and his wives on camels; **18** and he drove away all his livestock and all his property which he had acquired, the livestock he possessed which he had acquired in Paddan-aram, to go to the land of Canaan to his father Isaac. **19** Laban had gone to shear his flock, and Rachel stole the household idols [Heb teraphim] that were her father’s. **20** And Jacob deceived [Lit *stole the heart of*] Laban the Aramean by not telling him that he was fleeing. **21** So he fled with all that he had; and he got up and crossed the Euphrates River, and set out [Lit *his face*] for the hill country of Gilead.”

The dream encounter between the angel of the Lord and Jacob is another cut an dry instance of God appearing to and speaking with his creation. As illuded to, at this point in the Biblical timeline we are now following the life of Jacob, Isaac’s son. Jacob has been working for his shiesty father-in-law Laban for 14 years. As Jacob is recounting his dream to his two wives, Rachel and Leah, he indicates to them that the angel of God not only instructed him in his actions, but claimed to be God as well. Check off another one.

Next we are gonna jump ahead several hundred years to Exodus chapter 3 to look in on our favorite boy with a stick and a stutter, Moses. At this point on the Biblical timeline, in the book of Exodus, Israel has gone from living incredibly prosperously in Egypt, to being enslaved by the Egyptians and put to forced labor for over 400 years. During a time when Jewish male children were being put to death at birth, the Hebrew born Moses was saved by his mother, adopted by the Pharaoh’s daughter, and raised as Egyptian royalty. During a scuffle with an Egyptian who was savagely whaling on one of the Jewish slaves, Moses killed the guy, got called out for it by another Hebrew bro, and fled into the wilderness of Midian from Pharaoh who wanted him dead because of it. After saving some damsels in distress like a sandal-clad Batman, Moses marries, Zipporah, the daughter of Jethro, and takes up shepherding for his father-in-law. One balmy day out on the range Moses happens upon a burning bush (like ya do), and that is where we find him in Exodus 3.

*****Exodus 3:1-9*** (NASB) **The Burning Bush****

1 Now Moses was pasturing the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian; and he led the flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. **2** Then the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a blazing fire from the midst of [the] a bush; and he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, yet the bush was not being consumed. **3** So Moses said, “I must turn aside and see this [great] marvelous sight, why the bush is not burning up!” **4** When the Lord saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, “Moses, Moses!” And he said, “Here I am.” **5** Then He said, “Do not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.” **6** And He said, “I am the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” Then Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

7 And the Lord said, “I have certainly seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt, and have heard their outcry because of their taskmasters, for I am aware of their sufferings. **8** So I

have come down to rescue them from the [hand] power of the Egyptians, and 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, the Hittite, the Amorite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite. **9** And now, behold, the cry of the sons of Israel has come to Me; furthermore, I have seen the oppression with which the Egyptians are oppressing them.”

The Mission of Moses

“**10** And now come, and I will send you to Pharaoh, so that you may bring My people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt.” **11** But Moses said to God, “Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?” **12** And He said, “Assuredly I will be with you, and this shall be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship [or *serve*] God at this mountain.”

13 Then Moses said to God, “Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you.’ Now they may say to me, ‘What is His name? What shall I say to them?’” **14** And God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM”; and He said, “This is what you shall say to the sons of Israel: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” **15** God furthermore said to Moses, “This is what 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 the name [I.e., name used in prayer, vows, and ceremony] for all generations [Lit generation of generation] to use to call upon Me.”

SIDE NOTE: [I AM in this passage is Related to the name of God, *YHWH*, rendered *Lord*, which is derived from the verb *HAYAH*, *to be*]

Alrighty, here is another instance where the Bible uses the titles “the angel of the Lord”, and “the Lord/God” interchangeably. In verse 2 we have the initial appearance of the angel of the Lord (God) to Moses via a burning bush, and then we have God speaking directly face to face with Moses from within the bush from verse 4 on – even going as far as to say “I am the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” This event is another easily digestible instance of God appearing to mortal man in his angelic form as the angel of the Lord. However, there are several interesting things to unpack from within this passage.

The first issue of note is God’s method of appearance. Why did the angel of the Lord decide to speak to Moses from within the burning bush after we see him conversing face to face with Hagar in Genesis 16? Well on the one hand, a bush suddenly bursting into non-consuming fire out in the middle of nowhere would be quite the attention-grabber as well as serve to show God’s awesome power. On the other hand, it is possible that God was obscuring his appearance from Moses so that Moses would not die from looking upon the face of God. We know from Genesis 16 that the angel of the Lord is able to be looked upon and conversed with directly by his creation, and we also know that according to Exodus 33:20 that no one could behold the unobscured face of God in all his heavenly glory and live. Moses does converse with God in the tent of meeting “face to face, as a man speaks to his friend.” However, Moses and the Levitical priests that spoke to the Lord in this fashion, did so through the smoke of a censor so that they would not see God’s face directly and thereby die (Leviticus 16:11-13). This is why in Exodus

33 after Moses says to God “Please show me your glory”, God places him in the cleft of a rock and covers him with His hand until He passes completely by Moses. Then God removes His hand from obscuring Moses’ view to allow Moses to look upon His back, but not His face (Exodus 33:17-23). Hence, the fire of the burning bush could have been intended to grab Moses’ attention (which we can safely assume it was) while at the same time protecting him from death.

The second issue of note is the command God issues to Moses. God tells him “Do not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.” This command is almost verbatim the same command that the angel of the Lord gives to Joshua in Joshua 5 (which we’ll get to shortly). The act of obedience that Moses carries out in removing his sandals as well as hiding his face in reverence of God, should be understood as an act of worship. We know from Revelation 22:8-9 that angels are not allowed to command worship, as that is a right reserved for God alone. An angel’s presence does not make a place or object holy. However, the presence and or decree of the Lord can justify, purify, and make holy even the most unseemly of zones and items (Joshua 6:18-19).

SIDE NOTE: Fire also refines and purifies - Isaiah 6:6-7, Isaiah 48:9-11, and Zechariah 13:8-9 (just to name a few Biblical references).

The third issue of note is what Jesus Christ reveals about himself in reference to this event. Let’s jump to John 8 and see what the J-Man has to say. In John 8 we have the famous story of the adulterous woman who was caught in the very act of adultery and dragged (most likely naked or in some manner of undress) out into the street by the scribes and Pharisees to be stoned to death for her sin. After Jesus tells the woman’s accusers “**He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.**”, He forgives her and then takes the opportunity to drop some truth-bombs on her accusers. Jesus tells the Pharisees that he is the “**Light of the world**” and that whoever followed him would “**not walk in the darkness,**” but would “**have the Light of life.**” The Pharisees accuse him of lying, so Jesus retorts with a lesson in theology and the Mosaic law that peeves them off to the point that they indirectly accuse him of being a bastard – implying that Jesus was an illegitimate son of the virgin Mary, and that he was not conceived within her through God’s spiritual impartation. They instead implied that Jesus was born into this world as a result of Mary’s sexual impropriety while betrothed to Joseph. Jesus of course takes exception to that. He goes on to give the Pharisees and scribes a hard dressing down in which he flat out says to them “**You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father.**” We’ll pick it up at verse 48 following Jesus’ initial verbal beatdown.

John 8:48-59 (NASB) “**48** The Jews answered and said to Him, “Do we not rightly say that You are a Samaritan, and You have a demon?” **49** Jesus answered, “**I do not have a demon; on the contrary, I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me. 50** But I am not seeking My glory; there is One who seeks it, and judges. **51** Truly, truly I say to you, if anyone follows My word, he will never see death.” **52** The Jews said to Him, “Now we know that You have a demon. Abraham died, and the prophets as well; and yet You say, ‘**If anyone follows My word, he will never taste of death.**’ **53** You are not greater than our father Abraham, who died, are You? The prophets died too. Whom do You make Yourself out to be?” **54** Jesus answered, “**If I glorify Myself, My glory is nothing; it is My Father who glorifies Me, of whom you say, ‘He is our God’; 55** and you have not come to know Him, but I know Him. And if I say that I do not know Him, I will be a liar like

you; but I do know Him, and I follow His word. **56** Your father Abraham was overjoyed that he would see My day, and he saw it and rejoiced.” **57** So the Jews said to Him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and You have seen Abraham?” **58** Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly I say to you, before Abraham was born [Lit *came into being*], I am. **59** Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him, but Jesus hid Himself and left the temple grounds.”

Did you catch it? In verse 58 when Jesus said “Truly, truly I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am.”, he was making two very weighty claims in this one statement:

1 – He (Jesus) claimed that he was and is the Lord almighty who was in existence before, during, and after Abraham unto eternity.

2 – He was also claiming to be the voice of the covenant God of Israel who spoke to Moses from within the burning bush in Exodus 3. Jesus was in fact and is the great I AM.

In the Jewish culture for anyone to make the fallacious claim that they were God was blasphemy. It is of course still blasphemy today. By Mosaic law the punishment for blaspheming the name of the Lord was death by stoning – Leviticus 24:16. The scribes and Pharisees could not and would not accept the truth of Jesus’ statements which is why they picked up stones to chuck at him in John 8:59. Jesus knew exactly what he was saying and who he was. His was the voice who called to Moses, He was the being in the burning bush, and He spoke to his servant face to face. In Exodus 3 in the wilderness of Horeb, The angel of the Lord, Jesus Christ, strikes again!

SIDE NOTE: In Genesis 18 Abraham has an encounter with God. In this encounter not only does Abraham speak with the Lord face to face, but He serves Him and his two angel companions a non-cosher meal. Tell that to your Jewish friends and watch them have a meltdown. We’ve already established according to Exodus 33:20 that no one can look upon the face of God the Father and live. I believe therefore that in the Genesis 18 encounter, Abraham was conversing with the angel of the Lord – Jesus Christ. This definitely lends more credence to Jesus’ statement to the scribes and Pharisees in John 8:56 that their “father Abraham was overjoyed that he would see My day, and he saw it and rejoiced.” Food for thought.

Next up we’re gonna take a look at the sordid and somewhat humorous story of Balaam and his ass. At this point in the Biblical timeline Israel is wandering in the wilderness outside Canaan. This was in punishment for Israel’s rebellion against Moses and God after ten of the twelve spies who spied out the land of Canaan had returned and given a bad report of what they saw. The people of Israel had a meltdown when they learned that Canaan was inhabited by cannibalistic giants of the Nephilim and Rephaim tribes. For this God sentenced them to wander in the wilderness for forty years. Following a number of blunders and repentant times for Israel, they traveled to the valley in the land of Moab (one of the tribes of Lot). They were attacked in Jahaz by Sihon, king of the Amorites (a Nephilim tribe) and won the ensuing battle. Then as they were headed from there up by way of Bashan, the Rephaim king of Bashan, Og, and his people attacked Israel at Edrei. Israel won this battle as well killing Og, his sons, and every last one of his people. After these two intense wars with the Nephilim, “the sons of Israel journeyed on, and camped in the plains of Moab beyond the Jordan opposite Jericho (Numbers 22:1).” Balak the king of Moab worrying that Israel would utterly consume the land, decided to attack Israel and drive them out. However because Israel was too numerous and mighty for him to handle, Balak

sent his messengers with money to commission the prophet Balaam to come and curse Israel for him that he might defeat them in battle. It's understood from the text that Balaam was all too willing to go a-whoring after the king's riches, even at the cost of God's chosen people. Instead of doing the right thing and sending Balak's men back with the message of "Up yours O king, I ain't cursing Israel", he tells Balak's men "Spend the night here, and I will bring word back to you just as the Lord may speak to me (Numbers 22:8)." At God's behest Balaam refused to go with Balak's messengers and curse Israel. When the messengers came to Balaam a second time God gave him leave to go with them, with the caveat that Balaam only do what God would tell him to (Numbers 22:20). However it should be noted that while God permitted Balaam to go, He was angry with him for the condition of his heart as he prepared to leave. The text seems to suggest that Balaam was fully expecting and planning to go curse Israel, provided God gave him the words to utter in speaking said curse. We'll pick up the story at Numbers 22:22 as Balaam is enroute to see king Balak.

*****Numbers 22:22-41*** (NASB) **The Angel and Balaam****

22 But God was angry that he was going, and the angel of the Lord took his stand in the road as an adversary against him. Now he was riding on his donkey, and his two servants were with him. **23** When the donkey saw the angel of the Lord standing in the road with his sword drawn in his hand, the donkey turned off from the road and went into the field; and Balaam struck the donkey to guide her back onto the road. **24** Then the angel of the Lord stood in a narrow path of the vineyards, with a stone wall on this side and on that side. **25** When the donkey saw the angel of the Lord, she pressed herself against the wall and pressed Balaam's foot against the wall, so he struck her again. **26** Then the angel of the Lord went further, and stood in a narrow place where there was no way to turn to the right or to the left. **27** When the donkey saw the angel of the Lord, she lay down under Balaam; so Balaam was angry and struck the donkey with his staff. **28** Then the Lord opened the mouth of the donkey, and she said to Balaam, "What have I done to you, that you have struck me these three times?" **29** And Balaam said to the donkey, "It is because you have made a mockery of me! If only there had been a sword in my hand! For I would have killed you by now!" **30** But the donkey said to Balaam, "Am I not your donkey on which you have ridden all your life to this day? Have I ever been in the habit of doing such a thing to you?" And he said, "No."

31 Then the Lord opened Balaam's eyes, and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way with his sword drawn in his hand; and he bowed all the way to the ground [prostrated himself to his face]. **32** Then the angel of the Lord said to him, "Why have you struck your donkey these three times? Behold, I have come out as an adversary, because your way was reckless and contrary to me. **33** But the donkey saw me and turned away from me these three times. If she had not turned away from me, I certainly would have killed you just now, and let her live." **34** So Balaam said to the angel of the Lord, "I have sinned, for I did not know that you were standing in the way against me. Now then, if it is displeasing to you, I will turn back." **35** But the angel of the Lord said to Balaam, "Go with the men, but you shall speak only the word that I tell [speak to] you." So Balaam went along with the representatives of Balak.

Alright lets dissect this one. So there's Balaam just sitting on his ass when the angel of the Lord shows up with sword in hand to block his path. Balaam cannot see the angel, but his ass is terrified and moves to get the heck out of there. This pisses Balaam off and after whooping his

ass, and then talking to his ass, God opens Balaam's eyes so he can see the angel of the Lord that his formerly dumb-ass has been staring at the whole time. So what's ole' Balaam do, he prostrates himself before the Lord in worship and reverent fear – smart boy. The angel of the Lord doesn't correct Balaam like the angel in Revelation 22:8-9 does the Apostle John. Why? Because the angel of the Lord is Jesus Christ and is worthy of all our praise and worship. Then when Balaam offers to go back the way he came, the angel of the Lord uses the same kind of language that God used when He spoke to Balaam back in verse 20. He does this in the first person laying claim to deity as the Lord God, and reiterates that Balaam was to go with Balak's men but was only to speak the word He would tell him. Balaam does as commanded, and in the following chapters king Balak brings him up to Bamoth-baal (the high places of Baal) to curse Israel. Bad news for Balak though, as the word the Lord keeps giving Balaam to speak is in prophesy of blessing for Israel. File this discourse with the angel of the Lord away as another God-encounter.

Next up we'll check in with Joshua, the son of Nun, in the not too distant future while he is leading God's people into battle against the fortified city of Rephaim known as Jericho. Once Israel's forty years of wandering in the wilderness came to an end and Moses died, the Lord enlisted Joshua to lead Israel into the promised land. Joshua was charged with destroying every last remnant of the Rephaim in the land of Canaan in what has come to be known as the Nephilim Wars. Jericho is the first stop on the war campaign through Canaan.

*****Joshua 5:13-15*** (NASB) “**13** Now it came about when Joshua was by Jericho, he raised his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing opposite him with his sword drawn in his hand, and Joshua went to him and said to him, “Are you for us or for our enemies?” **14** He said, “No; rather I have come now as captain of the army of the Lord.” And Joshua fell on his face to the ground, and bowed down, and said to him, “What has my lord to say to his servant?” **15** And the captain of the Lord's army said to Joshua, “Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy.” And Joshua did so.”**

This one is pretty cut and dry. Although the text doesn't name the sword-wielding man who Joshua encounters as the angel of the Lord, the man announces himself as “captain of the army of the Lord.” We know from Revelation 19:11-19 that the captain of the armies of heaven is Jesus Christ – so we can assume that the man Joshua is speaking with in this passage is the angel of the Lord. And just so there's no confusion, the Archangel Michael also leads a number of warring angels under Jesus in Revelation 12:1-9. There are Biblically illiterate individuals who are given to believe that Jesus and Michael are one in the same. However, this simply is not the case. As chief angel under Christ who is known as the King of Kings, Michael is referred to as “the great prince who stands *guard* over the sons of Israel in Daniel 12:1. Michael is also incapable of leveling a rebuke at Satan (Jude verses 8 & 9). This is not a limitation that God and his Son are restricted to. In the episode we just read with Joshua, after taking in the armed man standing before him, he prostrates himself before the angel of the Lord in an act of worship. He is also not corrected for doing so. In verse 15 the angel then says to Joshua “Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy.” This command to holy reverence is almost verbatim the same command that God gives to Moses in Exodus 3:5 during the burning bush episode. From this we can conclude that just as Jesus in angelic form spoke to Moses, he likewise spoke to Joshua.

Next up we are jumping into the book of Judges. Israel gets out of pocket a lot in Judges and endures harsh punishments at the hands of conquering nations for their crimes against God and man. After being sufficiently punished for their deviant ways, God always raised up a champion to judge Israel and liberate them from their enemies. At this point in the Biblical timeline Israel is in the promised land in earnest. God had commanded Israel back in Joshua 1 to conquer and take complete possession of all the land of Canaan. Lead by Joshua, son of Nun, Israel came through Canaan like a camel-riding wrecking-ball laying waste to the inhabitants thereof. Although Joshua went as hard as he possibly could up into his old age, he unfortunately was unable to finish the conquest of Canaan. So it was left to the 12 tribes of Israel to finish the job in Joshua 13. Israel failed in utterly driving out the Nephilim and Rephaim inhabitants of Canaan, and instead elected to put the remnants of their enemies to forced labor in Judges 1. We'll pick up it up in Judges 2 as the Angel of the Lord recounts Israel's failings to them and then declares the chastisement that is to beset them for their grave error.

*****Judges 2:1-5*** (NASB) **Israel Rebuked****

“**1** Now the angel of the Lord came up from Gilgal to Bochim. And he said, “I brought you up out of Egypt and led you into the land which I have sworn to your fathers; and I said, ‘I will never break My covenant with you, **2** and as for you, you shall not make a covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall tear down their altars.’ But you have not obeyed Me [listened to My voice]; what is this thing that you have done? **3** Therefore I also said, ‘I will not drive them out from you; but they will become like thorns in your sides, and their gods will be a snare to you.’” **4** Now when the angel of the Lord spoke these words to all the sons of Israel, the people raised their voices and wept. **5** So they named that place Bochim [weepers]; and there they sacrificed to the Lord.”

Much like the previous encounter this one is pretty straight forward as well. In this passage the angel of the Lord lays claim to deity as he speaks in the first person about the acts he carried out, the commands he gave, and the retribution he exacts on his people. Each of the points the angel of the Lord makes in this passage refer to a specific instance of God's communication with His people:

- In Exodus 20:2 God says to Israel “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery [Lit *slaves*].”
- In the terms of His covenant with Abraham in Genesis 17, God says to him “I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an *everlasting* covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.” God renews this covenant with Israel after their flight from Egypt in Exodus 34.
- Concerning the upcoming conquest of the land of Canaan and its inhabitants in Exodus 23, God says to Israel in verses 30-33 “**30** I will drive them out from you little by little, until you become fruitful and take possession of the land. **31** I will set your boundary from the Red Sea to the sea of the Philistines, and from the wilderness to the Euphrates River; for I will hand over the inhabitants of the land to you, and you will drive them out from you. **32** You shall make no covenant with them or with their gods. **33** They shall not

live in your land, otherwise they will make you sin against Me; for if you serve their gods, it is certain to be a snare to you.”

These passages make it clear and provide even more evidence that God and the angel of the Lord are one in the same. Next up we will continue with Judges chapter 5. Following the defeat of Jabin king of Canaan and the commander of his army Sisera, two of the stars of the show, the prophetess Deborah and army commander Barak sing a song of triumph.

*****Judges 5:19-23*** (NASB) “19 “The kings came and fought; Then the kings of Canaan fought At Taanach near the waters of Megiddo; They took no plunder in silver. 20 The stars fought from heaven, From their paths they fought against Sisera. 21 The torrent of Kishon swept them away, The ancient torrent, the torrent Kishon. My soul, march on with strength! 22 Then the horses’ hoofs beat From the galloping, the galloping of his mighty stallions. 23 ‘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.’”**

Beyond a quick detailing about the angel of the Lord cursing the city of Meroz, there isn’t much else concerning him in the song. I include this entry in my list primarily to ensure that I cover each encounter with the angel of the Lord. Next up is Gideon’s visit from the angel of the Lord in Judges 6.

*****Judges 6:11-27*** (NASB) **Gideon Is Visited****

“11 Then the angel of the Lord came and sat under the oak that was in Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, as his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the wine press in order to save it from the Midianites. 12 And the angel of the Lord appeared to him and said to him, “The Lord is with you, valiant warrior.” 13 Then Gideon said to him, “O my lord, if the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all His miracles which our fathers told us about, saying, ‘Did the Lord not bring us up from Egypt?’ But now the Lord has abandoned us and handed us over to Midian.” 14 And the Lord looked at [turned toward] him and said, “Go in this strength of yours and save Israel from the hand of Midian. Have I not sent you?” 15 But he said to Him, “O Lord, how [with what] am I to save Israel? Behold, my family is the least in Manasseh, and I am the youngest in my father’s house.” 16 Yet the Lord said to him, “I will certainly be with you, and you will defeat [strike] Midian as one man.” 17 So Gideon said to Him, “If now I have found favor in Your sight, then perform for me a sign that it is You speaking with me. 18 Please do not depart from here until I come back to You, and bring out my offering and lay it before You.” And He said, “I will remain until you return.”

19 Then Gideon went in and prepared a young goat and unleavened bread from an ephah [3/5 bushel or 22 liter] of flour; he put the meat in a basket and the broth in a pot, and brought them out to him under the oak and presented them. 20 And the angel of God said to him, “Take the meat and the unleavened bread and lay them on this rock, and pour out the broth.” And he did so. 21 Then the angel of the Lord put out the end of the staff that was in his hand and touched the meat and the unleavened bread; and fire came up from the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened bread. Then the angel of the Lord vanished [departed] from his sight. 22 When Gideon perceived that he was the angel of the Lord, he [Gideon] said, “Oh, Lord God! For I have seen the angel of the Lord face to face!” 23 But the Lord said to him, “Peace to you, do not be

afraid; you shall not die.” **24** Then Gideon built an altar there to the Lord and named it The Lord is Peace [Heb *Yahweh-shalom*]. To this day it is still in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

25 Now on the same night the Lord said to him, “Take your father’s bull and a second bull seven years old, and tear down the altar of Baal which belongs to your father, and cut down the Asherah that is beside it; **26** and build an altar to the Lord your God on the top of this stronghold in an orderly way, and take a second bull and offer a burnt offering with the wood of the Asherah which you shall cut down.” **27** Then Gideon took ten men from his servants and did as the Lord had spoken to him; and because he was too afraid of his father’s household and the men of the city to do it by day, he did it by night.”

This is a pretty cool encounter the outcome of which will take Gideon on the adventure of a lifetime. In Judges 7 Gideon will go on to lead 300 of God’s people in victorious battle against the Midianites, the Amalekites, and the people [Lit sons] of the east. Here now in chapter 6 however, we see his recruitment by Jesus Christ himself. Verse 11 of this passage indicates that it is God’s emissary the angel of the Lord who approaches Gideon. We see the interchangeable titles of “angel of the Lord” and “Lord” employed again as verses 14 & 16 refer to the angel as “the Lord.” Gideon also calls the angel “Lord” proper in verse 15. This encounter even harkens back to Exodus 33:20 and the promise of death to those who look upon the unobscured face of God. After the angel of the Lord departs, Gideon realizes who he’s been talking to and rightly fears that death will be coming on swift wings for him. God calms him down by saying “Peace to you, do not be afraid; you shall not die.” Judges 6 clearly demonstrates that God and the angel of the Lord are again one in the same.

Sticking with the book of Judges we will continue on with chapter 13. Israel is up to their old tom-foolery again and has to endure the Lord’s punishment at the hands of the Philistine’s.

*****Judges 13*** (NASB) Philistines Oppress Again**

1 Now the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord handed them over to the Philistines for forty years.

2 And there was a man of Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah; and his wife was infertile and had not given birth to any children. **3** Then the angel of the Lord appeared to the woman and said to her, “Behold now, you are infertile and have not given birth; but you will conceive and give birth to a son. **4** And now, be careful not to drink wine or strong drink, nor eat any unclean thing [I.e. ritually unclean]. **5** For behold, you will conceive and give birth to a son, and no razor shall come upon his head, for the boy shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb; and he will begin to save Israel from the hands of the Philistines.” **6** Then the woman came and told her husband, saying, “A man of God came to me, and his appearance was like the appearance of the angel of God, very awesome. So I did not ask him where he came from, nor did he tell me his name. **7** But he said to me, ‘Behold, you shall conceive and give birth to a son, and now you shall not drink wine or strong drink, nor eat any unclean thing [I.e. ritually unclean], for the boy shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb to the day of his death.’”

8 Then Manoah pleaded with the Lord and said, “Lord, please let the man of God whom You have sent come to us again so that he may teach us what we are to do for the boy who is to be

born.” **9** And God listened to the voice of Manoah; and the angel of God came again to the woman as she was sitting in the field, but Manoah her husband was not with her. **10** So the woman hurried and ran, and told her husband, “Behold, the man who came the other day has appeared to me!” **11** So Manoah got up and followed his wife, and when he came to the man he said to him, “Are you the man who spoke to the woman?” And he said, “I am.” **12** Then Manoah said, “Now when your words are fulfilled, what shall be the boy’s way of life and his vocation?” **13** And the angel of the Lord said to Manoah, “The woman shall pay attention to all that I said. **14** She shall not eat anything that comes from the vine nor drink wine or strong drink, nor eat any unclean thing; she shall keep all that I commanded.”

15 Then Manoah said to the angel of the Lord, “Please let us detain you so that we may prepare a young goat for you.” **16** But the angel of the Lord said to Manoah, “Though you detain me, I will not eat your food [bread], but if you prepare a burnt offering, offer it to the Lord.” For Manoah did not know that he was the angel of the Lord. **17** And Manoah said to the angel of the Lord, “What is your name, so that when your words are fulfilled, we may honor you?” **18** But the angel of the Lord said to him, “Why do you ask my name, for it is wonderful?” [H6382 - I.e., incomprehensible; see Isaiah 9:6]” **19** So Manoah took the young goat along with the grain offering and offered it on the rock to the Lord; and He performed wonders while Manoah and his wife looked on. **20** For it came about when the flame went up from the altar toward heaven, that the angel of the Lord ascended in the flame of the altar. When Manoah and his wife saw this, they fell on their faces to the ground.

21 Now the angel of the Lord did not appear to Manoah or his wife again. Then Manoah knew that he was the angel of the Lord. **22** So Manoah said to his wife, “We will certainly die, for we have seen God.” **23** But his wife said to him, “If the Lord had desired to kill us, He would not have accepted a burnt offering and a grain offering from our hands, nor would He have shown us all these things, nor would He have let us hear things like this at this time.”

24 So the woman gave birth to a son, and named him Samson; and the child grew up and the Lord blessed him. **25** And the Spirit of the Lord began to stir him when he was in Mahaneh-dan [I.e. the camp of Dan], between Zorah and Eshtaol.”

Alright let’s get into this one. For those familiar with the book of Judges, you’ll note that chapter 13 kicks off the epic tale of Sampson and Delilah. Sampson was an incredibly strong and powerful man in the Lord’s employ as the tool of His vengeance against the Philistines. In this encounter the angel of the Lord first shows up to the barren wife of a Hebrew man named Manoah. He issues a number of commands concerning what she and the child that she is to bear are to abstain from eating and drinking, as the child is to be a Nazirite from birth to death. No problem there. When he appears the second time, the angel of the Lord reiterates to Manoah all that he commanded the woman to adhere to. In verses 17 & 18 Manoah asks the angel of the Lord what his name is, to which the angel replies that his name is “wonderful” – i.e. “incomprehensible” as footnoted in the NASB. An interesting thing to note about this passage is that Jesus Christ is called “Wonderful Counselor” in the prophesy of the future Birth and Reign of the Prince of Peace that is laid out in Isaiah 9.

Isaiah 9:6 “For a Child will be born to us, a Son will be given to us; And the government will rest [be] on His shoulders; And His name will be called *Wonderful Counselor* [H6382], Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.”

Isaiah 9:6 doesn't just hold that Jesus will be called “Wonderful Counselor” but also “Mighty God, Eternal Father,” and “Prince of Peace.” This shows that God and Jesus are one in the same, and illustrates the unity of God the Father and God the Son into one collective being. It also adds more fuel to the claim that Jesus made in John 8:58 - “**before Abraham was born, I am.**” It's by no mistake that the NASB draws the conclusion that the angel of the Lord's name is in effect incomprehensible. The proper name for God that we know as Jehovah or Yahweh is derived from the Tetragrammaton (YHWH). The Tetragrammaton is the unpronounceable name of God – rendered in the Hebrew language as Yod-Hey-Vav-Hey (יהוה). If you haven't figured it out yet, every word, letter, number, and punctuation mark in the Bible is there by deliberate design of the Holy Spirit.

The Judges 13 encounter ends with the angel of the Lord performing “wonders” (or I'm assuming mind-bending miraculous feats) in the presence of Manoah and his wife before ascending to heaven in the flames given off by Manoah's burnt offering to God. The ending of Judges 13 also refers back to Exodus 33:20 as Manoah fears impending death when he realizes that he and his wife had gazed upon the face of God. His wife assuages his fears and the chapter ends with the birth of the Nazirite Sampson.

SIDE NOTE: According to Numbers 6 & Judges 13:5-7, a Nazirite is one who has taken a vow that:

- (1) Demands that they abstain from wine and from every product of the vine;
- (2) Requires that they not cut their hair and leave their beard untouched by a razor;
- (3) Prohibits them to touch a dead body;
- (4) Prohibits the consumption of unclean food (Judges 13:5-7; Numbers 6).

People typically maintained Nazirite status for a limited amount of time and were released from the terms of their vow following a ceremony of release. The only Nazirites for life recorded in the Bible were Samson, Samuel and John the Baptist. Fun facts.

Back to it, let's file Judges 13 away as another encounter with the preincarnate Jesus Christ.

Next up we will be jumping from Judges (arguably the darkest period in Israel's history) to another dark period, the time of Kings – marked as the time of the divided kingdoms of Israel and Judah (the Northern & Southern kingdoms) which spanned a collective 390 years. At this point in our Biblical timeline the northern kingdom of Israel is being ruled by the wicked Israelite king Ahab. During Ahab's reign and marriage to the pagan queen Jezebel, Baal worship was being strictly enforced. With that bedrock laid down, we'll take a look at 1 Kings 18 & 19 and check in on everyone's favorite Baal-mocking false-prophet slaying bro, Elijah. Our encounter with the angel of the Lord is following an incredible event atop Mt. Carmel in 1 Kings 18. At the behest of Elijah the 450 prophets of Baal and four hundred prophets of Ishtar (AKA Asherah/Ashtoreth) were assembled at Mt. Carmel where Elijah issued a challenge to them.

1 Kings 18:21-24 “**21** Then Elijah approached all the people and said, “How long are you going to struggle with the two choices? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.” But the people did not answer him so much as a word. **22** Then Elijah said to the people, “I alone am left as a prophet of the Lord, while Baal’s prophets are 450 men. **23** Now have them give us two oxen; and have them choose the one ox for themselves and cut it up, and place it on the wood, but put no fire under it; and I will prepare the other ox and lay it on the wood, and I will not put a fire under it. **24** Then you call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the Lord; and the God who answers by fire, He is God.” And all the people replied, “That is a good idea (Lit The matter is good).””

The false god Baal unsurprisingly did not respond to his prophets by igniting the sacrifice, despite all the effort the prophets put into calling out to him and cutting themselves in ritual pagan homage. After a quick prayer from Elijah to the Lord “the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt offering and the wood, and the stones and the dust; and it licked up the water” that Elijah had poured over it that was now filling the trench that he had dug around it (1 Kings 18:38). After this display of power from the true God, Jehovah, Elijah has the 450 prophets of Baal seized and brought down to the brook Kishon where he personally slaughtered every last one of them. Let’s take a look at the events that immediately followed this in 1 Kings 19.

*****1 Kings 19:1-8*** (NASB) Elijah Flees from Jezebel**

“**1** Now Ahab told Jezebel everything that Elijah had done, and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. **2** Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, “So may the gods do to me and more so, if by about this time tomorrow I do not make your life [soul] like the life [soul] of one of them.” **3** And he was afraid, and got up and ran for his life [soul] and came to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah; and he left his servant there. **4** But he himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a broom tree; and he asked for himself to die, and said, “Enough! Now, Lord, take my life [soul], for I am no better than my fathers.” **5** Then he lay down and fell asleep under a broom tree; but behold, there was an angel touching him, and he said to him, “Arise, eat!” **6** And he looked, and behold, there was at his head a round loaf of bread baked on hot coals, and a pitcher of water. So he ate and drank, and lay down again. **7** But the angel of the Lord came back a second time and touched him, and said, “Arise, eat; because the journey is too long for you.” **8** So he arose and ate and drank, and he journeyed in the strength of that food for forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the mountain of God.”

This encounter is a fairly simple one, with the exception that the angel of the Lord is delivering sustenance like an ancient world Door-Dasher. The main thing to point out in this passage is that initially in verse 5 the text states that “there was an angel touching him.” No other defining characteristic is given in that verse to identify exactly who the angel was. Verse 7 clears up the mystery by pointing out that the angel is (you guessed it) none other than the angel of the Lord – AKA Jesus Christ. We can infer plainly from this verse that the angels in verses 5 and 7 are one in the same.

Next up we are still hanging out with the prophet Elijah in 2 Kings 1.

*****2 Kings 1*** (NASB) Ahaziah's Messengers Meet Elijah**

1 Now Moab broke with Israel after the death of Ahab. **2** And Ahaziah fell through the window lattice in his upper chamber which was in Samaria, and became ill. So he sent messengers and said to them, "Go, inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron, whether I will recover from this sickness." **3** 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 to them, 'Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are going to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron?' **4** Now therefore, this is what the Lord says: 'You will not get down from the bed upon which you have lain, but you shall certainly die.'" Then Elijah departed."

5 When the messengers returned to Ahaziah, he said to them, "Why have you returned?" **6** They said to him, "A man came up to meet us and said to us, 'Go, return to the king who sent you and say to him, "This is what the Lord says: 'Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are sending messengers to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron? Therefore you will not get down from the bed upon which you have lain, but you shall certainly die.''" **7** Then he said to them, "What [*What was the appearance of*] did the man look like, who came up to meet you and spoke these words to you?" **8** And they said to him, "He was a hairy man with a leather belt [loincloth] worn around his waist." And he said, "It is Elijah the Tishbite."

9 Then the king sent to him a captain of fifty with his fifty men. And he went up to him, and behold, he was sitting on the top of the hill. And he said to him, "You man of God, the king says, 'Come down.'" **10** But Elijah replied to the captain of fifty, "If I am a man of God, may fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty." Then fire came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty men.

11 So the king again sent to him another captain of fifty with his fifty men. And he said to him, "You man of God, this is what the king says: 'Come down quickly!'" **12** But Elijah replied to them, "If I am a man of God, may fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty." Then the fire of God came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty men.

13 So the king again sent the captain of a third fifty with his fifty men. When the third captain of fifty went up, he came and bowed down on his knees before Elijah, and begged him and said to him, "You man of God, please let my life and the lives of these fifty servants of yours be precious in your sight. **14** Behold, fire came down from heaven and consumed the first two captains of fifty with their fifties; but now let my life [soul] be precious in your sight." **15** And the angel of the Lord said to Elijah, "Go down with him; do not be afraid of him." So he got up and went down with him to the king. **16** Then he said to him, "This is what the Lord says: 'Since you have sent messengers to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron—is it because there is no God in Israel to inquire of His word? Therefore you will not get down from the bed upon which you have lain, but you shall certainly die.'"

In this multi-faceted event we first see the angel of the Lord sending Elijah to the messengers of King Ahaziah to give them a word from the Lord that they could take back to the him. This is in response to King Ahaziah having fallen through the window lattice work of his upstairs chamber and suffering a wound/wounds grievous enough to ensure a swiftly impending death for himself. The word of the Lord the messengers returned with was an unfavorable one

for the king who in response sent his men to bring the prophet Elijah to him by force. Elijah has been through quite a bit in his life at this point, and he is far stronger in his convictions and faith in God than he was when he fled Queen Jezebel's wrath. So much so that the first two parties of soldiers and their captains that Ahaziah sent to retrieve Elijah were burnt to a crisp by fire that he called down from heaven. Fire-Nation eat your heart out (for all my Avatar fans out there). However, the third party's captain through successful diplomacy and humility secured safety for his men and himself, as well as garnering Elijah's cooperation at the angel of the Lord's instruction to accompany the captain back to King Ahaziah. Once there Elijah lays the same message on the king as before, only with one difference.

In Elijah's first dialogue with the angel of the Lord in verses 3 & 4, the angel tells him "Arise, go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria and say to them, 'Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are going to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron?' **4** Now therefore, this is what the Lord says: 'You will not get down from the bed upon which you have lain, but you shall certainly die.'" As Elijah recounts the angel's words for the second time in verse 16 he says "This is what the Lord says: 'Since you have sent messengers to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron—is it because there is no God in Israel to inquire of His word? Therefore you will not get down from the bed upon which you have lain, but you shall certainly die.'" Did you catch it? Elijah rightly attributes the entirety of what the angel of the Lord said as being spoken to him directly from God. The angel of the Lord (Jesus Christ) first questions King Ahaziah in the first-person about his communing with Baal-zebub, and then makes the distinction between himself and God the Father when he says "this is what the Lord says: 'You will not get down from the bed upon which you have lain, but you shall certainly die.'" It's also possible that the angel of the Lord is speaking in the third-person (as we know God is given to do). However, given our prior premise that the angel of the Lord is Jesus Christ, he is the arbiter of God and is himself God in tangible form. Knowing this we see that nothing spoken by Elijah or the angel of the Lord are in conflict. Our case for the identity of the angel of the Lord just keeps getting stronger.

Staying with 2 Kings we'll take a look at chapter 19 where the angel of the Lord shows off his war-like prowess by amassing a body-count of Assyrian soldiers that far exceeds the death tolls from the initial blasts of the two nukes we dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki towards the end of WWII. At this point in the Biblical timeline the God-fearing King Hezekiah is reigning in Israel. This is coming on the heels of a three year siege of the city and region of Samaria by Sennacherib, king of Assyria. The siege was a successful one resulting in Sennacherib capturing Samaria and leading the people of Israel into exile to Assyria. King Hezekiah eventually revolted against King Sennacherib and did not serve him. He also "defeated the Philistines as far as Gaza (2 Kings 18:8)." Over the next 10 years, despite King Hezekiah's successes in battle, the kings of Assyria continued to take ground in Israel. Assyria's war campaign was such that "Now in the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, Sennacherib king of Assyria marched against all the fortified cities of Judah and seized them (2 Kings 18:8)."

King Sennacherib then sends messengers with a large army to Jerusalem to demand their unconditional surrender or else suffer his wrath. The prophet Isaiah encourages King Hezekiah, telling him that not only would King Sennacherib abandon his campaign and return to his own land but that he would also be killed by his own people with the sword. King Hezekiah then

received a God-defying letter from King Sennacherib. He takes this letter to the Lord in prayer and petitions His intervention and help. God responds encouragingly to King Hezekiah through His prophet Isaiah, saying that He was gonna put the hurt on ole' Sennacheribbers and save the day for Israel. This is where we find ourselves presently. Isaiah 37 describes the exact same events almost verbatim, so we are just going to focus on the 2 Kings account. We'll pick it up with 2 Kings 19:32-37.

*****2 Kings 19:32-37*** (NASB) Assyrians Destroyed**

“**32** ‘Therefore this is what the Lord says about the king of Assyria: “He will not come to this city nor shoot an arrow there; and he will not come before it with a shield nor heap up an assault ramp against it. **33** By the way that he came, by [Lit *it*] the same he will return, and he shall not come to this city,’” declares the Lord. **34** ‘For I will protect this city to save it for My own sake, and for My servant David’s sake.’”

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 the rest got up early in the morning, behold, all of [Lit *it*] the 185,000 were [Lit *dead bodies*] dead. **36** So Sennacherib the king of Assyria departed and [Lit *went and returned*] returned home, and lived at Nineveh. **37** Then it came about, as he was worshiping in the house of Nisroch his god, that [Some ancient mss *his sons Adrammelech*] Adrammelech and Sharezer killed him with the sword; and they escaped to the land of Ararat. And his son Esarhaddon became king in his place.”

This event is another fairly straight forward one. Only this is the first time that we've seen the angel of the Lord engage in physical combat – and not just combat with a single person, but with a multitude of enemy warriors. And it all took place in one night. The second combat engagement in 1 Chronicles 21 that we will be covering next, pales in comparison to the butchering that was wrought here in 2 Kings 19. The slaughter of 2 Kings 19 also dwarfs the shock and awe of the two nukes, Fat Man and Little Boy, that were dropped on Japan at the tail end of WWII. In the initial blasts that utterly destroyed the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on August 6th & 9th, 1945, a combined total of around 113,000 people were killed almost instantly. The combined total of casualties, including both the dead and injured, numbered around 200,000. We're talking literally Biblical levels of devastation inflicted by the first and only two nuclear bombs ever used in a war. However the angel of the Lord, a single enraged supernatural being of light killed 185,000 Assyrian hostiles by himself in a single evening – 72,000 more than the 113,000 slain the by initial blasts of Fat Man & Little Boy. When you piss off the angel of the Lord by trying to rout his chosen people, there is literal hell to pay. And to add insult to injury, King Sennacherib runs home like the little bitch he is only to be killed by his two sons Adrammelech and Sharezer while praying to the false god Nisroch. It's so poetic it would arouse ole Bill Shakespeare.

Next we'll catch up with David and the grim events surrounding one of his biggest faux pas during his reign as King of Israel.

*****1 Chronicles 21*** (NASB) Census Brings Plague**

“**1** Then Satan stood up against Israel and incited David to count Israel. **2** So David said to Joab and to the leaders of the people, “Go, count Israel from Beersheba to Dan, and bring me word so

that I may know their number.” **3** But Joab said, “May the Lord add to His people a hundred times as many as they are! My lord the king, are they not all my lord’s servants? Why does my lord seek this thing? Why should he be a cause of guilt to Israel?” **4** Nevertheless, the king’s word prevailed against Joab. Therefore, Joab departed and went throughout Israel, and came to Jerusalem. **5** Then Joab gave the number of the census of the people to David. Israel was 1,100,000 men in all who drew the sword; and Judah was 470,000 men who drew the sword. **6** But he did not count [muster] Levi and Benjamin among them, because the king’s command [word] was abhorrent to Joab.

7 Now [it was evil in the sight of God] God was displeased with this thing, so He struck Israel. **8** David said to God, “I have sinned greatly, by doing this thing. But now, please overlook Your servant’s guilt, for I have behaved very foolishly.”

9 The Lord spoke to Gad, David’s seer, saying, **10** “Go and speak to David, saying, ‘This is what the Lord says: “I extend to you three choices; choose for yourself one of them, which I will do to you.”’” **11** So Gad came to David and said to him, “This is what the Lord says: ‘Take for yourself **12** three years of famine, or three months to be swept away before your foes while the sword of your enemies overtakes you, or else three days of the sword of the Lord: a plague in the land, and the angel of the Lord destroying throughout the territory of Israel.’ Now, therefore, consider what answer I shall bring back to Him who sent me.” **13** David said to Gad, “I am in great distress; please let me fall into the hand of the Lord, for His mercies are very great. But do not let me fall into human hands.”

14 So the Lord sent a plague on Israel; seventy thousand men of Israel fell. **15** And God sent an angel to Jerusalem to destroy it; but as he was about to destroy it, the Lord saw and was sorry about the catastrophe, and said to the destroying angel, “It is enough; now relax your hand.” And the angel of the Lord was standing by the threshing floor of [In 2 Sam 24:16, *Araunah*] Ornan the Jebusite. **16** Then David raised his eyes and saw the angel of the Lord standing between earth and heaven, with his drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem. Then David and the elders, covered with sackcloth, fell on their faces. **17** And David said to God, “Is it not I who commanded to count the people? Indeed, I am the one who has sinned and acted very wickedly, but these sheep, what have they done? Lord, my God, just let Your hand be against me and my father’s household, and not against Your people as a plague.”

David’s Altar

“**18** Then the angel of the Lord commanded [said to] Gad to say to David, that David was to go up and build an altar to the Lord on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. **19** So David went up at the word of Gad, which he spoke in the name of the Lord. **20** Now Ornan turned back and saw the angel, and his four sons who were with him hid themselves. And Ornan was threshing wheat. **21** As David came to Ornan, Ornan looked and saw David, and went out from the threshing floor and prostrated himself to David with his face to the ground. **22** Then David said to Ornan, “Give me the site [place] of this threshing floor, so that I may build on it an altar to the Lord; you shall give it to me for the full price, so that the plague may be brought to a halt from the people.” **23** But Ornan said to David, “Take it for yourself, and may my lord the king do what is good in his sight. See, I am giving the oxen for burnt offerings, and the threshing sledges for wood and the wheat for the grain offering; I am giving it all.” **24** Nevertheless, King David

said to Ornan, “No, but I will certainly buy it for the full price; for I will not take what is yours for the Lord, nor offer a burnt offering [gratuitously] which costs me nothing.” **25** So David gave Ornan six hundred shekels of gold by weight for the site [place]. **26** Then David built an altar there to the Lord, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. And he called to the Lord, and He answered him with fire from heaven on the altar of burnt offering. **27** The Lord commanded the angel, and he returned his sword to its sheath.

28 At that time, when David saw that the Lord had answered him on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite, he offered sacrifice there. **29** For the tabernacle of the Lord, which Moses had made in the wilderness, and the altar of burnt offering were on the high place at Gibeon at that time. **30** But David could not go before it to inquire of God, for he was terrified by the sword of the angel of the Lord.”

All right, on its face this entire affair is intense beyond what I imagine most of us can conceive – with the exceptions of Hideki Anno, Hayao Miyazaki, Peter Jackson, and perhaps a smattering of others. This same series of events is also detailed for us in 2 Samuel 24 and took place late in David’s reign. We’ll touch on both passages, but our focus will be largely on the events as they are laid out in 1 Chronicles 21. From the onset we see King David tempted by Satan into taking a census of all the nation of Israel. David does so and incurs the wrath of God. Ignoring the time and man-power required to undertake such a task in Biblical times with the resources at King David’s disposal (nine months and twenty days), this action I’m sure strikes most of us as a virtually innocuous event. God’s anger at King David for doing so, I’ll wager also has most of us scratching our heads. The act of taking a census of the people of Israel is not necessarily sinful to the Lord in and of itself. However, David’s selfish and prideful motivations for doing so are where the bloody error lied.

Concerning taking a census of Israel, the Lord said to Moses back in Exodus 30:12 “When you take a census of the sons of Israel to count them, then each one of them shall give a ransom for himself to the Lord, when you count them, so that there will be no *plague* among them when you count them.” Verses 13-16 of Exodus 30 go on to detail that a half shekel was to be collected from everyone counted in the census, and that the money collected was to be given “for the service of the tent of meeting.”

It is clear from 1 Chronicles 21:7 & 8 that David did not collect the offering that was owed to the Lord, as the Lord strikes Israel with a plague immediately following the conclusion of the census. King David also had the people of Israel counted for his own curiosity and selfish purposes. The numbers that David’s army commander Joab reports, are the numbers of able-bodied fighting men (Lit - men who drew the sword) in both the Northern and Southern kingdoms of Israel. He did not include the civilians in his counting because David was uninterested in anything but knowing the full strength of his military might. It’s quite possible that David had a mind to conquer a neighboring nation and was basing his decision to engage with the enemy on how strong in number his army was. Basing military operations solely on the strength of his army instead of the providence and power of God, would have shown David’s lack of faith in the Lord and potentially his desire to engage an enemy without being instructed and sanctioned by God to do so. Whatever his reasoning may have been, it’s clear from the text that God was pissed at David’s decision to number Israel’s warriors in this fashion. God also

showed extreme patience with David by not afflicting Israel with a plague until the conclusion of the census. I believe that had David required Joab to number both the warriors and civilians as well as collect the half shekel from each for the service of the tent of meeting, that God would not have smote Israel the way that he did. Too bad David didn't.

David realized what a mistake he he'd made right quick and begged God to relent. God heard David's cry, but unfortunately for David and Israel, punishment for this transgression of the law was unavoidable. As we read in 1 Chronicles 21:9-13 God offers David the choice of one of three different punishments – 3 years of famine, 3 months of Israel being ravaged by her enemies, or 3 days of God's direct wrath at the hands of the angel of the Lord. David chooses the third option, leaning on the mercy of God and not man. Once the choice was made the fireworks kicked off with the angel of the Lord going scorched earth on Israel. The same account in 1 Samuel 24:15-16 says “**16** So the Lord sent a plague upon Israel from the morning until the appointed time, and seventy thousand men of the people from Dan to Beersheba died. **16** When the angel extended his hand toward Jerusalem to destroy it, the Lord relented of the disaster and said to the angel who destroyed the people, “It is enough! Now drop your hand!” The Bible doesn't describe exactly how the angel of the Lord went about slaughtering Israel, but I'll see if I can put the carnage into perspective for you.

During the Civil War 51,112 men died in the Battle of Gettysburg that took place July 1-3, 1863 – three days. That's 17,038 deaths a day, 710 deaths an hour, 12 deaths a minute, and 1 death every 5 seconds for 3 days straight. During the 3 days of Israel's wrathful punishment in 1 Samuel 24 & 1 Chronicles 21, 70,000 men died. That's 23,334 deaths a day, 973 deaths an hour, 17 deaths a minute, and 1 death every 3.5 seconds. At Gettysburg you had multiple engagements taking place all at the same time as a combined total of 165,620 men fought against each other with muskets, pistols, bayonets, sabers, knives, cannons, and their fists. And we consider the Battle of Gettysburg to have been an all-out blood bath. During the three days of the wrath of God, one super angel (the angel of the Lord) obliterated 70,000 people by himself. Historically we've seen the wrath and punishment of God being doled out in the forms of a World-wide flood (Genesis 7), fire & brimstone (Genesis 19), fire from heaven (Leviticus 10), an earthquake (Numbers 16), fiery serpents (Numbers 21), and Giant rocks from heaven (Joshua 10), just to name a few. Now bearing that in mind, the scene in 1 Chronicles 21 had to have been an absolutely horrific nightmare. I don't know what all methods the angel of the Lord employed in literally decimating Israel (killing 1 out of every 10 people), but I think it's safe to assume that he didn't just use his sword.

This is the second time that we've seen the angel of the Lord use his sword for more than just intimidation. However, this depiction of Jesus is quite contra to what those with only a surface level understanding of the Bible believe about him. Many people have a hard time believing that Jesus would exhibit such wrath, let alone kill people. Yet Jesus himself said in Matthew 10:34-36 “**34** “Do not think that I came to bring [Lit *cast*] peace on the earth; I did not come to bring [Lit *cast*] peace, but a sword. **35** For I came to turn a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; **36** and a person's enemies will be the members of his household.”

Matthew 25:31-46 paints a clear and vivid picture of how in the end, the World is to be judged by Jesus Christ. But leading up to Judgement Day and after Jesus comes to gather up his Church, ten kings of the Earth will make war against Jesus. And “The lamb (Jesus) will conquer them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings (Revelation 17:14).” Moreover during **The Coming of Christ** in Revelation 19, Jesus’ “eyes are a flame of fire” and “He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood” as He makes war against “the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies.” After hurling the beast and his false prophet into the lake of fire, Jesus slaughters with the sword (protruding from His mouth) the rest of those on Earth who stood against Him.

In Exodus 23:20-23 as the people of Israel are being given their marching orders for the conquest of Canaan, God tells them "**20** Behold, I am going to send an angel (the angel of the Lord) before you to guard you along the way and to bring you into the place which I have prepared. **21** Be attentive to him and obey his voice; do not be rebellious toward him, for he will not pardon your rebellion, since *My name is in him*. **22** But if you truly obey his voice and do all that I say, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries. **23** For My angel will go before you and bring you into the land of the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; and I will completely destroy them.”

We know from exploring the book of Jude and Judges 2:1-5 that the angel God sent before Israel as they came to the promised land was the angel of the Lord – Jesus Christ. Additionally Jude, the brother of Jesus, points out in his **Warnings of History to the Ungodly** that it was Jesus Christ himself who destroyed the unbelieving Israelites who feared to enter the promised land after ten of the twelve spies Moses sent from Kadesh-barnea to spy out the land of Canaan (back in Numbers 13) returned with a bad report. Because of Israel’s fear and unbelief, the Lord “made them wander in the wilderness for forty years, until the entire generation of those who had done evil” in his sight by not subduing the promised land had completely died off (Numbers 32). Jude 5 harkens back to this grim episode in Israel’s history and reads “Now I want to remind you, though you know everything once and for all, that [One early ms *Jesus*] the Lord, after saving a people out of the land of Egypt, [Lit *the second time*] subsequently destroyed those who did not believe.” All things considered, we have to give credit where credit is due. Jesus can be one stone cold killer when he needs to be.

Alright back to 1 Chronicles 21. After slaying 70,000 men, the angel of the Lord sets his sights on the capital of Israel, Jerusalem. God sees the angel fixin’ to raze Jerusalem to the ground in verse 15 and relents from his anger, commanding the “destroying angel” to stay his hand. After David and the elders prostrate themselves before the Lord, David begs God to focus his wrath on himself and his father’s house instead of the sheeple of Israel. The angel of the Lord then sends a message to King David in verse 18 by way of his prophet Gad - saying “that David was to go up and build an altar to the Lord on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite.” The key thing to point out about this command comes in verse 19 where the Bible points out that “David went up at the word of Gad, which he spoke *in the name of the Lord*.” The angel of the Lord never prefaced to Gad “Thus sayeth the Lord” or words to indicate that he was speaking on the Lord’s behalf. We also don’t see God giving the angel of the Lord this command to relay to Gad. The angel of the Lord simply gave the command of himself. Verse 19 of this passage makes the implicit claim (like the Bible has so many times before) that the angel of the Lord is God in his handleable viewable state. David follows the Lord’s command to build an alter to Him. David

then offers burnt offerings and peace offerings, calls out to the Lord, and is answered by the Lord “with fire from heaven on the altar of burnt offering.” God then calls off the angel of the Lord and the whole harrowing episode comes to a close.

Next up we are jumping into the book of Psalms.

*****Psalm 34:1-9*** (NASB) **The Lord, a Provider and the One Who Rescues Me****

“**1** I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth. **2** My soul will make its boast in the Lord; The humble will hear it and rejoice. **3** Exalt the Lord with me, And let’s exalt His name together.

4 I sought the Lord and He answered me, And rescued me from all my fears. **5** They looked to Him and were radiant, And their faces will never be ashamed. **6** This wretched man cried out, and the Lord heard him, And saved him out of all his troubles. **7** The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear Him, And rescues them.

8 Taste and see that the Lord is good; How blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him! **9** Fear the Lord, you His saints; For to those who fear Him there is no lack of anything.”

Here amidst the poetry of Psalm 34 we have a quick reference to the angel of the Lord and his nature towards those who fear Him (or treat Him with reverence). He encamps around (or keeps watch over) the reverent and rescues them. The previous verse (verse 6) talks of how the Lord saved a wretched man “out of all his troubles.” We know that the angel of the Lord and the Lord God are one in the same, and by extension so are their natures. One of the most obvious demonstrations of the angel of the Lord’s rescuing/saving nature comes from 2 Kings 19 (which we recently covered). The angel of the Lord rescued Judah by going out to the camp of the invading Assyrians and slaughtering 185,000 of them in a single evening – winning the battle for Israel and driving King Sennacherib away in terror.

Verses 8 & 9 speak of blessing being upon those who take refuge in the Lord, as well as instruct the saints to fear (or walk in reverence to) the Lord. This reverent fear/respect which we are to exhibit is due only to the Lord. To suggest that God would share this position of reverence with anyone less than Himself is preposterous and theologically unsound. Verses 7 & 9 make it quite clear and reinforce the fact that the angel of the Lord and God are the same being.

SIDE NOTE: In addition to “the fear of the Lord” meaning to regard Him with respect and holy reverence, Proverbs 8:13 (ESV) tells us that “The fear of the Lord is hatred of evil.” Proverbs 1:7 also tells us that “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.” Food for thought.

Next up is a Prayer for deliverance from King David in Psalm 35.

*****Psalm 35:1-8*** **Prayer for Rescue from Enemies. A Psalm of David****

“**1** Contend, Lord, with those who contend with me; Fight against those who fight against me. **2** Take hold of buckler [I.e., small shield] and shield And rise up as my help. **3** Draw also the spear and the battle-axe to meet those who pursue me; Say to my soul, “I am your salvation.” **4** Let those be ashamed and dishonored who seek my life [soul]; Let those be turned back and

humiliated who devise evil against me. **5** Let them be like chaff before the wind, With the angel of the Lord driving them on. **6** Let their way be dark and slippery, With the angel of the Lord pursuing them. **7** For they hid their net for me without cause; Without cause they dug a pit for my soul. **8** Let destruction come upon him when he is unaware, And let the net which he hid catch him; Let him fall into that very destruction.”

There isn't a whole lot to discuss about this portion of King David's prayer in Psalm 35. We see a clear plea from David to the Lord to be rescued from his enemies. We know from 2 Kings 19 that the angel of the Lord has no problem driving out and pursuing the enemies of Israel with great vengeance and furious anger. In fact the Lord makes mention of driving Israel's enemies out from before them in the land of Canaan.

Exodus 23:27-28 “**27** I (God) will send My terror ahead of you, and throw into confusion all the people among whom you come, and I will make all your enemies turn their backs to you. **28** And I will send hornets ahead of you so that they will drive out the Hivites, the Canaanites, and the Hittites from you.”

Alright, next up we are hopping over to the book of Zechariah. We'll be taking a look at part of a vision that the prophet Zechariah is having concerning God, the angel of the Lord, and the patrolmen he's sent out upon the earth. Israel is currently in exile in Babylon under the rule of King Darius.

*****Zechariah 1:7-21*** (NASB) **Patrol of the Earth****

“**7** On the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month, that is, the month Shebat, in the second year of Darius, the word of the Lord came to Zechariah the prophet, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo, [saying] as follows: **8** I saw at night, and behold, a man was riding on a red horse, and he was standing among the myrtle trees which were in the ravine, with red, sorrel [I.e. light reddish-brown], and white horses behind him. **9** Then I said, “What are these, my lord?” And the angel who was speaking with me said to me, “I will show you what these are.” **10** And the man who was standing among the myrtle trees responded and said, “These are the ones whom the Lord has sent to [walk about through] patrol the earth.” **11** So they responded to the angel of the Lord who was standing among the myrtle trees and said, “We have [walk about through] patrolled the earth, and behold, all the earth is still [sitting] and quiet.”

12 Then the angel of the Lord said, “Lord of armies, how long will You take no pity on Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, with which You have been indignant for these seventy years?” **13** And the Lord responded to the angel who was speaking with me with gracious [good] words, comforting words. **14** So the angel who was speaking with me said to me, “Proclaim, saying, ‘This is what the Lord of armies says: “I am exceedingly jealous for Jerusalem and Zion. **15** But I am very angry with the nations who are carefree; for while I was only a little angry, they furthered the disaster [Lit helped for evil].” **16** Therefore the Lord says this: “I will return to Jerusalem with compassion; My house will be built in it,” declares the Lord of armies, “and a measuring line will be stretched over Jerusalem.”” **17** Again, proclaim, saying, ‘This is what the Lord of armies says: “My cities will again overflow with prosperity, and the Lord will again comfort Zion and again choose Jerusalem.””’

This encounter is an interesting one, and parts of it are undoubtedly mysterious and or confusing at first glance. What is understood is that the angel who speaks with Zechariah and the man who was riding atop the red horse among the myrtle trees are the same being – the angel of the Lord. There appears to be a debriefing being conducted by the angel of the Lord with his emissaries or patrolmen. In verse 12 the angel of the Lord calls out to God by the title “Lord of armies.” This is one of the many titles of God the father which was first used in 1 Samuel 1. The angel of the Lord speaks boldly to the Lord of armies as they are equals in power, stature, and holiness. An answer is demanded of the Lord of armies by the angel of the Lord (Jesus Christ), concerning how much longer God was going leave Israel in exile in Babylon under the rule of Darius of Persia. God responds to the angel of the Lord with gracious and comforting words, which are followed by a recanting of those word by the angel of the Lord to Zechariah. By now we know that the angel of the Lord is Jesus Christ and is one with God the Father and the Holy Spirit. Hence the boldness with which he goes to God seeking an audience and answers. Pretty straight forward. Last up in our list of encounters with the angel of the Lord, we’re staying with Zechariah as his vision continues into chapter 3.

*****Zechariah 3:1-7*** (NASB) **Joshua, the High Priest****

“**1** Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan [Satan is Heb for Adversary; or Accuser] standing at his right to accuse him. **2** And the Lord said to Satan, “The Lord rebuke you, Satan! Indeed, the Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a log snatched from the fire?” **3** Now Joshua was clothed in filthy garments and was standing before the angel. **4** And he responded and said to those who were standing before him, saying, “Remove the filthy garments from him.” Again he said to him, “See, I have taken your guilt away from you and will clothe [Lit to clothe] you with festive robes.” **5** Then I said, “Have them put a clean headband on his head.” So they put the clean headband on his head and clothed him with garments, while the angel of the Lord was standing by.

6 And the angel of the Lord admonished Joshua, saying, **7** “The Lord of armies says this: ‘If you walk in My ways and perform My service, then you will both govern My house and be in charge of My courtyards, and I will grant you [goings] free access among these who are standing here.’”

This is another interesting moment as Zechariah’s initial encounter with the angel of the Lord via a vision is still on going. This part of Zechariah’s vision is centered around Joshua. The Joshua in this passage however, is not the same son of Nun who lead Israel into battle against Jericho. This Joshua was the son of Jehozadak, and was the current High Priest in Israel.

A beautifully powerful scene plays out as the angel of the Lord rebukes Satan who is standing to accuse and condemn Joshua who is clad in filthy garments. The angel of the Lord (Jesus Christ) then shows his authority and kindness by removing Joshua’s filthy garments along with his guilt – a compassionate move reserved only for the Lord to administer (John 1:29-34, and Mark 2:1-13). He then has Joshua arrayed in new festive robes and a headband. Following this the angel of the Lord delivers an admonition to Joshua to walk in the ways of the Lord, coupled with a promise of great reward and privilege for doing so. There isn’t much else to say, as this passage is as straight forward as the last.

There you have it. If you didn't know before, you do now – Jesus Christ is the angel of the Lord. Consider the theory at the top of this paper to be solidified as FACT. Thank you so much for sojourning with me on this adventure. I hope you learned a lot just as I did in researching this topic, and I hope you enjoyed the ride. I would encourage you to do your own independent study into the angel of the Lord and the events surrounding him. You'll be enriched by the experience and I'm sure you'll have a lot of fun in the process. God bless you and yours, and stay thirsty.

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Strong's Concordance References

Strong's H3068 – יהוה - Y^hōvâ – (transliteration)

- I. Jehovah = "the existing One"
 - A. the proper name of the one true God
 - i. unpronounced except with the vowel pointings of H136

Strong's H136 - אֲדֹנָי - 'ăḏōnāy – (transliteration)

- I. my lord, lord
 - A. of men
 - B. of God
- II. Lord - title, spoken in place of Yahweh in Jewish display of reverence

Strong's H6382 - פֶּלֶא' - pele' - (transliteration)

- I. wonder, marvel
 - A. wonder (extraordinary, hard to understand thing)
 - B. wonder (of God's acts of judgment and redemption)