

WHO -WHAT- IS THE "ANGEL OF THE LORD"?

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1. INTRODUCTION

Who is "the Angel of the Lord"? Mystery of Mysteries! Many have wondered and floundered. Is this merely a term used in the Bible of different angels at different events and circumstances? Or a specific personage? If the latter, then was this a special, created angel, or God himself? Only the scriptures can reveal the answers.

Some, such as the Jehovah Witness' groups (itself an offshoot x of the Sardis Era), claim that Christ was created by the Father, and became the firstborn, or first created angel of God - the Angel of the Lord, who is supposedly Michael. They use such scriptures as Prov 8:22-31; Col 1:15; Rev 3:14, to prove Christ was born or created of the Father, but neglect to explain such verses as Rev 1:5; Rom 8:29. Further, use of other scriptures such as I Cor 10:1-4; I Thes 4:16; Ex 19:16-20; Jude 9; Dan 12:1, 10:21, 10:13, Is 9:6, Acts 2:15; 5:31; "proves" Christ is the Archangel Michael, whom they say is also "the Angel of the Lord". We have 3 choices:

1. Christ is Michael - the Angel of the Lord.
 2. Christ is not Michael nor the Angel of the Lord.
 3. Christ is the Angel of the Lord but not Michael.
- What is the truth? Search the Scriptures, they'll reveal the answer!

The enigma surrounding the Angel of the Lord is about as mysterious as the death Angel. Who was he? God Himself? An angel? Or a demon sent from God?

Many have been wrestling with the relative scriptures but cannot seem to find the answer (e.g. Ex 12:12-13, 23, 29; Ps 78:49 Cf I San 16:14-16, 23; II Sam 24:16; I Kings 22:19-23; I Chron 21:15; Jud 9:23-24; Job 1:6-12 etc) The solution is to honestly look at each scripture on the given subject before conclusions are drawn.
In fact, he WAS AN Angel of God.

Finally, it would behove one to realise an "angel" means a messenger

This may be either:

1. A spirit angelic being,
2. A demon,
3. A human minister,
4. Christ himself.

These are pertinent points to keep in mind before ploughing into this paper.

2. HIS APPEARANCE TO THE PATRIARCHS

The first appearance of this mighty being is recorded in Gen 16:6-13 where He met with Hagar and blessed her saying " I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered" (v. 10). After He left "she called the name of the Lord that spake unto her, Thou God seest me" (v. 13). God is indeed the source of all blessings (17:1-8) (21:12-17).

Later "God tested Abraham" (22:1) and he was instructed to sacrifice Isaac. And yet the Angel of the Lord stopped Abraham. And so Abraham called that place "Jehovah jireh" (YHVH the provider). A second time that day Abraham encountered the Angel of the Lord who said "By Myself have I sworn, saith the Lord ... That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven" (v. 16-17). The Angel of the Lord is here either (i) equating Himself with God, or (ii) speaking on His behalf. However, Jacob at a most upsetting time in his history clearly states of this Angel , "And the Angel of the God spake unto me in a dream saying... "I am the God of Bethel, where thou anointedst the pillar". Could anything be clearer? Speaking of Laban Jacob related how he was deceived by Laban "but God suffered him not to hurt me" (v.7). However, he remembered this event later in life, saying shortly before his death: "The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads" (48:16)

Then in another incident, Jacob had the pleasure of being met by certain

of God's Angels (32:1), and later still the terrifying incident of literally wrestling with a certain "Man" (v. 24:28). This Being then blessed Jacob (v. 29). But who or what was this? The very next verse gives the answer: "Jacob called the name of the place Peniel, for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved". Hosea remembered this event, relating it in these words: "... by his strength he had power (or "strove" - RSV) with God. Yea, he had power over the Angel, and prevailed". Speaking of this same Personage, he continues, "He found him (Jacob) in Bethel, and there He spoke with Him; Even the Lord God of Hosts" (Hos 12:3-5).

3. HIS APPEARANCE TO MOSES AND ISRAEL

Moses, too, encountered the mysterious "Angel of the Lord". "And the Angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flare of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed... God called unto him out of the midst of the bush... 'I Am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Israel, And the God of Jacob". (Ex 3:3-6). How similar to God's appearance to Abraham (Gen 15:17-18). Surely there is no doubting now?! For here the Angel of the Lord is called God! (cf Is 63:7-10; Acts 7:35)

Where did this terrifying event take place? On "the mountain of God, even Horeb" (Ex 3:1 cf Gen 22:14; Num 10:33; Ex 14:27, 18:5, 25:13; I Kings 19:8; Ps 68:15; Ezek 28:16). Many have puzzled over the location of this spot. But the Bible is quite clear for we are told in Acts that "there appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, an Angel of the Lord in a flame of fire in a bush" (v. 30).

Enough of digressions, let us continue with ^{the} story flow. During the Exodus period "the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, ^{see Num 9:17} to lead them the way" (Ex. 13:21). But in the very next chapter we are told that "the Angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; And the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them" (14:19). Once again the Bible uses the terms "Angel of the Lord" and "The Lord".

interchangeably. In I Cor. Paul writes: "all our fathers were under the cloud... for they talk of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ" (10:1-4)

A little later, God brought them to Mt. Sinai to give them His Law, "And the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai... And God spake all these words, saying, 'I Am the Lord thy God, which have bought thee out of the Land of Egypt" (Ex 19:20; 20:1-2; See Num 23:22). Yet in Judges "And an Angel of the Lord came up from Gibeon to Bochim and said, 'I made you to go up out of Egypt'" (2:1; See Num 20:16). Here God and the "Angel" appear to be one. But in other places it is unclear whether the Angel of the Lord is referred to or an Angel (e.g. Michael). For example Ex 23:20-23, 32:34, 33:2. But this in no way dents the argument presented so far.

Another time this great Being appeared to Joshua and Joshua saw "A Man over against him with His sword drawn in His hand". This "Man" said to Joshua "as Captain (or prince) of the host of the Lord am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, ... And the Captain of the Lord's host said unto Joshua, 'Loose thy shoe from off thy foot, for the place whereon thou standest is holy" (Joshua 5:13-16). How similar to the events of Exodus 3:5, and Num 22:22-23. If this were a mere created angel such as Michael, then indeed Joshua would have been rebuked sharply for worshipping him, but is not (See Rev 22:8-9; 19:10). One should not compare falling down to worship with that of falling down upon one's face, under the inspiration of God's

Holy Spirit, to experience a vision in sleep such as that of Dan 8:16-19. (Here Daniel was not worshipping an Angel). In that passage in Joshua, Christ the Angel of the Lord, is called a Captain (in Hebrew "Prince" or "Chief"). And so He is called such elsewhere in Scripture: Is. 9:6, Dan 8:25, Acts 3:15, 5:31, Heb 2:10, 12:2 (here the Gr "archegos" is translated "Author"). Granted that Michael is a prince of the Angels, and a leader of the armies of God (Dan 10:13, 21:12, Rev 12:7), but under Christ, But Christ is more than a mere Prince, He is also King of Kings and Lord of Lords (Rev 19:14-16).

4. HIS APPEARANCE IN THE PERIOD OF THE JUDGES AND KINGS

The brave warrior Gideon also met the Angel of the Lord (actually called the lord in v. 14), on an occasion (Jud 6:11-14). "And when Gideon perceived that he was an Angel of the Lord, Gideon said, 'Alas O Lord God! for because I have seen an Angel of the Lord face to face. And the Lord said unto him, 'Peace be unto thee, fear not: thou shalt not die'" (v. 22-23). If this were an ordinary Angel there would have been nothing to fear. But seeing this was God the Messenger - YHVH Himself, He was afraid of the possibility of death (see Gen 32:30; Ex 33:18-23).

The Angel of the Lord appeared later to Manoah and his wife, both Danites. His wife was barren, but the Angel of the Lord promised to heal her of this (Jud 13:2-7), (as he had done to others previously in Gen 11:30, 21:1-2, 25:21, 30:22-23). Manoah prayed to God that this "Man of God" may appear to them again, as he would like to meet Him. The Angel of the Lord appeared again and Manoah asked Him: "Art thou the Man that spakest unto the woman!" The Answer? "I Am"!!! (v.11). The very name of God! (see Ex 3:6,8,16; Gen 15:7, 26:24; 28:13,15; 31:13; 25:11; 46:3; Ex 6:2, 6-8, 29: 7:5,17; 8:22; Jos 6:10, John 8:58 etc., etc.,)!

"And Manoah said unto the Angel of the Lord, 'What is Thy name, that when Thy sayings come to pass we may do Thee honour?' And, the Angel of the Lord said unto him 'Why askest thou thus after My name,

seeing it is secret?" (v.18). Is this not what God said to Jacob in Genesis 32:29-30? Actually the Hebrew for "secret" also is "wonderful" (see Is 9:4).

Still being ignorant of the Majesty of whom they were speaking with, they offered up a kid to God. Only when the Angel had ascended up in a flame into heaven did they realise the magnitude of the moment (v.19-20. cf Gen 35:13). The scripture is not clear, but it is quite possible that this enormous flame was Divinely sent as an acceptance of the offering (see Gen 6:4; Lev 9:24, Jud 6:21, Kings 18:38, I Chron 21:26; II Chron 7:1; Ps 20:3). "And Manoah said unto his wife, 'We shall surely die, because we have seen God'" (v.22). Again a reference to the legend that those who see God (not an ordinary Angel) shall die (Gen 37:30; Ex 33:18-23; Jud 6:22-23).

Later this Angel appeared to Elijah (I King 19:1-15; II Kings 3:15), and destroyed the Assyrian armies (III King 19:32-35, II Chron 32:21). It is assumed that this is the same Angel that David saw about to destroy Jerusalem (II Sam 25:15-17, I Chron 21:12-30, cf Jos 13:15) but the Scriptures are not clear on this. Similarly with the Angel of the Lord in Zech 1:12-13, 3:1-7. If indeed He is Christ, then the Father is called YHVH here as He is in Ps 110:1, and possibly the prophecy of Ps 18:6-20. But these would be the only occasions He would be called YHVH.

5. CONCLUSION

What, then may we conclude based on the pertinent scriptures? That God is ~~after~~ called an "Angel" in the Old Testament! But Why? We shall see.

Indeed, this personage is called a "star" in Num 24:17, symbolic of an "Angel" (Mat 2:2, Rev 1:20 etc.,). And in Revelation He is called "the bright morning star" (2:28; 22:26). And in II Pet. He is labelled the "day star", (1:19), while in Luke He is called the "dayspring" (~~me~~aning a "branch of light") (1:7, 8-79). This "day star" may be Venus (symbolic of Lucifer whom Christ defeated and is about to replace See Is 14:12)-And/or the Sun (which is a star and NOT a planet). Cf Mal 4:2. Everywhere in Scripture there is a play on the words "sun" and "son", and these two may be used interchangeably. To this day little boys are called "sonny" or "sunshine"! Christ is indeed the Son and Sun of God.

So why is Christ called an "Angel" or "star" of God? Simply this: an "angel" is a messenger. And Christ is the Messenger of the "Most High God". Those who believe there is a single personage forming the Godhead are clearly wrong, even based on the Father's ~~name~~ name used often in the Old Testament: if there is a "Most High God", then there must be another God, ~~lesser in rank~~ . And Christ is that God, being the Messenger of the former. In Malachi He is called the "Messenger (or Angel) ~~of the covenant~~" (3:1). He is indeed no ordinary created angel (Heb 1:13-14, 2-16). He came almost 2,000 years ago as a star twinkling in this world of darkness (John 4:10). The next

time , He comes will be as a blazing Sun. But on both occasions
He comes as the Messenger of God, His Spokesman or Word who is
also God: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God
And the Word was God"!!! Could anything be clearer?

APPENDIX: IN SEARCH OF... THE ORIGINS OF THE JEHOVAH WITNESSES
AND CHRISTOPHELPHIANS

It is common knowledge that the Worldwide Church of God considers it self as the Philadelphia Era of the Church of God, having sprung, from the Sardis Era Church of God (7th Day) in August 1933 - February, 1934, with fellowship with them maintained until 1938 and co-operation with John Kiesz until 1945.

The Church of God (7th Day) may be said to be the major Sardis (splintered) Church. It was formed in 1863 after the Seventh - Day Adventists broke from from the Church of God (1860-63). This is where the Jehovah Witnesses come in . The SDA's are an offshoot of the Sardis Era, yet claim to be the Laodicean Era (I suppose it could be reasonably assumed that the SDA's would form part of the coming Laodicean Era). The Jehovah Witnesses formed as a result of Russell joining up with a disaffected Adventist group (Hoekema in his "Four Major Cults", p. 224). His paper, started in 1879 was called "Zion's Watchtower and Herald of Christ's Presence"; this is similar in meaning to the name of the Sardis paper started in 1888 called "Sabbath Advocate And Herald of the Advent". One wonders if there were not some inter-course between the Sardis Era and early Jehovah Witnesses.

The Jehovah Witnesses published a newsletter in 1922 called "The Bulletin" ; an identical name Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong gave to a

newsletter in the 1930's (a forerunner to the "Good News" magazine). Russell wrote a series of articles which were published in 1886 called the "Millennial Dawn". This title may have been partially borrowed from the Millerite paper of Edson called "The Day Dawn" (1845).

It is possible that the Sacred Name groups which began in the 1930's by Dodd was influenced by the Jehovah Witnesses (who were emphasising the original Hebrew names for God, especially "Jehovah" from 1931 on). The Jehovah Witnesses, in 1972, published "The Bible in Living English" - A translation by S.T. Byrington, who worked on it for some 40 years - emphasising the divine name. Until 1931 the Jehovah Witnesses held to a number of truths which were then jettisoned:

- * the correct name (Church of God),
- * Passover on 14 Nisan,
- * healing.

... however they still hold to the following:

- * Second Advent,
- * the 144,000 are begotten now, but born again at the resurrection (A half truth),
- * baptism by immersion,
- * modern Christianity is Babylon,
- * disfellowshipping,
- * A strong centralised government.

Certain in the W.C.G used the Jehovah Witnesses work "Equipped for every good work" for Bible dates. Even the Jehovah Witnesses

date of 1975 for Christ's return was used by some of us!

The 1970's shows an interesting parallel between events in the W.C.G and J.W.'s: the growing belief that the J.W.'s discipline was too severe (perhaps in their case rightly so); the end of the world did not occur in 1975 resulting in the massive loss of faith of the successor to their Church's leader (although it started long before 1972-75, Garner Ted Armstrong's faith slipped badly then): Raymond Franz was the successor - to be of his ailing uncle Frederick Franz (note, like H.W.A. and G.T.A., these two were also closely related); Raymond was doubtful of many of the J.W.'s teachings, as G.T.A. was of ours; Frederick Franz was 88 at that time - H.W.A. was 86 at his crisis of 1978; just as G.T.A. took a leave of absence, so did Raymond; as G.T.A. was first suspended and then disfellowshipped, so was Raymond.

Note a further parallel: "Canons governing divorce, for example, have been changed twice since 1972 (similarly with the W.C.G). Witnesses who were divorced under the old set of rules now find they must return to their former mates or face excommunication" ("Newsweek", 20.7.82). All they have done is adopt our old doctrine on D & R. Is all this coincidence?

What of the Christadelphians? : "there seems to be some fraternal relationship between them (the 19th century Church of God (7th Day)) and Dr. John Thomas, founder of the Christadelphians" (p.6 of "General Council of the Churches of God (7th Day)"). In an article by the

Christadelphians (given me in 1976) they trace their spiritual roots through such groups as the Waldenses (as do the J.W.'s too), Albigenses and Huguenots. In the same article they mention that they have a lot in common with a certain large group in the U.S.A. called "The Church of God". Which Church of God they do not specify.

Notice the following peculiarities:

- * in the late 1840's Dr. Thomas published a book called the "Hope of Israel". This is the same title as the paper published by the Sardis Church in 1863. It is also similar in name to the paper called the "Banner of Israel" founded in the 1870's by E. Hines (founder of the B.I.W.F.) And also the paper of a certain elder Ziegler (an associate of G.G. Rupert. Rupert was a man who, besides H.W.A., had more knowledge of the truth since the Apostle John than anyone) who named his "The Torch of Israel" (c. 1910),
- * certain Christadelphians believe in the false "sacred name" doctrine,
- * believe in Church Eras!
- * believe that all Christians are begotten now, but will be born again at the resurrection,
- * believe in mortality of the soul; evil to be burnt into ashes; and that righteous to reign on earth, not in heaven for 1,000 years,
- * water baptism,
- * that Christianity is Babylon,
- * have a weak "governmental" structure (if you can call it that) - virtual autonomy like the Sardis churches,

- * have a fascination with the "types",
- * the second Advent; and an understanding of prophecy very similar to the Sardis Churches.

Is all this really coincidence? Did the Jehovah Witnesses and Christadelphians develop their beliefs independently of the Church of God as everyone thinks, or was there a connection?