

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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“The Angel of Jehovah”

(Jerry Fite)

When one angel appears among the myriads of angels fifteen separate times between Genesis and the Book of Judges; we tend to wonder who this angel is.

“The angel of Jehovah” first appears in Genesis 16. Hagar is fleeing from Sarai, who had treated her maidservant harshly. The angel of Jehovah appears to Hagar commanding her to return to her mistress and submit to her authority (*Genesis 16:9*). Then, the angel of Jehovah says, “I will greatly multiply thy seed, that it shall not be numbered for multitude” (*Genesis 16:10*).

After the angel of Jehovah declares Hagar is with child; that she will bear a son, whom she will call “Ishmael;” and he will be in conflict with his brethren, Hagar understood “Jehovah,” was speaking with her. Hagar “called the name of Jehovah that spake unto her, ‘Thou art a God that seeth...Have I even here looked after Him that seeth me?’” (*Genesis 16:13*). Here the angel of Jehovah first appears speaking with the recognized authority of Jehovah, using the first-person pronoun “I” when promising to multiply the seed of Hagar.

“Jehovah appeared” to Abraham through his angel at the oaks of Mamre in the heat of the day (*Genesis 18:1*). Three angels,

appearing “as men” in form, stand before Abraham as he sat at the door of his tent (*Genesis 18:2*). Apparently, one of the angels is the angel of Jehovah, addressed as “Lord” by Abraham (*Genesis 18:3*). The angel is manifesting the presence and authority of the Lord, for when two angels depart for Sodom, Abraham stands alone “before Jehovah” (*Genesis 18:22, 19:1 cf. Judges 6:11, 14*).

The angel of Jehovah appears again stilling the hand of Abraham as he is about to slay his son Isaac on an altar unto God. From heaven, the angel of Jehovah commands him not to harm his son, declaring, “for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me” (*Genesis 22:12*). Again, we notice the angel of Jehovah is at least speaking with the authority of God, if not speaking as God.

Later, when God is ready to free the offspring of Abraham from Egyptian bondage through Moses, “...the angel of Jehovah appeared unto him (Moses) in a flame of fire out of the midst of the bush...behold the bush was not consumed” (*Exodus 3:2*). God commands Moses to remove his shoes for he was standing on “holy ground.” God is calling Moses out of the midst of

the bush (*Exodus 3:4*), through the angel in the midst of the burning bush. God, through the angel was present, demanding Moses to reverence the Holiness of God (*Exodus 3:5*).

Jehovah promises His people that He will send “His angel” to “keep thee by the way, and to bring thee into the place where I have prepared” (the promised land) (*Exodus 23:20*). They must “heed his voice and provoke him not for he will not pardon your transgression...” why? “... for My name is in him” (*Exodus 23:21*). When Israel was afflicted, “the angel of His presence saved them...he bare them and carried them all the days of old” (*Isaiah 63:9*).

Noting that the angel of Jehovah speaks as if he is Jehovah, and receives worship, some are tempted to think God, the Son, is the angel, before His incarnation as man. By definition, Jesus could be a “messenger” from heaven, but He was not a created angel (*cf. Hebrews 1:5 ff.*) The angel of Jehovah was unique in that this created angel manifested the authority and presence of Jehovah. He is the angel of “God’s presence,” having God’s authoritative “name “in him,” but not necessarily the pre-incarnation of the second Person of the God-head.