

# In the Beginning, God...

## Introduction

*Mal'ak Jehovah - The Angel of the Lord*

Genesis 16:6–13 (ESV)

6 But Abram said to Sarai, “Behold, your servant is in your power; do to her as you please.” Then Sarai dealt harshly with her, and she fled from her.

7 The angel of the Lord found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, the spring on the way to Shur. 8 And he said, “Hagar, servant of Sarai, where have you come from and where are you going?” She said, “I am fleeing from my mistress Sarai.”

9 The angel of the Lord said to her, “Return to your mistress and submit to her.”

10 The angel of the Lord also said to her, “I will surely multiply your offspring so that they cannot be numbered for multitude.” 11 And the angel of the Lord said to her, “Behold, you are pregnant and shall bear a son. You shall call his name Ishmael, because the Lord has listened to your affliction. 12 He shall be a wild donkey of a man, his hand against everyone and everyone’s hand against him, and he shall dwell over against all his kinsmen.”

13 So she called the name of the Lord who spoke to her, “You are a God of seeing,” for she said, “Truly here I have seen him who looks after me.”

The Hebrew is Mal'ak מַלְאָךְ Yehovah יְהוָה. In many passages He is identified with God; and at times He is identified as God and in other passages as God's representative.

Throughout the pages of the Old Testament there is a mysterious person called the Angel of the Lord who appears miraculously in moments of key importance.

Moses met Him at a bush that burned but was not consumed.

Joshua met Him before he faced the battle of Jericho.

Sometimes He came in the form of an angel at others a prophet of God speaking the Word of the Lord.

The Messenger of the Lord appears at critical moments and delivers important warnings - He may come bringing judgment - reconciliation - mercy - deliverance.

Now that we have an understanding of who this mysterious Messenger is, the question becomes why He appears here.

What is it about this moment—this situation—that draws the attention of heaven?

## **Message:**

### **1. An Unwanted Pregnancy catches God's Attention**

Gen. 16:6 “Sarai dealt harshly with her. . .”

Before this passage ever speaks to modern debates, it shows us something foundational: when no human authority protects the vulnerable, God Himself steps in.

However, our modern society would do well to consider that God cares for the unborn. We live in a time when in all nations except the most primitive sacrifice the unborn on an altar of convenience. And even the most primitive peoples will at times sacrifice the youngest of their people to false gods for blessings or favors that the community wants or believes it needs.

While Abraham should have stood in the gap with his future son, his inaction called God to take a stand.

The children of Ishmael may have become a snare and trouble to the children of Issac, God intended from the start to bless them just as He intended to bless the children who would come through Sarah.

The name Ishmael means “God hears” and he represents the unprotected, the second class, the forgotten and those who do not have the privilege of protection by those in power.

Paul in Galatians tells us that the slave woman's offspring will not enjoy the inheritance of the offspring of promise who came through Sarah.

That distinction does not cancel God's compassion, nor does it negate His concern for the innocent.

Thus the Lord sent Hagar back to live under Abraham's tent, and submit to Sarah.

When human responsibility fails—when Abraham is silent, Sarai is harsh, and Hagar is disposable—God does not look away.

It is precisely here, at the point of neglect and injustice, that the Angel of the Lord steps onto the scene.

## **2. The Angel of The Lord Appears for the First Time**

Gen. 16:7-8, He finds her by a well on the way back to Egypt.

This is a moment of redemption and salvation. Consider what would likely have happened to Hagar and her son had she returned to Egypt.

As vindictive as Sarah might have been in response to Hagar's disdain, this pales in comparison to what Hagar would have faced. Likely prostitution, slavery in a house that would not honor her.

Her son growing up unloved and unwanted among people who would use him and abuse him until he was spent, broken and discarded by society. Very likely they would be separated after a while and she would never see him again.

But it is at the well that God is revealed now to a pagan who had lived as a slave, was now a wife and pregnant by her aged husband who did not love her.

But when God finds Hagar, He does not begin with commands or corrections.

Before He tells her what to do, He asks her who she is and where she is headed.

### **3. The Question that Arrests and Focuses**

When the Angel of the Lord appears, He does not incriminate, He does not condemn, He does not remind her of her paganism and lack of belief.

He comes to her in compassion, asking the only question that could break through the hurt and sorrow she is suffering.

*“Hagar, servant of Sarai, where have you come from and where are you going?”*

He calls her by name, reminds her of her life - encourages her to remember her past, and is considerate of her future.

These questions have the intended effect, she pauses to answer and she answers honestly, “I am fleeing from my mistress, Sarai.”

Honest answers open the door to healing—but healing always leads to a decision.

Once the truth is spoken, God does not leave Hagar where she is; He calls her to trust Him with what comes next.

That question still arrests us today.

When careers unravel, relationships fracture, diagnoses arrive, or regret catches up with us—God still asks, Where have you come from, and where are you going?

#### **4. The Command of Obedient Faith**

When God meets us at the point of our life crisis, He doesn't offer platitudes of false hope, He admonishes us where we are, and encourages us to face our trial.

The well was a place of rest and refreshment but it is also a place of healing and deliverance.

God's focus is not on our circumstances nearly so much as it is on our response to the circumstance. Not because our pain is insignificant—but because our response determines whether pain becomes despair or deliverance.

When the Messenger of the Lord shows up and arrests our hearts with the questions that break through the hurt, the anger, and the pride, we should recognize that the messenger while in human or angelic form is truly the God who sees and hears our plight and our heart's cry.

It may appear at times that God is uninterested in the marginalized of society but He sees and He hears.

And lest obedience feel like abandonment, God does something gracious.

He does not send Hagar back with commands alone—He sends her back with a promise.

## **5. The Promise of an unconsidered Future**

Just as God had promised Abraham, He now speaks promise to Hagar.

The Angel of the Lord does not merely command her to return—He anchors her obedience in a promise. God never asks His people to walk back into difficulty without giving them a future to trust.

He tells her:

“I will surely multiply your offspring...”

What Abraham heard in faith, Hagar now hears in mercy.

The child she carries will not be forgotten.

The son no one planned for is already known by God.

The name Ishmael means “God hears.”

Before Ishmael ever cries out, God has already heard the cry of his mother.

This promise does not place Ishmael in the covenant line of Isaac—but it does place him under the care of a righteous and seeing God.

The Lord makes a clear distinction between inheritance and compassion, between promise and provision—but He never abandons the innocent.

And it is here that we see something breathtaking:

This is not merely an angel.

This is the Lord who sees.

This is God stepping into the wilderness to meet a broken woman at a well.

Many throughout church history have rightly understood this to be a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ Himself.

Everything Jesus would later do in the Gospels is already here:

- He finds the outcast
- He speaks grace without denying truth
- He calls for obedient faith
- He promises a future only God can give

At this well, mercy meets obedience, and promise interrupts despair.

And when promise settles into her heart, something remarkable happens.

Hagar does what no one else in Scripture has done—she gives God a name born out of experience, ‘el roi the God who sees me.

## **Conclusion**

And that ancient confession echoes into this room tonight.

Because Hagar’s well is not the only place the Angel of the Lord still meets people.

Hagar leaves that well changed.

She goes back—not because her circumstances are suddenly easy, but because she has seen the God who sees her.



For the first time in Scripture, a human names God: “You are a God of seeing.”

She does not say, “I see God.” She says, “God sees me.” And that is the turning point of faith. Some of us are standing at a well this evening; Tired-Misused-Running.

Unsure whether going forward—or going back—makes any sense at all.

And the same question is being asked of us: “Where have you come from... and where are you going?”

The God who met Hagar in the wilderness is the same God who stepped into this world through Christ. He is the same God who provided a well of living water for all to drink from.

He is the same God who heard the cry of the innocent, and He is the same God who sees.

You may feel unseen. Unprotected. Unplanned for. But you are not unknown.

When the Angel of the Lord shows up, it is never by accident. And when God meets us at the well, it is not to shame us—but to send us forward with promise.

So, hear this clearly: God sees. God hears. And God is not finished with us yet!