

## **Who Is The Angel Of The Lord?**

### **Series: Why Did God Create Us?**

## **What Does The Bible Say?**

### **Do we see Christ in the Old Testament?**

6 But some of the teachers of religious law who were sitting there thought to themselves, 7 “What is he saying? This is blasphemy! Only God can forgive sins!” 8 Jesus knew immediately what they were thinking, so he asked them, “Why do you question this in your hearts? 9 Is it easier to say to the paralyzed man ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or ‘Stand up, pick up your mat, and walk’? 10 So I will prove to you that the Son of Man has the authority on earth to forgive sins.” Then Jesus turned to the paralyzed man and said, 11 “Stand up, pick up your mat, and go home!” 12 And the man jumped up, grabbed his mat, and walked out through the stunned onlookers. They were

all amazed and praised God, exclaiming, “We’ve never seen anything like this before!” (Mark 2:6–12 NLT)

**Only God can forgive sin.**

20 “See, I am sending an angel before you to protect you on your journey and lead you safely to the place I have prepared for you.

21 Pay close attention to him, and obey his instructions. Do not rebel against him, for he is my representative, and he will not forgive your rebellion. 22 But if you are careful to obey him, following all my instructions, then I will be an enemy to your enemies, and I will oppose those who oppose you. (Exodus 23:20–22 NLT)

**The angel of the Lord could forgive sin.**

8 “God will provide a sheep for the burnt offering, my son,”

Abraham answered. And they both walked on together. 9 When they arrived at the place where God had told him to go,

Abraham built an altar and arranged the wood on it. Then he tied

his son, Isaac, and laid him on the altar on top of the wood.

10 And Abraham picked up the knife to kill his son as a sacrifice. 11 At that moment the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven, “Abraham! Abraham!” “Yes,” Abraham replied. “Here I am!” 12 “Don’t lay a hand on the boy!” the angel said. “Do not hurt him in any way, for now I know that you truly fear God. You have not withheld from me even your son, your only son.” (Genesis 22:8–12 NLT)

**The angel of the Lord speaks in first person as God.**

**Why were Jews in the New Testament able to accept God in the flesh in Jesus?**

One day Moses was tending the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian. He led the flock far into the wilderness and came to Sinai, the mountain of God. 2 There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a blazing fire from the middle of a bush. Moses stared in amazement. Though the bush was engulfed in

flames, it didn't burn up. 3 "This is amazing," Moses said to himself. "Why isn't that bush burning up? I must go see it." 4 When the Lord saw Moses coming to take a closer look, God called to him from the middle of the bush, "Moses! Moses!" "Here I am!" Moses replied. 5 "Do not come any closer," the Lord warned. "Take off your sandals, for you are standing on holy ground. 6 I am the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." When Moses heard this, he covered his face because he was afraid to look at God. (Exodus 3:1–6 NLT)

**Here we have God's voice and the angel of the Lord together.**

**How Can You Obey?**

**Understand that there are two God figures in the Old Testament—one invisible, and the other visible and human in form.**

**Understand that the angel of the Lord could not save us, the second person of the Trinity had to become flesh.**

14 Because God's children are human beings—made of flesh and blood—the Son also became flesh and blood. For only as a human being could he die, and only by dying could he break the power of the devil, who had the power of death. 15 Only in this way could he set free all who have lived their lives as slaves to the fear of dying. (Hebrews 2:14–15 NLT)

**Additional Notes:**

If you would like to use your home to disciple others, check out our training at [www.crosswaveschurch.com/host](http://www.crosswaveschurch.com/host). Cross Waves has produce short videos to train you how to use your home to reach others for Christ. So please check it out.

**Explore:**

This series comes from the book, What Does God Want?

Michael S. Heiser and Blind Spot Press, 2018.

## **Explore:**

Even people who don't believe in God like to believe in angels. It is comforting to think that there is someone watching out for us—someone with supernatural power and special access to God. So angels continue to fascinate people. There are angels on TV and angels at the bookstore. There is even an entire magazine devoted to them, called Angels on Earth.

There is always a danger in giving angels more attention than they deserve. Naturally we are curious about these supernatural beings. However, our fascination quickly becomes unprofitable. The angels do not desire to call attention to themselves but to point us to God. Therefore, the Bible warns us not to worship them (Col. 2:18). The Apostle John found this out when he tried to bow down to one. "Do not do it!" the angel said. "I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God!" (Rev. 19:10).

As wrong as it is to worship the angels, it is just as wrong to doubt their existence or to deny their proper place in God's plan. God has made beautiful spiritual beings to serve him in Heaven and to carry out his will on earth. These angels exist for the glory of God and the good of his people. It is their happy privilege to protect us, watch over us, and help us along in our pilgrimage. As the psalmist said, "he [God] will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways" (91:11).

Ryken, P. G., & Hughes, R. K. (2005). Exodus: saved for God's glory (p. 765). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

### **Explore:**

There is an angel in Exodus. He is mentioned near the end of chapter 23, when God was giving Moses the laws of his covenant. Typically an ancient covenant ended with blessings and curses. These described in careful detail what would happen if the covenant was kept or broken. The Book of the Covenant

was no exception. After telling his people what to do, God told them what would happen if they did it or failed to do it.

God began his warnings and promises with the announcement that he was sending Israel an angel: “See, I am sending an angel ahead of you to guard you along the way and to bring you to the place I have prepared. Pay attention to him and listen to what he says. Do not rebel against him; he will not forgive your rebellion, since my Name is in him” (vv. 20, 21).

The first thing to resolve about these verses is the identity of the angel. Some scholars think the angel was the glory cloud that led the Israelites day and night, because like the cloud, the angel was with the Israelites all the way through the wilderness.

However, a cloud is an inanimate object, whereas this angel is described as a living, moving, speaking person. Others think the angel “stands only for the guidance and help of the Lord.” Yet



God clearly distinguished himself from the angel. “I am sending an angel,” he said.

Another suggestion is that the angel was a human being. Since the Hebrew word for “angel” simply means “messenger,” it need not necessarily refer to a glorious angel from Heaven. Some scholars think Moses was the messenger. Certainly Moses spoke for God. However, the obvious difficulty is that the angel was sent to conquer the Promised Land, which Moses never entered. The man who did lead God’s people there was Joshua; so many fine commentators have argued that he was the messenger.

Writing sometime around a.d. 200, Tertullian commented that “Joshua was to introduce the people into the land of promise, not Moses. Now he [God] called him an angel on account of the magnitude of the mighty deeds which he was to achieve (which mighty deeds Joshua the son of Nun did, as you can yourselves read) and on account of his office of prophet announcing the divine will.”

Augustine took this interpretation a step further by noting that Joshua is the Hebrew name for Jesus. This gives new significance to verse 21, in which God said, “my Name is in him.” God gave the messenger his divine name. On this interpretation the messenger would be Joshua, which is another name for Jesus. “It follows,” said Augustine, “that he who said, ‘My name is in him’ is the true Jesus, the leader who brings his people into the inheritance of eternal life, according to the New Testament, of which the Old was a figure. No event or action could have a more distinctly prophetic character than this, where the very name is itself a prediction.”

Of course, the angel could be exactly that—an angel, in the usual sense of the word. If so, then it was a guardian angel sent to keep the Israelites safe on their way to Canaan. As Scripture says, “The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them” (Ps. 34:7). The angel went ahead to guide the people on their way, just like he did when the Israelites

were camped by the sea (Exod. 14:19). It was like playing Follow the Leader: The angel led, and the people followed. The angel also served as God's representative. He spoke for God, and when he did, the people had to listen to what he said. Moreover, they had to give him their absolute obedience. To listen to the angel was to listen to God, and to rebel against him was to rebel against God. In this connection it is worth noting that the word used in verse 21 for "rebellion" is generally used elsewhere in the Old Testament for opposition to the Almighty.

By now we are getting the distinct impression that this messenger was more than an angel. He was so closely associated with God as to be identified with him. This is confirmed by the angel's power to forgive or not to forgive sin. God said, "Do not rebel against him; he will not forgive your rebellion." But the Scripture also says, "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" (Mark 2:7). So who was this guiding, guarding angel who acted for God, spoke for God, and held the power of forgiveness?

Whoever he was, he bore God's very name, for God said, "My Name is in him" (Exod. 23:21). God's name is always more than a name. It indicates his special presence and refers to his divine being. According to John Mackay, the Name is a "revelation of the character and attributes of God," which means that "[h]ere we have a unique dignity accorded to the angel as manifesting all that God has made known regarding himself. That is why the angel can command complete obedience and trust: his presence is the equivalent of the presence of the Lord himself."

To summarize, this messenger was distinguished from God, yet at the same time had uniquely divine attributes. Therefore, many Christians have identified him as the second person of the Trinity, the pre-incarnate Son of God. We have encountered this phenomenon before, back at the burning bush and at the place where the water came from the rock. Long before his incarnation, long before he was born in Bethlehem, Christ was with his people on their way to salvation. Mackay concludes:

“Christian interpreters have generally identified the angel mentioned here and the angel of the Lord found throughout the Pentateuch as the one phenomenon, which is a temporary pre-incarnate appearance of the second person of the Trinity to give encouragement to the people of God. He is the one who goes before his people to protect them and bring them to the place he has prepared for them.”

Ryken, P. G., & Hughes, R. K. (2005). Exodus: saved for God's glory (pp. 765–767). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

### **Explore:**

The most familiar way to process what we've seen is to think about the way we talk about Jesus. Christians affirm that God is more than one Person, but that each of those Persons is the same in essence. We affirm that Jesus is one of those Persons. He is God. But in another respect, Jesus isn't God—he is not the

Father. The Father is not the Son, and the Son is not the Father. Nevertheless, they are the same in essence.

This theology did not originate in the New Testament. You've now been exposed to its Old Testament roots. There are two Yahweh figures in Old Testament thinking—one invisible, the other visible and human in form. Judaism before the first century, the time of Jesus, knew this teaching. That's why ancient Jewish theology once embraced two Yahweh figures (the "two powers"). But once this teaching came to involve the risen Jesus of Nazareth, Judaism could no longer tolerate it.

Heiser, M. S. (2015). *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible* (First Edition, p. 148). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

**Question 1 of 5**

Why would God use people from the second century millennium BC and the first century AD to write the Bible?

**Question 2 of 5**

Why is it important to know only God can forgive sin?

**Question 3 of 5**

Explain the concept of the Trinity.

**Question 4 of 5**

Why do people say the Trinity is a New Testament concept? Are they correct?

**Question 5 of 5**

Why does it help us to see a physical manifestation of God, Angel of the Lord in the Old Testament, and Jesus in the New Testament?