

ZOOM STUDY: IMPORTANT BIBLICAL THEMES

THE ANGEL OF THE LORD

- 1.) What comes to mind when someone speaks of an angel?

- 2.) List some occasions in Scripture where these created angelic messengers are active or described.

- 3.) However, beyond these created angels that serve the LORD and relay messages from him, there is another angel mentioned as “the Angel of the LORD.” This angel appears...
 - to Hagar (when she fled Abraham’s household)
 - to Abraham (to announce the birth of Isaac and later preventing his sacrifice)
 - to Jacob (when he blessed him and changed his name to Israel)
 - to Moses (in the burning bush at Mt. Horeb)
 - to Balaam (as he rode his donkey, intending to go and curse the Israelites)
 - to Joshua (as he is about to attack Jericho)
 - to Gideon (commissioning him)
 - to Manoah and his wife (announcing Samson’s birth)
 - at the killing of 185,000 Assyrians who were threatening Jerusalem
 - to the prophet Zechariah

Practically every time the Angel of the LORD appears, he is either called the LORD, speaks as God or does things that only God can do. So the Angel of the LORD is God visibly manifesting himself (often in human form). The Angel of the LORD is God and yet is distinct from God.

- 4.) How does the following passage show that the Angel of the LORD is distinct from God, yet shares the same characteristics. Name some of the divine characteristics possessed by the Angel of the LORD.

Exodus 3:2,4-8, 12, 18-21 There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. ⁴ When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, “Moses! Moses!” And Moses said, “Here I am.” ⁵ “Do not come any closer,” God said. “Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.” ⁶ Then he said, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.” At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God. ⁷ The LORD said, “I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. ⁸ So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey—the home of the Canaanites... And God said, “I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain.... ¹⁸ “The elders of Israel will listen to you. ...¹⁹ But I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless a mighty hand compels him. ²⁰ So I will stretch out my hand and strike the Egyptians with all the wonders that I will perform among them. After that, he will let you go. ²¹ And I will make the Egyptians favorably disposed toward this people, so that when you leave you will not go empty-handed.”

5.) The Angel of the LORD was especially active in the time of the Judges. Read of his appearance to Manoah and his wife in Judges 13:12-23. At first they thought he was an ordinary angel and offered him the hospitality of a meal, but the Angel told him to offer a sacrifice to the LORD instead. What made it clear to them that this Angel was actually God himself?

6.) The Angel of the LORD was often involved at pivotal points in the Old Testament history of salvation. What does this tell us about his role?

7.) Some people believe that the Old Testament Israelites had no concept that their God consisted of three persons. In fact, some consider the Old Testament God to be entirely different than our New Testament God. What do you think of these opinions? How does the Angel of the LORD dispel that myth?

8.) As the Angel of the LORD, Jesus reveals his Father's will. How did God reveal through Jesus Christ his desire to punish sinners and his desire to rescue sinners?

9.) The Angel of the LORD is God himself and worthy of our worship. Mere created angels are not. How are we to regard created angels? How do some people today wrongly regard them?

Hebrews 1:14 Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?

Revelation 22:8-9 I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I had heard and seen them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who had been showing them to me. But he said to me, "Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers the prophets and of all who keep the words of this book. Worship God!"

Closing Prayer: Jesus, Angel of the LORD, thank you for serving as your heavenly Father's messenger of grace and truth and revealing his splendor. Continue to lead us on to our eternal salvation through faith in you. Amen.