

# 1. WHERE IS CHRIST IN THE OLD TESTAMENT?

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Then he said to them, 'These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you --- that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms must be fulfilled.' Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day ...' (Luke 24: 44-46).

So, where do you think Jesus would have turned to in the Old Testament Scriptures --- the only Bible Jesus knew! --- to prove his Messianic credentials? Where did Jesus find himself in those sacred pages?

There were, we now understand, dozens of plainly stated prophecies --- e.g. where and when the Messiah would be born, how he would die, where he would be buried, etc. --- and there were loads of prophetic types all sketching out his mission --- like Isaac being offered for sacrifice, the brass serpent held up for public view to save the people from their snake bites, the bread from heaven and the water from the rock, etc.

Yet, in spite of the overwhelming corroborative evidence, those dejected followers on the Road to Emmaus did not recognise Jesus even after his oft-forecast resurrection. After the greatest miracle supplying *bone fide* messianic credentials, they still needed the expert exposition from the Master Rabbi himself to **open their minds to understand the scriptures (v. 45)**.

Jesus was often staggered at the blindness of Israel. On a previous occasion he had rebuked Israel's spiritual elite, the Pharisees and the doctors of the Law (the scribes) for their wilful blindness. He roused on them, '**You are searching the Scriptures ... and it is they that testify of me ... If you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words**' (John 5: 39f).

Again we must ask: Why didn't these men who had their noses constantly in their Bible see Jesus as their predicted messianic lord? Was Jesus of Nazareth too esoteric for their tradition-bound minds? How did he hide in plain sight? Surely, traditional stereo-types inherited from generations of expert enquiry conspired to distort their expectations?

But let me make this question personal. Christian, if you were asked, 'Where is Christ in the Old Testament?', would you be able to competently point him out? It's certainly a lot easier this side of the resurrection. Hindsight is always easier.

Is it possible we too may be victims of accrued church myths that warp the very woof from the truth? Have we also inherited generations of church tradition where Christ is concerned? None of us works in a vacuum! And to misunderstand Jesus is to take the bite out of the bark of the Bible!

After all, the first 75% of our Bibles --- the foundation --- consists of the Hebrew Bible. And, failure to value the only Bible which Jesus and his First Century followers knew, sets us up to miss vital elements of the message of the New Testament to this very day. Let's delve a little deeper.

So then, where do we find Jesus Christ in the Old Testament?

## WHERE HE IS NOT.

First, a negative. Sometimes seeing what something is not, helps us to see what it is!

In every single passage in the OT where the Son of God is mentioned, he is located in the future of God's prophetic purposes. He is "the Coming one" (Matt. 11:3) --- definitely not the One who has been! The promise and the person of the Son of God are always (to use a good Aussie expression) down the track.

When the great patriarch Abraham was told about the Coming one, he contented himself to believe the promises of God about the coming future redeemer. Said Jesus, "Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and saw it, and was glad" (John 8: 57). <sup>1</sup>

Contrary to popular notions then, **Abraham saw the day, not the Messiah in person before he was born!** Messiah predated --- and was therefore greater than --- Abraham, in God's plans for the future. It is in this sense that Jesus stated, "Before Abraham was, I am *he*", that is, the promised Messiah (v. 58). <sup>2</sup>

Moses too, predicted that, **The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers, you shall listen to him** (Deut. 18: 15). Jesus will be a fully-credentialed Jewish man. This is to say nothing of the oft-repeated assurances that one of David's future sons (descendants) would be the Messianic Lord (e.g. Ps. 110:1; 2 Sam. 7: 12-16; 1 Kgs. 2: 1f; Ps. 132: 11-12). In God's purpose for the ages, the coming Messiah was to be greater than all these prophets, priests, and kings, though one of their countrymen.

## THE SON OF GOD HAD A PERSONAL BEGINNING

Finally, after **the fulness of time came, God sent forth His Son** (and let me give you the literal translation) **who came into existence from a woman, who came into existence under the Law** (Gal. 4:4). <sup>3</sup> There was a time *in history* when God's Son **came into existence from a woman**. Which is to say, there was a time when the Son of God did not yet exist!

The apostle Paul wrote to Timothy that he must, **Remember Jesus Christ, having been raised from the dead, descendant of David, according to my gospel ...** (2 Tim. 2: 8).

Do you understand this vital piece of information? Not only is the physical resurrection of Jesus from the dead an essential component of the Gospel, but also critical to Paul's Gospel is the confession that Jesus is the physical **descendant of David**? **The resurrection of the human Jesus descended from David is essential Gospel-foundation according to the apostle Paul.**

Which is to say, the Bible-Jesus is a genuine human being, descended from the biological chain of his human ancestors. The Gospel of the NT certifies Jesus' flesh and blood humanity. On the other hand, pre-existence Christology that makes him "the eternal Son" robs Jesus of his finitude so essential to our humanity.

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<sup>1</sup> Some of the passages where the Son of God was yet future are 2 Samuel 7: 12f; I Chronicles 17: 11f; Psalm 2; Isaiah 53; Daniel 7.

<sup>2</sup> Jesus did not claim to be the Yahweh speaking through the angel of the burning bush who said, **I am the existing One**. Jesus used the common expression in John 8:58, "I am *he*" (i.e. the one in question, the one Abraham looked forward to).

<sup>3</sup> Paul does not employ the usual word for birth as our English translations would have us read. Here the word *ginomai* means "to come into existence". Paul believed Jesus Christ had had a personal beginning --- he came into existence --- by God's special creation in the woman Mary --- not that he had existed from eternity and suddenly transmuted his mode of residence!

It is impossible for a human being to exist before their ancestors! There is no such thing as a human being who personally pre-existed their own conception. The Bible knows no such thing as a beginningless beginning for any human being, including Jesus the Messiah!

To repeat: To qualify as the human Messiah, Jesus could not have personally and consciously pre-existed his own birth as “the eternal Son” --- an oxymoron found nowhere in the Bible! If Jesus had been alive as “God the Son” --- another expression also found nowhere in the Bible! --- then he is disqualified from being our Saviour for that would make him non-human! <sup>4</sup>

The coming deliverer must be of **the seed of the woman (Gen. 3: 15)**. Thus, Messiah must be a direct human descendant from woman and from man ... completely human. Jesus is no half-bred human being, not even 100% man and 100% God, which is 100% contradiction. The only place you find the offspring of the gods and humans is in pagan mythology!

Jesus is the physical descendant --- miraculously generated by the Spirit of God in Mary --- of the biological chain from the ancestry of Jewish men and women --- summarised in the twin descriptions, **the seed of the woman** and **the son of David**.

### NOT AN ANGEL.

Yet despite this clear Scriptural information, the idea commonly persists today that Jesus literally and personally pre-existed as an angel before his human beginning. Specifically, as (and I'll print it as you read it in these popular articles) “**THE** Angel of the LORD”; bold definite article, and capitalised Angel! One article goes so far as to say that as **the** Angel of the LORD in the OT, Jesus is “**An Angel You Ought To Know!**”! <sup>5</sup>

The popular reasoning runs like this (see if you can spot the copious speculative reasoning!):

The name of the Lord may refer to the whole Godhead collectively or to the Persons individually [so] one Person may have one form of special responsibility and another Person another. Thus the Messenger or Angel of the Godhead is given the title “The Angel of the Lord,” and throughout Scripture it will be found quite consistently that this title is reserved for Jesus.

When Jacob wrestled with the Angel of the Lord, he was well aware of His true identity. This Person appeared to Jacob as a man (Gen. 32:24) and wrestled with him. Subsequently this Person identified himself as God (verse 28), and as a consequence Jacob named that place Peniel, a Hebrew compound form which means “the face of God,” for he said, “I have seen God face to face” (verse 30).

Since no man has seen God the Father, this was God the Son. Hosea 12:4 and 5 tell us that this Person was “the Angel ... even the Lord God of Hosts,” ... Jacob himself subsequently refers back to this incident in his life when blessing Joseph (Gen. 48:15-16) and calls this Angel his Redeemer.

Putting all these passages together, we have Jesus identified as the Angel of the Lord, the King, the Redeemer, the Lord God of Hosts, and as Jehovah. <sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> E.G., **Romans 5: 12f** is clear that it was by one man that sin invaded our planet, and it is by one man that salvation comes.

<sup>5</sup> For example, <http://ldolphin.org/angelL.html> This of course, is exactly what the apostle Paul warns against in his letter to the Colossians ... we don't need angelic mediation because Jesus Christ has been exalted as the first immortalised and glorified man, far above all angelic power and authority, meaning that in him **all the fulness of the Deity dwells substantially, in reality** (definitely not as your English translations want you to believe “**in bodily form**” ... an expression not found in the Greek text!). The Greek word for “**body**” translated in **Col. 2:9** is the same word *soma* translated **substance** a few verses further down in **v. 17** where the contrast is between mere **shadow** and **substance** as found in Christ. So, why not consistently translate that idea as the context demands back in **v. 9**???

<sup>6</sup> This article at <http://custance.org/old/incarnation/5ch6.html> is titled **The “Angel of the Lord” and “The Voice of the Lord”**.

Oh, really? Not only does “the Name of the Lord” never ever refer to the whole Godhead collectively, but can anybody please find a single verse where Jesus is the Angel of the Lord, the King, the Redeemer, the Lord God of Hosts, and Jehovah? There simply is not a single explicit statement anywhere in the Old or New Testaments where “the angel of the LORD” is equated with the Son of God.

Didn't Jesus make it clear that his coming was uniquely special precisely because he had never before been personally seen or heard in any previous generation? He said;

Blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear. For truly I say to you, that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it; and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it (Matthew 13: 16-17).

Contrary to all subsequent speculation, Jesus made it abundantly clear that he had not been seen or heard by preceding generations in any guise! That generation was the first and exclusive generation granted the privilege of seeing and hearing the Son of God in person.

It is therefore certain that, Jesus did not see himself as “**The** Angel of the Lord” in the OT. Which means Jesus never claimed to be the one who wrestled with Jacob as the God-angel-man. Surely it is pure speculation to think Jesus saw himself as the superangel of the God-angel-man variety. Where did he himself ever make such a claim? Where in the pages of the NT do we find such a thing?

#### A LITTLE HISTORY LESSON

Anyone reading the NT knows that Jesus was never, and is not now, and will never ever be, an angel. <sup>7</sup> So why is it that, when I Googled “The Angel of the Lord” all the sites I searched promote the idea that Jesus is the Angel of the Lord, the second Person of the Trinity, before his ‘incarnation’?

This is in spite of the fact that, none of the six Apostolic Fathers --- Clement of Rome 30-100 A.D., Barnabas, Polycarp 65-155 A.D., Ignatius 30-107 A.D., Papias of Heiropolis and Hermes --- taught that Jesus is the Angel of the Lord. Indeed, only Hermas mentioned ‘the angel of the Lord’, but he did not apply it to Jesus Christ, but to that great and glorious angel, Michael [Hermas, Sim 8.2.3]. <sup>8</sup>

Of course, it goes without saying, that Jewish commentary never considered “the angel of the Lord” to be other than a created angel who was sent as an agent/messenger/medium for manifesting the Almighty to Israel.

So, how has the modern “orthodox” belief that, **The** Angel of the Lord was the pre-incarnate Jesus? For the answer we turn to the 2nd, 3rd & 4th Century Church Fathers (so-called even though they are very much post-apostolic voices). History tells us that these apologists scrambled for all available means to defend Christ's authority and status before both Jews and Gentile pagans.

It was Justin Martyr writing in the middle of the 2nd Century who pioneered the way for succeeding apologists to find a “second God” in the OT under the title of “an angel” --- he appealed to other names such as ‘the glory of the Lord’, firstborn, *logos*, son, etc. Justin Martyr elaborated four (4) instances to

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<sup>7</sup> How much clearer could this be stated than, for instance, in Hebrews chapters 1 & 2? In contrast to the diverse portions when God spoke through prophets and visions and angels to Israel, He has now spoken to us in these last days through His Son. God has rewarded Jesus' faithfulness by granting him to become much superior to angels. Bluntly put: Jesus did not say a word in the OT dispensation! Furthermore, Hebrews 2: 5-17 states, God has not put the Coming Messianic Age under the authority of His angels, but rather to the exalted Son of man!

<sup>8</sup> The Apostolic Fathers were those who were contemporary with the apostles and the First Century generation of Christians. Naturally, they pre-date the later so-called Church Fathers from the Second Century onwards --- a misnomer if ever there was one!

demonstrate how the pre-incarnate Christ appeared as an angel (Abraham in Gen. 18; Jacob in Gen. 28; Moses in Ex. 3; and Joshua in Joshua 5).

Subsequent apologists took these four instances as standard proof texts. **Clement of Alexandria** influenced the north African school with his assertion that “the angel of the Lord” who wrestled with Jacob was, “**God, the Word, the Instructor**”.

And **Tertullian** (also of north Africa) strongly contended for the true and solid substance of the “unborn” flesh in Christ’s supposed visits to the Jewish patriarchs. Another, **Novatian** the noted Roman presbyter agreed that, “the Son” was **accustomed to descend and be seen** as an angel prior to his incarnation.

And so, a new tradition of interpretation was forged! For the greater number of these so-called **Church Fathers** --- **Irenaeus, Cyprian, Chrysostom, Eusebius, Hilary, and Theodoret** *et al* proposed that, the Angel of the Lord in the OT was Christ himself manifested as the second Person of the Trinity before his incarnation.

The snowball was now rolling and gathering momentum. By the mid 4th Century **The Formula of Sirmium** included two anathemas (15,16) against anyone who denied that it was “the Son” who appeared to Abraham and Jacob respectively! The snowball has developed big bad teeth!

Once this poison flowed into the stream of “orthodoxy” it was picked up by formidable Reformation theologians such as those in the Lutheran tradition, where to the point that denying this was to invite official sanction and even persecution. The anathema pronounced in **The Formula of Sirmium** was later appealed to by **Luther’s** followers. In one of their books, **Consensus Repititus Fidei Vere Lutheranae** by **A. Calovius** (1664) it was deemed heresy to deny that, **the angel of the Lord was Christ**.

And in his **Institutes, Bk.1,13.10**, **John Calvin** committed himself to an assumed descent of the **not-yet** incarnate Christ, **in a mediatorial capacity, that he might approach the faithful with greater familiarity**. In his list against **Michael Servetus**, **John Calvin** indicted that martyr for heresy because he did not hold that the angel was Christ!

Still, it has to be said, on the surface there appear to be strong reasons adduced for the belief that Jesus was **the** Angel of the LORD in the OT. It is claimed that this particular angel was worshipped, that he made promises that only God could make, and that he spoke as God in the first person.

I have addressed these various appeals before, so for the sake of brevity will let the reader follow those specific expositions in those other places. But I will here address one other aspect needing further explanation. <sup>9</sup>

## THE DEFINITE ARTICLE

One of the common arguments employed in favour of the angel of the Lord being the pre-existent Son of God is that this super-angel is denominated with the definite article. He is not just any angel, but **the** Angel of the Lord. Representative of this view is at [www.GotQuestions.org](http://www.GotQuestions.org) Under the question, “**Who is the angel of the Lord?**” they answer:

**The precise identity of the “angel of the Lord” is not specifically given in the Bible. However** (they are now going to go on and specify anyway!?) **there are many important “clues” to his identity. There are Old and New Testament references to “angels of the Lord,” “an angel**

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<sup>9</sup> See my book ***They Never Told Me This in Church!*** in the chapter **Another God** under the sub-heading **The Principle of Agency**.

of the Lord,” and “THE angel of the Lord.” It seems when the definite article “the” is used, it is specifying a unique being, separate from the other angels. (My underlining.)

The angel of the Lord speaks as God, identifies Himself with God, and exercises the responsibilities of God (Genesis 16:7-12; 21: 17-18; 22: 11-18; Exodus 3:2; Judges 2: 1-4; 5: 23; 6:11-24; 13: 3-22; 2 Samuel 24: 16; Zechariah 1:12; 3: 1; 12:8). In several of these appearances, those who saw the angel of the Lord feared for their lives because they had “seen the Lord.” Therefore, it is clear that in at least some instances, the angel of the Lord is a theophany, an appearance of God in physical form.

Not so fast! Is it true to say that the definite article (“the”) is specifying a unique being, separate from the other angels? Our author is not alone by any stretch, for this is a common assertion. But, and it’s a big “but”, does it not occur to these sincere authorities that the Hebrew has no definite article?

Without getting too technical, this simply means that whenever angels are introduced in any OT passage, they are introduced without the definite article (*anarthrously* for you technically minded folk! And for the super technically minded, it’s called the construct state.)

Take the first time “the angel of the Lord” appears in the OT: **Genesis 16: 7** in our English Bibles reads, **Now the angel of the LORD found her (Hagar) by a spring of water in the wilderness ...** Given that Hebrew has no definite article, it is perfectly legitimate to translate it as “**an** angel of the LORD”. We must therefore understand that to write, **the angel of the LORD found her**, is the translator’s insertion.

However, once introduced to the reader, this *anarthrous* angel may legitimately be described as “the angel of the LORD” because the reader has just met this particular angel at this moment in time. So, in a nutshell, that’s how an angel becomes the angel of the LORD in every single OT passage when an angel of God appears! Having appeared, and once introduced, the reader knows which angel is speaking and acting. He is now “the angel of the LORD”!

But don’t take my word for it;

The English article that begins the traditional translation, “**the** angel of the Lord” is an inferior theological pillar that collapses when made to bear the weight of personal specificity. The article is placed there in any English translation according to an editor’s taste and **not** of necessity.<sup>10</sup>

Now, to compound their false trail the [www.GotQuestions.org](http://www.GotQuestions.org) Article continues:

The appearances of the angel of the Lord cease after the incarnation of Christ. Angels are mentioned numerous times in the New Testament, but “THE angel of the Lord” is never mentioned in the New Testament.

Are they serious? “THE angel of the Lord” is never mentioned in the New Testament!?!?

For the record, the NT follows the same OT pattern of introducing its angels. Just to make sure you have your thinking cap on, the Greek has no indefinite article. So whenever an angel of the Lord appears, he is introduced *anarthrously* --- without the definite article. But then, just as per the OT pattern, whenever that angel continues to speak or to act, he is subsequently described with the definite article --- which the Greek language definitely does have! --- because the reader already recognizes this one who is appearing as “the angel of the Lord” in that scene.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Willaim G. MacDonald, *Critique of Angelomorphic Christology*, p 7

<sup>11</sup> For example, in **Luke 1: 11** we read, **And an angel of the Lord appeared** to Zacharias. Whenever that angel speaks subsequently to Zacharias he is called **the angel of the Lord**. Indeed, he calls himself by name, and it’s not Jesus! Same holds for instance, in **Acts 12: 7** when **an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared** to Peter in jail. Thereafter, that particular angel is called **the angel of the Lord**.

Ah, what a castle of hot air is constructed on no linguistic foundation *at all* when it is alleged that, [The appearances of the angel of the Lord cease after the incarnation of Christ. Angels are mentioned numerous times in the New Testament, but “THE angel of the Lord” is never mentioned in the New Testament!](#)

“The angel of the Lord” appears before Jesus’ conception, during Jesus’ gestation in the womb, and subsequent to his birth! This continuity of terms between Old and New Testaments ought to once and for all time settle the issue.

No-one would seriously suggest that “the angel of the Lord” who speaks to Mary about her impending pregnancy is really the pre-incarnate Jesus (unless it be that Gabriel is the pre-incarnate Jesus!?!). Nor would they say that “the angel of the Lord” who appeared to Peter in jail was really the now-resurrected and glorified Jesus! A little common sense and a lot of consistency is helpful.

## CONCLUSION

Given that Christ is not “**the** Angel of the LORD”, we ask again where Jesus would have seen himself in the OT Scriptures? We will turn to the positive side of this question in the next article.