

Jesus appeared as 'Angel of the Lord'

On Faith, by Brent Emery

In just a few days, Christians all over the world will be celebrating Christmas, which marks the birthday of Yeshua (Jesus). Putting aside the fact that Dec. 25 is not the day Yeshua was born (see my column on this topic), Christmas leads many to believe Yeshua's first appearance on the pages of the Bible happened in Bethlehem's manger.

I want to introduce you to Yeshua before He was Yeshua – that is, before He was the son of Miriam and Joseph. In order for you to meet Yeshua before He was born, you'll need to get out your Old Testament. Long before we see the baby Yeshua on the pages of the New Testament, we find Yeshua coming to earth as the 'Angel of the Lord.' But make no mistake, as this is no ordinary angel (as if angels could ever be classified as ordinary).

Before we look at a specific text, we need to do a little work on the language surrounding the Hebrew word for angel. The Hebrew word "mal'ak" means messenger, and normally this is the role angels fulfill, as they bring messages from heaven to earth. The Greek translation of the Hebrew Scripture translated the Hebrew word "mal'ak" with the Greek word "angelos," and from that, the Greek word "angel" entered the English vocabulary. So whenever we encounter the "Mal'ak Adonai" (Angel of the Lord), we are dealing with a messenger from G-d. On occasion, the Angel of the Lord can also be called the Angel of G-d.

The first time the Angel of the Lord appears is in Genesis 16 to an Egyptian woman named "Hagar," which literally means "the foreigner." Having been cast from her mistress Sarai, Hagar finds herself in dire straits only to have the "Angel of the Lord" appear to her. But you might

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be thinking, "How do we know this is not just a regular angel instead of the Living G-d?" Verse 10 of Chapter 16 is the giveaway.

This "angel" promises to give Hagar children too numerous to count, and the ability to give children is something only G-d could do. Make no mistake: This is not just any angel, but the pre-incarnate Son of G-d, who would later be known as Yeshua (Jesus).

Skipping ahead to Exodus, Chapter 3, we find Moshe (Moses) having an encounter with the Angel of the Lord in the "burning bush." In verse 2, the Angel of the Lord appears to Moshe, but in verse 4, YHVH sees Moshe, and in the same verse "Elohim" speaks to Moshe. Now this is really interesting because YHVH is the four-letter name of G-d throughout the Hebrew Scripture.

The pronunciation of the name has been lost but we still have the four consonants of the name of G-d, and He appears here to Moshe. The word "Elohim" is a more generic title for G-d, but since it has been coupled with YHVH, we know we are dealing with none other than the Holy One of Israel.

This event started with the Angel of the Lord (Yeshua) and ends with YHVH (the Father), but the only One that could be apprehended by the senses was the Angel of the Lord.

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For one final text, let's look at Exodus 23:20-23. In verse 21, the nation of Israel is to "obey the voice" of this angel, as He will lead the nation to the places they need to go. Verse 21 goes on to say that the "name" of G-d is in this angel. Now this is very significant, as the word "name" refers to the Living G-d of Israel.

To have the name of G-d in this Angel demonstrates again that this is no regular angel. The One who would lead the nation of Israel on their journey out of Egypt was none other than Yeshua the Messiah.

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Space does not permit us the opportunity to look at every place the Angel of the Lord appears, but I encourage you to get a concordance and look at every place this "Angel" appears. What you will find is that this angel accepts worship, promises children and, in several instances, is so interconnected with the Lord as to be indistinguishable. When this angel appeared, He was visible and could carry on a conversation. People could touch him, and they knew He was real. So this Christmas, when you see that baby in the Nativity, and when you sing the songs celebrating the coming of Yeshua to this earth, know that He came long ago -- and numerous times in the one we know as the Angel of the Lord.

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