

# The Messenger of YHVH

## *Who bears God's Name & Speaks as God*

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**L**ong before “angels” (plural) are mentioned in Genesis, a mysterious character shows up who was not Himself “God,” since He was God’s “Messenger.” One cannot be a messenger of himself. Both the Hebrew and Greek words translated “angel” simply mean “messenger,” and are used of both heavenly messengers and human messengers.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, the term itself does not indicate any particular kind of creature. This can only be ascertained by the context. However, unlike the other heavenly “messengers” (angels), this “Messenger of YHVH” was God’s own personal spokesman, His fully authorized Agent. He spoke for God in the first Person as though He were God Himself, using God’s name (YHVH) with all of the authority of God. None of the other heavenly messengers (angels) dared to do so. He made His first appearance in Genesis 16, long before any other heavenly messengers are mentioned in the Bible.<sup>2</sup>

*Genesis 16:5-13*

*5 Then Sarai said to Abram, “My wrong be upon you! I gave my maid into your embrace; and when she saw that she had conceived, I became despised in her eyes. [YHVH] judge between you and me.”*

*6 So Abram said to Sarai, “Indeed your maid is in your hand; do to her as you please.” And when Sarai dealt harshly with her, she fled from her presence.*

*7 Now the [Messenger of YHVH] found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, by the spring on the way to Shur.*

*8 And He said, “Hagar, Sarai’s maid, where have you come from, and where are you going?” She said, “I am fleeing from the presence of my mistress Sarai.”*

*9 [The Messenger of YHVH] said to her, “Return to your mistress, and submit yourself under her hand.”*

*10 Then [the Messenger of YHVH] said to her, “**I will multiply your descendants exceedingly, so that they shall not be counted for multitude.**”*

*11 And [the Messenger of YHVH] said to her: “Behold, you are with child, And you shall bear a son. You shall call his name Ishmael, Because [YHVH] has heard your affliction.*

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<sup>1</sup> cf. Gen. 32:3,6

<sup>2</sup> The first “angels” mentioned in Genesis are the two who rescued Lot out of Sodom (Gen. 19). The second mention was in Jacob’s dream of the ladder to heaven (Gen. 28).

12 He shall be a wild man; His hand shall be against every man, And every man's hand against him. And he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren."

13 Then she called the name of [YHVH] who spoke to her, "You-Are-the-God-Who-Sees;" for she said, "Have I also here seen Him who sees me?"

Moses clearly stated several times that it was "the Messenger of YHVH" who actually appeared and spoke to Hagar. Yet, He spoke with absolute authority. He said, "I will multiply your descendants..." something that YHVH alone could do. In verse 13, it says that YHVH spoke to Hagar. It is therefore evident that the Messenger of YHVH was standing in for YHVH, acting as God's personal Agent, speaking the words of YHVH with the authority of YHVH. He did this in the first Person, as though He was YHVH Himself! Yet, He could not be YHVH Himself since He was His "Messenger." Also, Hagar referred to Him as "the God who sees me" and thus claimed to have seen "God." **Thus, seeing "the Messenger of YHVH" was considered the equivalent of having seen God.** The Hebrew word "malak" (messenger) and the equivalent Greek word ἄγγελος (messenger) absolutely require a sender who is greater in authority than the one sent. Jesus Himself said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him,"<sup>3</sup> proving the obvious, that the one sending is a different person than the one being sent. In the clause, "Messenger of YHVH," the genitive term "of YHVH" proves that YHVH was that sender.

It is clear both in the Hebrew and the LXX that the Messenger of YHVH in some limited sense conveyed the invisible presence of God, and exercised the full authority of YHVH. Yet it is equally clear that the Agent of YHVH had a superior, YHVH Himself who sent Him. This was probably not known to Hagar herself, since He did not introduce Himself as "The Messenger of YHVH." That bit of important information was added by Moses who was narrating the story for the sake of the Israelites who had just come out of Egypt. What we have illustrated here is a kind of "agency" that is so personal as to be absolutely unique.

Further, what the Messenger of YHVH does, YHVH is said to have done. Again, this shows a very unique kind of agency.

Exodus 23:20-25

20 "Behold, I send a Messenger before you [the LXX has "My Messenger"] to keep you in the way and to bring you into the place which I have prepared.

21 "Beware of Him and obey His voice; do not provoke Him, for He will not pardon your transgressions; for My name is in Him. [LXX "upon Him"]

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<sup>3</sup> John 13:16

22 "But if you indeed obey His voice and do all that I speak, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries.

23 "For My Messenger will go before you and bring you in to the Amorites and the Hittites and the Perizzites and the Canaanites and the Hivites and the Jebusites; and I will cut them off.

24 "You shall not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor do according to their works; but you shall utterly overthrow them and completely break down their sacred pillars.

25 "So you shall serve the LORD your God, and He will bless your bread and your water. And I will take sickness away from the midst of you.

The clause "My name is in Him" (LXX "My name is upon Him") is critical to our study. First, notice that the possessive "My" refers to the one speaking. He clearly said that the name "YHVH" was His own personal name. He did not say that it was the name of the Messenger of YHVH. He did not say "My name is His name." Rather, YHVH's own name was "IN" (LXX – "UPON") the Messenger of YHVH. What does this mean? It simply means that the Messenger of YHVH was acting in YHVH's name, as though He were YHVH Himself. It is the same concept as the legal term, "Power of Attorney." The preposition used in the LXX is ἐπί. It literally means to cover.<sup>4</sup> This is the epitome of what an "agent" is – one who acts on behalf of another in their name, having their full authority to make decisions and contracts in their name. That the Messenger of YHVH was able to act independently of YHVH is clear in verse 21, where He had the power to forgive sins or withhold forgiveness if provoked. But whichever He decided, that was considered the act of YHVH Himself who had given this blanket authority to His Messenger.

Furthermore, notice who it was that would bring the Israelites into the Promised Land. As we will see in Joshua, it was the Messenger of YHVH who appeared to Joshua as they were about to engage the very armies mentioned here. Yet, notice in verse 23 above that when YHVH was speaking about His Messenger He then said "I will cut them off." That is, YHVH would do this through His Messenger. Now consider the following:

*Deut. 1:29-31*

29 "Then I said to you, 'Do not be terrified, or afraid of them.

30 'The LORD your God, who goes before you, He will fight for you, according to all He did for you in Egypt before your eyes,

31 'and in the wilderness where you saw how the LORD your God carried you, as a man carries his son, in all the way that you went until you came to this place.'

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<sup>4</sup> Louw-Nida Lexicon – "ἐπί: a position on the surface of an object, ... and in contact with the object."

Deut. 11:29

29 "Now it shall be, when the LORD your God has brought you into the land which you go to possess, that you shall put the blessing on Mount Gerizim and the curse on Mount Ebal.

So who was it exactly that brought Israel to the Promised Land? Was it YHVH Himself? Or was it the Messenger of YHVH?

Judges 2:1

1 Then the Messenger of YHVH came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said: "I led you up from Egypt and brought you to the land of which I swore to your fathers; and I said, 'I will never break My covenant with you.'"

These passages and many others prove this very unique and personal concept of "agency." YHVH sends His Messenger with full authority to act for Him. And whatever the Messenger of YHVH does is credited to YHVH Himself! Yet they are clearly distinct Persons.

Notice also that the Messenger of YHVH refers to the Mosaic Covenant as "My covenant with you." This is confirmed by Steven in Acts 7 when He spoke of the Messenger of YHVH as being both the one who appeared in the burning bush and the one who delivered the Law to Moses on Mt. Sinai.

Acts 7:35-38

35 "This Moses whom they rejected, saying, 'Who made you a ruler and a judge?' is the one God sent to be a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the Messenger who appeared to him in the bush.

36 "He brought them out, after he had shown wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red Sea, and in the wilderness forty years.

37 "This is that Moses who said to the children of Israel, 'The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear.'

38 "This is he who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the Messenger who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and with our fathers, the one who received the living oracles to give to us,"

Notice the clause, "God sent ... by the hand of the Messenger." Steven was describing this concept of personal agency. What the Messenger of YHVH did, speaking to Moses in the burning bush, YHVH is said to have done because His Messenger acted in His name. Steven also said this occurred at Mt. Sinai, "the Messenger who spoke to him on

Mount Sinai." Yet Exodus says it was YHVH who spoke to him at Mt. Sinai.<sup>5</sup> Thus, YHVH and His Messenger are united in that they were acting together as one both in word, authority, and execution. There is a single authority, a single "Monarchy" which is administered by YHVH's sole personal agent. This Agent can claim the name "YHVH," because YHVH placed His name "in Him" (Hebrew) or "upon Him" (LXX).

The Messenger of YHVH was sent as a representation of **the FACE of YHVH**.

*Exodus 33*

1 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Depart and go up from here, you and the people whom you have brought out of the land of Egypt, to the land of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, 'To your descendants I will give it.'

2 "And **I will send My [Messenger] before you**, and I will drive out the Canaanite and the Amorite and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite. ...

5 For the LORD had said to Moses, "Say to the children of Israel, 'You are a stiff-necked people. **I could come up into your midst in one moment and consume you**. Now therefore, take off your ornaments, that I may know what to do to you.'"...

9 And it came to pass, when Moses entered the tabernacle, that the pillar of cloud descended and stood at the door of the tabernacle, and the LORD talked with Moses.

10 All the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the tabernacle door, and all the people rose and worshiped, each man in his tent door.

11 **So the LORD spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend**. And he would return to the camp, but his servant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, did not depart from the tabernacle.

12 Then Moses said to the LORD, "See, You say to me, 'Bring up this people.' But You have not let me know whom You will send with me. Yet You have said, 'I know you by name, and you have also found grace in My sight.'

13 "Now therefore, I pray, if I have found grace in Your sight, show me now Your way, that I may know You and that I may find grace in Your sight. And consider that this nation is Your people."

14 And He said, "**My [FACE] will go with you**, and I will give you rest."

15 Then he said to Him, "If **Your [FACE] does not go with us**, do not bring us up from here.

16 "For how then will it be known that Your people and I have found grace in Your sight, except **You go with us**? So we shall be separate, Your people and I, from all the people who are upon the face of the earth."

17 So the LORD said to Moses, "I will also do this thing that you have spoken; for you have found grace in My sight, and I know you by name."

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<sup>5</sup> Exod. 19:20

18 And he said, "Please, show me Your glory."

19 Then He said, "I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion."

20 But He said, "**You cannot see My FACE; for no man shall see Me, and live.**"

21 And the LORD said, "Here is a place by Me, and you shall stand on the rock.

22 "So it shall be, while My glory passes by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock, and will cover you with My hand while I pass by.

23 "Then I will take away My hand, and you shall see My back; **but My FACE shall not be seen.**"

The Hebrew word for "face" is "paniyim." In this passage, the NKJV renders it sometimes as "face" and other times as "Presence." But it is the same word. It is apparent here why YHVH needed a Messenger or personal Agent. His real "face" (or personal presence) would consume them all in an instant. So God instead employed a buffer, a Mediator, an Agent, a substitute for His "face" who could interact with humans personally without consuming them. YHVH's Messenger was sent in a human form to speak to Moses "face to face" the very words of YHVH. Thus, the "face" or actual "presence" of YHVH Himself was always concealed from Israel for their own sake, as a benevolent act, to spare them. Yet, the Messenger of YHVH going with them was the substitute for God's "face" being present in their midst.

*Isaiah 63:9-10*

9 In all their affliction He was afflicted, And [**the Messenger of His FACE**] saved them; In His love and in His pity He redeemed them; And He bore them and carried them All the days of old.

10 But they rebelled and grieved His Holy [Breath]; So He turned Himself against them as an enemy, And He fought against them.

Consequently, when the Messenger of YHVH swore the oath to Abraham from heaven,<sup>6</sup> or when He wrestled with Jacob and changed his name to Israel,<sup>7</sup> or when He appeared to Moses in the burning bush,<sup>8</sup> or delivered the Law to Moses at Mt. Sinai,<sup>9</sup> in each case God used His personal Agent in order to insulate His people from the consequences of His real presence.

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<sup>6</sup> Gen. 22

<sup>7</sup> Gen. 32

<sup>8</sup> Exod. 3; Acts 7:30-31

<sup>9</sup> Acts 7:38

Yet, the personal identity of the Messenger of YHVH was always concealed. When Jacob wrestled with Him, he asked His name.

*Genesis 32:26-30*

*26 And He said, "Let Me go, for the day breaks." But he said, "I will not let You go unless You bless me!"*

*27 So He said to him, "What is your name?" He said, "Jacob."*

*28 And He said, "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed."*

*29 Then Jacob asked, saying, "Tell me Your name, I pray." And He said, "Why is it that you ask about My name?" And He blessed him there.*

*30 And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: "For I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved."*

Instead of actually seeing the face of YHVH, Jacob was shown the face of YHVH's Messenger as a substitute or buffer, to insulate Jacob from the consequences of exposure to YHVH's own face. Since the Messenger of YHVH changed Jacob's name to Israel, he wanted to know the name of this unique Messenger from YHVH's own presence. But He refused to give His name. Was it because He did not have a personal name? Or was it being intentionally concealed?

*Judges 13:13-23*

*13 So the [Messenger of YHVH] said to Manoah, "Of all that I said to the woman let her be careful.*

*14 "She may not eat anything that comes from the vine, nor may she drink wine or similar drink, nor eat anything unclean. All that I commanded her let her observe."*

*15 Then Manoah said to the [Messenger of YHVH], "Please let us detain You, and we will prepare a young goat for You."*

*16 And the [Messenger of YHVH] said to Manoah, "Though you detain Me, I will not eat your food. But if you offer a burnt offering, you must offer it to [YHVH]." (For Manoah did not know He was the [Messenger of YHVH].)*

*17 Then Manoah said to the [Messenger of YHVH], "What is Your name, that when Your words come to pass we may honor You?"*

*18 And the [Messenger of YHVH] said to him, "Why do you ask My name, seeing it is wonderful?"*

*19 So Manoah took the young goat with the grain offering, and offered it upon the rock to [YHVH]. And He did a wondrous thing while Manoah and his wife looked on – 20 it happened as the flame went up toward heaven from the altar – the [Messenger of YHVH] ascended in the flame of the altar! When Manoah and his wife saw this, they fell on their faces to the ground.*

21 When the [Messenger of YHVH] appeared no more to Manoah and his wife, then Manoah knew that He was the [Messenger of YHVH].

22 And Manoah said to his wife, "**We shall surely die, because we have seen God!**"

23 But his wife said to him, "If [YHVH] had desired to kill us, He would not have accepted a burnt offering and a grain offering from our hands, nor would He have shown us all these things, nor would He have told us such things as these at this time."

The Messenger of YHVH refused to divulge His name. However, He acknowledged that He had a name, saying, "It is wonderful." The Hebrew word means "wonderful, incomprehensible, or extraordinary" according to Strong's Lexicon. It is therefore obvious that the Messenger of YHVH had a personal and unique name at the time. But it was being concealed intentionally in a mystery. Paul explains why:

1 Cor. 2:6-8

6 However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing.

7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory,

8 which none of the rulers of this age knew; **for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.**

Col. 2:2-4

2 that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, **to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ,**

**3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.**

4 Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words.

That the Messenger of YHVH is Jesus Christ is shown from Isaiah 9:6-7.

Isaiah 9:6-7 NKJV

6 For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And **His name will be called Wonderful,** Counselor, Mighty God, [Father of the impending age],<sup>10</sup> Prince of Peace.

7 Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

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<sup>10</sup> "Everlasting Father" is not an accurate translation. אב־בָּאֵן means "father of the future" (impending age – the Kingdom). The term refers to the future, not infinite time.

The Septuagint reads quite a bit differently.

*Isaiah 9:6-7 LXX<sup>11</sup>*

6 "Because a child was begotten for us, a Son was also given to us, of whom the Beginning originated upon His shoulder, and **His name is called Messenger of Great Counsel**, for I will bring peace upon the rulers, peace and vitality to Him.

7 Great [was] His Beginning. And His peace has no boundary upon the throne of David and upon His Kingdom, to establish it and to support it in justice and in judgment, from now unto the appointed age. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this."

The Messenger of YHVH became "the Man Christ Jesus," was also cryptically announced by Malachi at the close of the Hebrew Scriptures.

*Malachi 3:1-2*

1 "Behold, I send My messenger, And he will prepare the way before **Me**. And **the Lord, whom you seek**, Will suddenly come to His temple, Even **the Messenger of the covenant**, In whom you delight. Behold, He is coming," Says the LORD of hosts.

2 "But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire And like launderer's soap.

In verse 1, "My messenger" refers to John the Baptist, since this statement was quoted by Jesus Himself and applied to John.<sup>12</sup> What immediately follows is a prophecy of Jesus Christ. "And the Lord, whom you seek, Will suddenly come to His temple, Even **the Messenger of the covenant**, In whom you delight. Behold, He is coming." Remember that it was the "Messenger of YHVH" who called to Abraham and swore the oath of the Abrahamic Covenant.<sup>13</sup> It was the "Messenger of YHVH" who appeared to Moses in the burning bush<sup>14</sup> and on Mt. Sinai to deliver the Mosaic Covenant.<sup>15</sup> And Jesus Christ as Man brought the New Covenant personally.<sup>16</sup> The same Person – the Son of God – was the sole Mediator between God and man in establishing the covenants. "For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time."<sup>17</sup> The "Messenger of Great Council" who would be born as a child according to Isaiah, who is also "the Messenger of the Covenant" between God and man, is the one whom John the Baptist came to announce.

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<sup>11</sup> My literal translation

<sup>12</sup> Matt. 11:7-15; Luke 7:24-28

<sup>13</sup> Gen. 22:15-18

<sup>14</sup> Exod. 3

<sup>15</sup> Acts 7:38

<sup>16</sup> Matt. 26:28

<sup>17</sup> 1 Tim. 2:5-6

"The Revelation of Jesus Christ" begins by portraying Jesus who appeared to John as the Messenger of YHVH.

*Revelation 1:1-3, 12, 17-18a LGV*

*1 The revelation of Jesus the Anointed which God gave to Him to show 2 His servants the things which must occur suddenly, 3 and [God] communicated it, having sent it **by His Messenger** to His servant John who reported the word of God and **the testimony of Jesus the Anointed** as much as he perceived. ...*

*12 And I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And upon turning, I saw seven golden lampstands. 13 And in the middle of the seven lampstands [I saw] one like **the Son of Man** ...*

*17 And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. And He placed His right hand on me, saying to me: "Do not be afraid. **I am the First and the Last.** 18 And **I am He who lives, and became dead, and look, I am alive unto the ages of the ages!** Amen ...*

His identity was concealed as a "mystery" in the Old Testament with an intentional tension between the many "one God" statements vs. the Messenger of YHVH actually speaking in the first person as YHVH. The solution to this apparent tension is the fact that YHVH gave to His Son the full authority to speak and act in His name. "Behold, I send [My Messenger] before you to keep you in the way and to bring you into the place which I have prepared. Beware of Him and obey His voice; do not provoke Him, for He will not pardon your transgressions; **for My name is in** [or upon] **Him**. But if you indeed obey His voice and do all that I speak, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries."<sup>18</sup> Paul explained why the identity of Jesus the "Son of God" was concealed.

*1 Cor. 2:7-10*

*7 But we speak **the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory,***

***8 which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.***

*9 But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him."*

*10 But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.*

It is the holy Breath of God which reveals the "mystery" of the Son, who is "the Lord of Glory," just as this was supernaturally revealed to Peter.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Exod. 23:20-22

<sup>19</sup> Matt. 16:13-18