

Shadows In the Bible

Angel of the Lord

This is not a simple subject, but it is an interesting one. The term “Angel of the Lord is mentioned (depending on the version) around 61 times in the Bible. There is a split in this term. Most scholars point to what is called an article. It’s the prefix of sorts that accompanies the saying. 51 times we have statements saying “the” angel of the Lord. 10 times we have “An” angel of the Lord. Big deal! The big deal is that “the” tends to signal “the Lord.” “An” usually signals a representative of the Lord.

There is lots of argument on this term and the articles preceding it. To some degree we just don’t know the real intention. In the New Testament we have several instances of an angel speaking for the Lord. “An” Angel met Zechariah the father of John the Baptist. An angel talked to Mary. The angel talked to Joseph but it did not say from the Lord. We can read a lot into this phenomenon. Usually the angel of the Lord has something to say from the Lord.

It is interesting that at Jesus tomb an angel of the Lord came down from heaven. He did not however declare something from the Lord. Instead he told them what to do and what had happened. Take for instance in the Old Testament we have the angel of the Lord talking to Hagar

in first person. We have the same thing with Abraham. We also have instances where the angel of God is a pillar of fire. He talks to Gideon and Manoah who is the father of Sampson. Clearly, there have been points in history where God felt it necessary to intervene in some way. People that say God is dead or just a figure in a distant heaven got it all wrong. God likes to appear in some form.

Let's talk about one more type of manifestation of the Lord. If you spend any time in church you just might hear the terms Incarnate, Theophany, or Christophany. They are big theological words. The term angel of the Lord plays a role with these three words. This is only theoretical. Some scholars and theologians believe that our instances of "The Lord" in the Bible are either God the Father himself or Jesus "incarnate" which means in the flesh.

There are two examples I would like to touch on. One is found in Joshua 5. A man talks to Joshua for God. He claims to be the commander of the army of the Lord. Some people say that is Jesus incarnate. One other incident comes in Genesis 32. Jacob is wrestling with a man that claims to be from the Lord. Clearly these two men have spiritual powers. They appear Godly. Are they Jesus spirit in the flesh? Some call this the incarnate Christ.

Either way we do have several instances when an angel or "the angel" of the Lord visits this earth. He is there to speak for God. Is it God the Father himself? In Genesis 1 we have a small instance of the Spirit of the Lord hovering over the waters. Who is that? Is it God the Father, God the Son, or is it the Holy Spirit? Well, now you know more about the Bible than you thought possible after this week's study.