

CHRISTOPHANIES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

In the following Old Testament passages the omnipresent God revealed Himself in a localized way which people could interact with (a theophany).¹ I believe these passages describe pre-incarnate appearances of the Second Person of the Trinity: the Son of God.²

“As the church fathers had already recognized [among later scholars we mention Calvin, Hengstenberg, Keil, Ebrard, Lange, and Stier], this is no less a person than the Son of God Himself, the Word. . . who appeared later in Christ.”³

In many cases, the individual is described as “the Angel of the LORD” (מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה, *malak YHWH*) who speaks in the first person as God. Like the similar Greek term, ἄγγελος (*angelos*), the term *malak* can also be translated as “messenger” or “ambassador” and does not require the Angel of the LORD be a created angelic being.

The name of this mysterious figure is highlighted by numerous OT passages within which He appears (Gen. 32:29; Ex. 23:21; Jdg. 13:6,18). I believe His name is related to the riddle posed by the Psalmist:

Who has ascended into heaven, or descended? Who has gathered the wind in His fists? Who has bound the waters in a garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What [is] His name, and what [is] His Son's name, If you know? (Pr. 30:4)

PASSAGE	The Angel of the LORD
Gen. 3:8	The LORD God <i>walked</i> in the Garden with Adam and Eve and they <i>hid</i> from His physical presence.
Gen. 16:7-13	The Angel of the Lord appears to Hagar. She called the name of the LORD who spoke to her, You-Are-the-God-Who-Sees; for she said, “Have I also here seen Him who sees me?”
Gen. 18:1-2	The LORD and two angels appear to Abraham.
Gen. 22:11-18	The Angel of the LORD stays Abraham’s hand when about to offer Isaac as sacrifice.
Gen. 32:24-30; Hos. 12:4-5; Gen. 48:16	Jacob wrestles with a man and says, “For I have seen God face to face and my life is preserved.”
Ex. 3:1-6; Acts 7:30-33	The Angel of the LORD appears to Moses within the burning bush.
Ex. 4:24	The LORD sought to kill Moses in relation to his failure to circumcise his son.
Ex. 24:9-11	Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and seventy elders of Israel ate and drank with God.

¹ “The word ‘theophany’ coming from the Greek words for God (*theos*) and ‘to appear’ (*phaino*), has historically been taken to refer to appearances of Christ in the Old Testament. . . In the Bible, theophanies have reference specifically to Christ. Usually they are limited to appearances of Christ in the form of man or angel while other forms of appearance, such as the Shekinah, are not considered as formal theophanies.” John Walvoord, *Jesus Christ Our Lord* (Chicago, IL: Moody Bible Institute, 1969), 51-52. “James Borland's definition of “Christophany” runs as follows: “those unsought, intermittent and temporary, visible and audible manifestations of God the Son in human form, by which God communicated something to certain conscious human beings on earth prior to the birth of Jesus Christ.” . . . When the biblical account associates “the Angel of Yahweh” with a theophany, “Messenger” is a better translation than “Angel,” because this title denotes the function or office of the individual, not His nature. In addition, He is spoken of as actually being God, He bears the name Yahweh, He speaks as God, He displays divine attributes and authority. Most significantly, however, He receives worship.” William D. Barrick, *Inspiration and the Trinity* in Richard L. Mayhue, ed., *The Master's Seminary Journal* (Sun Valley, CA: Master's Seminary), 24/2 Fall 2013, 179-197, 183.

² Tony Garland, http://spiritandtruth.org/reference/christophanies_in_the_old_testament-20191016124549.pdf

³ Erich Sauer, *The Dawn Of World Redemption* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdman's Publishing Company, c1964, 1951), 103.

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Ex. 13:21; 14:19; 23:20-23; 32:34; 33:2,14; Num. 20:16; Deu. 4:37; Isa. 63:9	God manifests His Presence as a pillar of fire and cloud which accompanies Israel out of Egypt and is said to be the Angel of God (Ex. 14:19) and Angel of His Presence (Isa. 63:9). God says, "My name is in Him" (Ex. 23:21).
Num. 22:22	The Angel of the LORD appears to Balaam and his donkey.
Jos. 5:13-15	The Commander of the LORD'S army appears to Joshua.
Jdg. 2:1-5	The Angel of the LORD admonishes the children of Israel as God.
Jdg. 5:23	The Angel of the LORD is said, by Deborah and Baraak, to have cursed "Meroz."
Jdg. 6:11-23	The Angel of the LORD appears to Gideon who fears he might die as a result.
Jdg. 13:3-23	The Angel of the LORD appears to Samson's parents. The father says, "We shall surely die, because we have seen God!"
2S. 24:15-17; 1Chr. 21:12-30	The Angel of the LORD brought a plague upon the Israelites in judgement of David's numbering of people of Israel.
1K. 19:7	The Angel of the LORD appears to Elijah and strengthens him for the journey to Mt. Horeb.
2K. 1:3,15	The Angel of the LORD instructs Elijah to accept the summons of Ahaziah.
2K. 19:35; Isa. 37:36	The Angel of the LORD kills 185,000 Assyrians in response to the petition of Isaiah and Hezekiah.
Ps. 34:7	The Angel of the LORD protects those who fear Him.
Ps. 35:5-6	David prays that the Angel of the LORD would pursue his enemies.
Eze. 1:26	Ezekiel sees a <i>man</i> seated on God's throne.
Dan. 3:25	An individual "like the Son of God" appears within the fiery furnace with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego.
Zec. 1:11-12	The Angel of the LORD asks about the judgment of Jerusalem.
Zec. 3:1-10	The Angel of the LORD admonishes Joshua, the high priest and announces the coming Servant, the Branch.
Zec. 12:8	In the day of the LORD, the strength of the house of David is compared with that of the Angel of the LORD.
Acts 7:38	The Angel of the LORD spoke to Moses on Mt. Sinai.

Numerous passages indicate that no man has ever seen God at any time—Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Trinity, is the person of God with Whom men have interacted—the "express image of His [the Father's] person" (Heb. 1:3 cf. Col. 1:19; 2:9).

PASSAGE	Jesus as the Approachable Revelation of God
Ex. 33:20	No man can see God and live
John 1:18	No one has seen God at any time . . . the only begotten Son . . . has declared Him.
John 5:37	The Father Himself . . . You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form.
John 8:48	Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM." (cf. Ex. 3:14)
John 14:9	. . . He who has seen Me has seen the Father . . .
1Ti. 3:16	. . . God was manifested in the flesh . . .
1Ti. 6:16	[God dwells] in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see...