

The God Of Abraham, Isaac Jacob, And Moses

Yahweh and the Angel of the Lord

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This message is related to the one I gave on Pentecost ["The Helper and the Angel of the Lord"]. That was a long time ago, and I don't expect you to remember the details, so I will briefly summarize. A main point was that Jesus Christ frequently uses titles or descriptors in the third-person. When He does this, it can sound like He is referring to someone other than Himself. This is a large part of the reason people believe there are three God beings—because Jesus spoke of the Helper, Comforter, or Holy Spirit in the third person, when He was really speaking of Himself. Jesus even gave the disclaimer that He was using figurative language, but most professing Christians still believe there are three divine beings instead of two.

We saw something similar when Jesus speaks of the Son of Man, which He did 80-some times. One noteworthy example is in Luke 9:26, where He says, "...whoever is ashamed of *Me* and *My words*, of him the *Son of Man* will be ashamed...." He uses the personal pronouns "Me" and "My," as well as the third-person title, "Son of Man" in the very same sentence, yet we understand that was how He chose to refer to Himself. He is not speaking of someone else, even though it can sound that way.

We also read what God said at the end of giving the law on Mount Sinai (Exodus 23). The One speaking said that He would send His Angel, and because of that wording, it sounds as though both God Beings were involved there. Yet other scriptures show that it was, in fact, the Angel of the Lord who made the covenant and with whom Moses spoke on Mount Sinai. So, the One speaking was the Angel of the Lord, who would send the Angel of the Lord, just as Jesus sent the Helper, who was Himself. Christ's figurative language and His proclivity for third-person descriptions may sound strange to our modern ears, but when we accept that this is how He speaks, we can better understand His revelation to us.

With this in mind, please turn with me to Acts 3:

Acts 3:13 The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His Servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go.

Today we will consider the title or descriptor found here: “the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,” or “the God of our fathers.” In this verse, there is a distinction between the God of the fathers and His Servant, Jesus Christ. However, a difficulty arises when the conclusion is drawn from this verse that the God of the fathers was therefore the God who Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob knew. Notice, though, that this verse makes no such statement. It simply says that the God of the fathers glorified His Servant Jesus.

Let’s look at something similar, a few pages over:

Acts 7:30-32 “And when forty years had passed, an Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire in a bush, in the wilderness of Mount Sinai. When Moses saw it, he marveled at the sight; and as he drew near to observe, the voice of the Lord came to him, saying, ‘I am the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’ And Moses trembled and dared not look.

In verse 32, we see the same descriptors of “the God of your fathers” and the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Verse 31 identifies these words as coming from “the Lord.” Now, it may seem like “the Lord” (who calls Himself the God of the Fathers) is separate and distinct from the Angel, whom we understand to be the pre-incarnate Jesus Christ. And from this comes the conclusion that it was God the Father who primarily interacted with all the Old Testament figures. There is some logic to that interpretation, but there is more that must be considered before settling on that conclusion.

As we saw, the usage of two divine titles or descriptors in a given context does not always mean that two God beings are being spoken of. In addition, another truth is that many of the titles or descriptors are non-specific,

meaning they can refer to either the Father or the Son, or to both together. The Bible introduces us to God with the word *Elohim*, which is plural. Two God beings, but referred to with a single word.

As another example, think about who the Creator is. Ephesians 3:9 says that God created all things ... through Christ. Scripture shows both the Father and the Son involved in creation—They are both Creators.

Another non-specific title is the word “Almighty.” Its basic meaning is “all powerful” or “omnipotent One.” Because the Father is greater than the Son, some conclude that the Almighty refers to the Father. Again, there is some logic there, but it falls short: Jesus introduces Himself in the book of Revelation by saying He is “the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, ... who is and who was and who is to come, *the Almighty*” (Revelation 1:8). Yet in other places, the Father is also described by that term. It applies to both.

A final example is the word “Lord.” In the New Testament, both the Father and the Son are called “Lord,” but it is applied to Christ far more often. The Hebrew word for “Lord” is *Yahweh* (or however you prefer to pronounce it; we are only guessing, anyway). Some say that there is only *one Yahweh*, and hopefully they examined all 6,517 occurrences before drawing that conclusion. Now if they had, they would have seen that both the Father and the Son are referred to as *Yahweh*. *Yahweh* even says, “Let Us,” just as *Elohim* says, “Let Us.”

Here in Acts 7, there is something that will help us to understand the God of the fathers, and it really fills out the picture of what happened in the Old Testament. Notice verse 38:

Acts 7:38 “This is he [Stephen is speaking of Moses] who was in the congregation in the wilderness *with the Angel* who *spoke* to him on Mount Sinai, and with our fathers, the one [back to Moses again] who received the living oracles to give to us,

This is very plain. It was the Angel who spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai, and with the fathers. The word for “angel” essentially means “messenger,” and it

is not limited to the created angels who are ministering spirits. Malachi 3:1 foretells of the “Messenger of the covenant,” who was Christ, and Malachi uses the Hebrew word translated as “angel.” The Messiah was the divine Messenger, the Angel of the Lord.

This identification of the Angel is highly significant. Stephen undoubtedly got this from Judges 2:1, where it says that the Angel had a covenant with Israel that He promised He would never break. Judges 2:1 also says that it was the Angel who promised the Land to the fathers. Yet when you go back and read the various accounts, it was the *Lord—Yahweh*—who spoke about the Promised Land, and made the covenant with Israel.

So, we have some possibilities. One is that *Yahweh* and the Messenger are separate Beings. However, this would indicate that they both, separately promised the same thing to the fathers, and both made covenants with Israel. Yet there is no record of such a duality of promises and covenants, first made by the Lord and then also made by the Angel.

Another possibility is that *Yahweh* and the Messenger are simply two different ways of describing the same Being, just as *Jesus* is the *Son of Man*, and the *Son of God*, and *God*.

Now, let’s look at what the Angel spoke to Abraham and Jacob under that title:

Genesis 22:11-12 But the Angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, “Abraham, Abraham!” So he said, “Here I am.” And He said, “Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.”

Genesis 22:15-18 Then the Angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, and said: “By Myself I have sworn, says the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son—blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as

the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.”

In verse 12, the Angel says that Abraham had not withheld Isaac from *Him*—from the Angel. This was Abraham’s God—the same God who told him back in verse 2 to sacrifice his only son. The Angel was the God that Abraham listened to, and in verse 14, Abraham named the place, “The LORD will provide.”

Then the Messenger speaks again. For verse 16, *Young’s Literal Translation* says, “By Myself I have sworn—the affirmation of [Yahweh]—that because [you] [have] done this thing, and [have] not withheld [your] son, [your] only one....,” and so on. In other words, it indicates the Messenger was not simply relaying a message here. He was at the center of what happened, because He was testing Abraham, and was very pleased with the response.

Now, if you would turn to Genesis 31, we will look at Jacob’s God:

Genesis 31:11, 13 Then the Angel of God spoke to me in a dream, saying, ‘Jacob.’ And I said, ‘Here I am.’ . . . (13) [The Angel said,] I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed the pillar and where you made a vow to Me. Now arise, get out of this land, and return to the land of your family.’ ”

Here, the Messenger of God says that He is the God of Bethel. Bethel was the place of Jacob’s dream. In that dream, God said, “I am the LORD God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants” (Genesis 28:13-14). So, if you put this together and follow the sequence, the Angel *is* the God of Bethel, and the God of Bethel *is* the LORD God of Abraham, and Isaac, who promised them the land. And, again, Judges 2:1 says that the Angel swore to give the land. What we are seeing is the exact same things being performed by the Lord and the Angel. We will see more of this in Genesis 48, when Jacob is on his deathbed:

Genesis 48:15-16 And he blessed Joseph, and said: “God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has fed me all my life long to this day, the Angel who has redeemed me from all evil, Bless the lads; Let my name be named upon them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.”

Jacob uses two statements about God, and then a statement about the Angel, all to describe the same Being. He thus identifies the Angel as the God who continually provided for him, and the God before whom Abraham and Isaac walked. The Angel of the Lord was Jacob’s God. This was the One with whom the fathers interacted, and who promised them the land, the One who became Jesus Christ.

Now, as we know, the term “Lord” can refer to either God Being, so is it possible that both the future Christ (as the Angel) and the future Father interacted with people in the Old Testament simultaneously? There is no doubt that the Father was active—that is beyond question. He has always been working, as Jesus said. However, there is something else for us to keep in mind. Please turn to the burning bush incident in Exodus 3.

We already read the account of this in Acts 7, so we will just look at some highlights. In verse 2, the divine Messenger appears to Moses in the burning bush. Verse 4 mentions the Lord and God, and God speaks, and says in verse 6 that He is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and Moses was afraid to look upon God. God tells Moses that He is sending him to the Israelites, and down in verse 13, Moses asks for His name. God replies with, “I AM WHO I AM.” Now, notice verse 16, where Moses was instructed to say, “‘The *LORD God of your fathers*, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, *appeared* to me, saying, ‘I have surely visited you....’” Remember, in verse 2, it says the Angel *appeared*.

Some say there were two Beings in the burning bush, one seen (the Angel), the other heard (the Lord). However, verse 16 says it was the *LORD* God who appeared. Once again, we see identical actions of the Lord and the Angel. Now, when the word “appeared” is used in this way—in what is called the

Niphal stem—it means “to present oneself, to be seen, to be visible.” Moses did not just hear the God of the fathers while seeing the Angel. This says that the God of the fathers appeared, presented Himself as visible, and was seen.

And this is not unique. In Genesis 12, 17, and 18, *Yahweh* appeared to Abraham—He was visible. In Genesis 26, the Lord appeared to Isaac. In chapter 35, He appeared to Jacob. However, the New Testament is *adamant* that the Father has not been seen, and cannot be seen by any except the Son. I will give you seven references: John 1:18 says, “*No one* has seen [the Father] *at any time*.” I Timothy 1:12 says He is *invisible*. I Timothy 6:16 says of the Father, “whom no man has seen or can see.” In John 5:37, Jesus Himself says, “You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form.” Jesus says again in John 6:46, “Not that *anyone* has seen the Father, except He who is from God.” Colossians 1:15 calls Jesus “the image of the invisible God.” I John 4:12 says that “*No one* has *seen* God *at any time*.” Those are a lot of witnesses that must be discounted *if* the Father appeared to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and others. Those are the clear verses with which we should begin, particularly Christ’s own testimony that no one has seen the Father except Himself.

So, to finally answer our question, Who was and is the God of the fathers, and of Moses? It was the Creator God. In the broadest sense, it was Both. God the Father is God over all, so He certainly was the God of the fathers, and in at least one place, the title refers to the Father rather than the Son. But the Son was also God of the fathers. He is also God, and the only One over whom He is not God is the Father. So, perhaps the better question is, Who did the fathers see and interact with? It was the divine Messenger, who was also God from the beginning, and the Almighty, and *Yahweh*, the Word who later became flesh. He is also the Rock, the Stone of Israel, the Shepherd of Israel, and thus, the One who dwelt between the cherubim in the Tabernacle and Temple (Psalm 80:1), as a type of the heavenly reality.

He has multiple names and titles, and He has a demonstrated pattern of using them in combination. Perhaps He does this to remind us of all that He is and does, so we don’t fall into thinking of Him too simply or narrowly. He is the *only* way that *anyone* has access to the Father. The high priest most assuredly did *NOT* come before the Father with the blood of bulls and goats. The priest could only approach the subordinate *Almighty God*, and that was

terrifying enough. It took the sinless blood of *God incarnate* to open the way to One so *awesome*. That One established the Word as the way to eternal life, and understanding Him means recognizing Him in the Old Testament.