

The Trinity - the Angel of the Lord

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[0 : 00] We're looking at a good many passages around Scripture. We will come to Judges 13 for our second or third point, but just have it open.

And the rest of the passages are short, and I can read them out for us. If you're, I'm sure, worked out already what our topic is this evening.

It's been hopefully clear in our reading and in our singing. We're carrying on our Trinity series. Remember last time we had, I hope it wasn't too technical, the Shema proof, but Trinity, the concept of a Godhead is even in the most basic truth about God.

We worship a God who is united in his oneness. Well, this evening perhaps we're taking a broader look. Last time it was that one single Hebrew word, and it was quite in-depth.

We'll go nice and broad this evening. And we'll see one evidence that is quite simple for us to point to, as to at least, if not the strong evidence, and it's good evidence of the presence of the Son, of the second person of the Trinity throughout Scripture, throughout the Old Testament.

[1 : 22] That is the angel of the Lord. Now, in reality, every one of these texts, it's a sermon in itself. For a short time this evening, we could just look at these texts and see what each of these texts tells us or shows us about the angel of the Lord and how that encourages us to realise that it is talking about the Son.

Of course, we know that throughout Scripture, throughout the Old Testament, angels are mentioned. Mankind encounters angels. God sends angels.

Of that, there's no discussion. Of that, there's no doubt. But we see there's at least, and it's argued here in numbers, but say around 14 encounters, 14 separate encounters in the Old Testament, where the angel is specifically named as the angel of the Lord.

Every angel is sent from the Lord, but this specific encounter, we see 14 times, is an encounter with the angel of the Lord.

Of course, the word angel perhaps confuses the topic somewhat. Angel, as we know, has two meanings, or it's two meanings in its usage at least.

[2 : 46] Of course, we know angel as being the created heavenly beings that God made and that are his messengers. But of course, also the very word angel, both in Hebrew and what comes from in Greek, and what comes from in Hebrew here, the name given to angels, the name angel, it just means literally messenger, one who carries a message.

So most of the time it means a physical angel, a heavenly being, whose job title is also angel, a created being who brings God's message.

But also the term angel means messenger. So we say here angel of the Lord, it is also the messenger of the Lord, or specifically, quite literally at times, the words or the word of the Lord.

Now, just to say, there's discussion here among brothers and sisters. Some brothers and sisters will say, the angel of the Lord is not anything other than just a normal angel.

A normal angel in the course of angels' work. Others, myself included, that's what I look at this evening from God's word, believe that in the angel of the Lord, we see what you would call a Christophany, a pre-incarnate appearance of the Son.

[4 : 14] So before he came in the incarnation, before he was born of women and made flesh, the Son, as we saw last week, so every week, from creation all the way through, he's fully involved.

And we see his involvement at specific times throughout the Old Testament, appearing as the angel of the Lord. Now, to prove the point, I'm starting off with what I think is the strongest evidence.

I'm no lawyer, but even I know. It's probably the strongest evidence, and the rest of the thing can back us up. The strongest evidence that the angel of the Lord is, in fact, the Son of God.

Every time you see the angel of the Lord, you can think to yourself, this is speaking about a pre-incarnate Jesus. This is speaking about the Son. Well, the evidence I find most compelling is comparing two texts.

Exodus 14, verse 9, and Jude, chapter 1, verse 5. Here we see the Son leading his people. Now, read for us.

[5 : 20] Exodus 14, verse 19, where it says, Then the angel of God, who was going before the host of Israel, moved and went behind them, and the pillar of cloud moved from before them and stood behind them.

And this is, of course, referencing when Egypt and Pharaoh and his army are closing in, and the people are protected. The angel of the Lord moves from in front to behind and protects the people of Israel.

The angel of the Lord is leading his people, according to the text in Exodus. Here we see the angel of the Lord leading this group of Israelites, leading these rescued people.

All the power seen here, the pillar of fire, the pillar of smoke, the power to stop the Egyptian army, it is all attributed to the angel of the Lord.

It's him that's doing this. And he is stopping Pharaoh's army, that this angel is moving, as it were, the pillar from one side to the other, and he is looking after the many thousands of people of Israel.

[6 : 32] Exodus 14, 19, Then the angel of the Lord was going before the host of Israel. Compare that, then, to the words we have in Jude, chapter 1, verse 5, where Jude says to us, Now, I want to remind you, although you once fully knew it, that Jesus, who saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe.

Now, if you have in front of you just now a different translation, if you have the KJV or the MKJV, you will see it says something different.

It will say, along the lines, I'm sure, of, Now, the Lord that saved a people out of Egypt. This is one area where our translations do differ. In many areas, we say our translations don't matter, and the meaning is still there.

The Lord does save his people. This is one area where Bible translations, there's differences. Just a quick help for us so we don't panic too much.

So the KJV says, The Lord saved a people out of Israel. And the ESV and others say, Jesus saved a people out of Israel. The KJV translators, they went with what you'd call the majority text.

[7 : 58] So the most manuscripts we had to hand at the time. The ESV and other translations go for the oldest manuscripts we have.

So the oldest manuscripts, the oldest versions, say, Jesus in Jude. The oldest Greek text that we have to hand today, the very, very oldest bits and pieces that we have of Jude, they all say, Jesus.

And others, later on, will say, the Lord. The thinking there is that the later on ones, we're just paraphrasing the early ones, where it says, the Lord saved a people.

It means the same thing. It means Jesus. Myself, personally, and I'm convinced of this from the Greek, it is Jesus Jude is speaking about.

Jude, chapter 1, verse 5, says that Jesus saved a people. Even the Lord works every way. The Lord. Of course, Jude, they're speaking about Jesus anyway.

[8 : 59] Jesus, who saved a people out of the land of Egypt. And the wording there, the Greek grammar there, is Jesus is moving the people. It's the same word as the angel of the Lord moving the people before them, behind them, protecting them.

Brothers and sisters, when the people of Israel are rescued, from Egypt, it is the angel of the Lord who is doing it. Who's leading them, who's going before them as that pillar of fire and a pillar of smoke, who is protecting the people of Israel.

And that angel of the Lord, as Jude tells us and reaffirms for us, that is the sun. And it makes more sense, isn't it, that it is the sun doing it.

The beauty is there. Just think. It was the sun, the second person of the Godhead, who is rescuing, who is active in the rescuing of his people out of Egypt.

As a foreshadowing, of course, what one day he would do for us, as he rescues us out of our Egypt, we could say. It makes more sense, I had to restrain myself looking at the sermon on transfiguration.

[10 : 16] I didn't go ahead of myself to this sermon. But it's Moses who speaks to Jesus at the Mount of Transfiguration. The beautiful thing there is that it is Jesus, or the sun, we should say, the second person of the Godhead, who leads Moses and his people away from Egypt into freedom, into life, into hope.

And there, at that point, we see Moses and Jesus speaking. The one who freed his people and the one he used to help free his people. For me, that's the strongest evidence.

For the 14 mentions of the angel of the Lord, that's the strongest one because the New Testament backs it up for us. Scripture always interprets Scripture. We always turn to Scripture to help us.

I have nothing else this evening. That is the main text we have. But in Egypt, the people of God were freed by the angel of the Lord and Jude calls that power, calls that one who freed his people.

Not an angel. He calls him Jesus. He calls him Jesus. From Egypt, the sun led his people. The second evidence we see is David.

[11 : 40] 1 Chronicles, chapter 21. You'll be familiar, I'm sure, of the story, the account. Jesus, so David, has, in his own boldness and his own sin, but also Scripture tells us, David, listening to Satan, has decided to number his army, to number his people, really.

He numbers his people. He's trying to remind himself and to show how strong he is. And the Lord heavily chastises David for doing this census, for numbering the people.

It's pride, it's arrogance. Again, Scripture says that David actually listened to the voice of Satan, to the voice of the accuser. So God chastises David.

God chastises Israel. And we see that God gives options, he gives a choice to David, choose one of these three things, what will happen to you and your kingdom.

In the story, the account carries on, David, of course, is mournful and David realises he has sinned. And we see in that account two instances where David is addressed by God.

[12 : 52] As David cries out to God, as he realises the sin in numbering of people, the pride and the arrogance, as God speaks to David, we see God speaking twice to him.

And twice there, God says this. First of all, in verse 9, the Lord spoke to Gad, David, seer, saying, go out and say to David, thus says the Lord, three things I offer you, choose one of them that I may do it to you.

So that's verse 9, the Lord spoke to Gad, David, seer, saying. Then later on in verse 18, we see God speaking again.

Now the angel of the Lord had commanded Gad to say to David, that David should go up and raise an altar to the Lord on the threshing floor of Ornan, the Jebusite.

If you remember, when David gets there and he sees the angel of the Lord before him, and they can't go near the place because of the presence of the angel, the angels have a sword in his hand and David perceives it, they see the angel.

[14 : 04] But we see that one account, verse 9 and verse 18, that God is speaking. But in one verse God is speaking called the Lord, the next verse God is speaking by the angel of the Lord.

And the angel of the Lord is speaking in verse 18 in a way that only God can speak. He's giving commands, speaking in power, he's giving orders.

He's not saying, thus says the Lord, he is saying, do this and do that. The angel of the Lord commanded Gad to say to David, the angel of the Lord, several times throughout scripture, speaks as he is God.

He speaks as if he himself is God. That evidence carries on Zechariah chapter 3, where for me, it's one of the most beautiful sections of the angel of the Lord speaking.

Zechariah chapter 3, here we see the angel of the Lord forgiving sin. The angel of the Lord forgives sin. Zechariah chapter 3, the word of the Lord says, then he showed me Joshua the high priest as a vision standing before the angel of the Lord and Satan standing on his right hand side to accuse him.

[15 : 31] The Lord said to Satan, the Lord rebuke you Satan, the Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you. Is not this the man a burning stick snatched from the fire?

Now Joshua was dressed in filthy clothes as he stood before the angel. Then the angel of the Lord said to those who were standing before him, take off his filthy clothes.

Then the angel said to Joshua, see, I have taken away your sin and I will put fine garments on you. There is no angel.

There is no created being who can say, I have forgiven your sin, I have taken away your sin. There is no angel that can say, command, clean clothes to be put on someone to signify the removal of dirt and sin and waywardness.

I'm seeing just now, as it's reading the text, there's never a clear example. We're told who's in the vision. There's the angel of the Lord and there's Satan. And there's Joshua in front of them.

[16 : 42] Angel of the Lord, Satan, Joshua in front of them. And all the way through, who's speaking? The Lord and the angel of the Lord are used interchangeably.

They're used in the same way. Verse 2, the Lord speaks. Verse 3, the angel of the Lord speaks. Verse 4, the angel. Verse 5, the angel. Verse 6, the Lord speaks.

It's interchangeable. The angel of the Lord here is forgiving sin. Who can forgive sin alone but God?

Who alone forgives sin in our experience? Who alone says to the blind to see? Who alone says, if your sin is forgiven, take up your mat and walk? It's the son, isn't it?

It's the son. there's time for time yourself. Zechariah chapter 1, chapter 2 also has a mysterious encounter with the angel of God.

[17 : 40] But there's no time for that this evening. That's a whole study in its own. It leads us into different directions. So, so far we've seen the angel of the Lord is being called Jesus by Jude.

the angel of the Lord leads his people out of Egypt. The angel of the Lord here is forgiving sin. The angel of the Lord is speaking to David as if he is God himself.

And finally, the chapter we read in Judges chapter 13. The chapter we saw before in our Judges series. There is so much content in chapter 13 for us here that proves just who the angel of the Lord is.

We see the angel appearing to Manoah and his wife telling them what will take place. Now in that there's nothing too special.

This is something that angels do of course. As the angel appears to Mary and tells Mary what would take place. That wasn't the angel of the Lord. That's an angel. But here we see the angel of the Lord.

[18 : 51] Yes, he delivers what's a normal message that she's about to receive. She's about to bear a child and he gives instruction. The child is going to Nazareth.

Again, all quite normal as far as angels come. But then we see something taking place in verse 17. We have this confusing section.

Manoah said to the angel of the Lord, what is your name? So that when your words come through, we may honour you. A simple question. Think to Revelation.

When John falls before the angel to worship the angel, John is overcome by the visions he's seeing. John is overcome by what's going on around him and he falls to worship at the feet of the angel.

What does the angel say to John? Don't do that. Don't do that. Stop it. I am one of you. I am a fellow servant, one of the fellow brothers and prophets and all that.

[19 : 51] angels are very quick to say, don't you dare worship me. Don't have any honour to me. I am a servant of the Lord. When Manoah says here, what is your name so that when your words come through, we may honour you, the angel doesn't say, oh, don't worry about me, I'm an angel.

Worship the Lord alone. No. The angel doesn't answer here that is extraordinary. Why do you ask my name seeing it is wonderful?

Why do you ask my name seeing it is wonderful? Quite literally, why do you ask my name and the literal, the meaning of the Hebrew is wonderful but the Hebrew meaning is unknowable, uncomprehendable.

It's beyond our grasp. You will never understand what my name is. Not linguistically, not it's too complicated a name, but it's beyond you. How other angels name themselves?

We know Michael exists and Gabriel. We know there's angels that have titles and names. But here this angel of the Lord says, my name is too glorious for you.

[21 : 06] The answer to that question, is too glorious to you. Who I am is too big for you to grasp. Bear in mind, when a name is mentioned in the Old Testament, names weren't just given. Names always told you about the person themselves.

We see that. Every child that's born is named to reflect their parents or reflect the situation they're born in. That's of angels. Their names have meanings. The angel here says, my name, who I am, it is too big for you to grasp.

Do our minds, I hope we do go back to a similar time when a name is asked. When Moses says, what does he say?

Who do I say sent me? What do I name you? God, what are you called? And God there gives a name that's not a name.

I am that I am. It's not a name. It's not a title. It's a description of who he is. I am beyond naming.

[22 : 14] My name is what? My person is what? My being is what? It is too wonderful for you. I am that I am. I am beyond describing. He is beyond description.

He is that he is. He is God. Here the angel says, my name is beyond your understanding. It is too wonderful for you. Here we see the angel of the Lord taking glory and answering a way that tells us he is something else.

Backed up for us and confirmed for us further down at the end of our account here where Manoah has this panic. Verse 22.

Poor Manoah he says a strange few days of it and in panic he is fed or he is given a burnt offering to the angel. Manoah says in panic he turns to his wife and he says we shall surely die for we have seen God.

Note there's no correction there about his wife. His wife Manoah's wife is far more switched on than he is. She's far more understanding than he is. She is on the ball the whole way through and he is panicking.

[23 : 35] Why is he panicking? Because he knows this is no mere angel he's seen. When people see angels we know angels always at least in the New Testament what do they say?

Be not afraid. Do not fear. Why? Because their holiness and even perhaps their very image it is terrifying to behold. It is awesome in the most literal way.

They are full of awe. But at no point do we see someone worshipping angels as if they're God. And here we see Manoah saying we have seen God.

We have seen God. and for all this angel how did he appear? He appeared as a man. Very awesome yes but a man nonetheless as we find out in the chapter itself.

Yes he's extraordinary and beautiful and wonderful in many ways but he appears human in form when he comes to them. Perhaps we have to I hope this is perhaps a wasted tangent for us but just to remind ourselves that very often when we see angels interacting with people not in visions when we see them interacting with people in the world angels always in the world appear as we see in scripture they appear almost always in physical form.

[25 : 08] There's three men talking to Abraham isn't there? The angels of Sodom and Gomorrah the men of the town we know what they want to do to the angels because they appear as men and here although he's glorious and wonderful he appears as a man he appears as human but yet even he appears as human Manoah knows it is God he is seeing and then his wife again doesn't argue his wife backs up what he's saying and she says if the Lord were meant to kill us he would not have accepted a burnt offering and shown us all these things and so on and so on they were aware they hadn't just seen an angel they had seen and been in the presence of God our minds go as we said to the other encounters we see with the three men who appear to

Abraham they're not named there in one sense as angels they are but there you see there's something else going on it's an appearance of Christ as Abraham speaks to a man in one verse the next verse it says he speaks to God the next verse it says he's speaking to a man and is there to show us he's speaking to someone who appears to him physically but at the same time he's speaking to God as they're doing here as David is doing as Zechariah sees in his vision all this to say Jesus has led his people and been with his people and appeared to his people all the way through all the way through this is for a future sermon but it brings to mind just to prove to us that Jesus has been there at every point of his people's journey when

Isaiah is in the temple and he sees what he sees in the temple he sees the throne of God in his vision he sees the whole area the whole tabernacle the whole room is filled with the incense the presence the shekinah glory of God he sees all the beauty and glory and the thundering voice and the terror of God and he knows there's one on the throne that one is hidden by the angels and we know that's God he sees he's called Yahweh in that title Isaiah addresses him as Yahweh then John later on tells us Isaiah saw Jesus when Isaiah saw Jesus the chapter and verse it's a feature sermon so I'll tell you when we get there in a few weeks time but it's there for us all the way through the son with respect was not just sitting there waiting for his time to come down to earth as he was in creation every step of the way every process every moment of his people's journey from wilderness to exile to return to exile to return to abandonment to estrangement to the time of the judges to heresy to evil we see

Jesus is with his people again and again and again where do we not see the angel of the lord being mentioned anywhere we are in the new testament why because he's there there's no more hints there's no more shadows there's no more pre incarnate appearances of humanity he is there now fully fleshed out flesh and blood and bone physically with his people this is an area personally I find exhilarating and there is so much more to go here if I do it eats into future sermons and future times together so I have to watch just now this evening because a lot of the other appearances of the angel of the lord tie into other sermons for us in the future so we'll stop there but just to remind ourselves every time you see the angel of the lord we sang didn't we in psalm 34 a verse we know so well a verse we know so well and perhaps when you read verse 7 and sing verse 7

I'll read it here in the psalter the angel of the lord encamps and round encompasseth all those about that do him fear and them delivereth we perhaps always think perhaps if you like me you always forget the angel of the lord is jesus or the son and you think the him there all those about that do him fear we only think about the angel of the lord doing a job there well no now we know the angel of the lord is the second person of the godhead he looks after his people the angel of the lord encamps and surrounds and encompasses his people it brings more beauty to that verse brings more glory to what we're singing and saying about him he cares he has cared for his people throughout all time the very start of the journey of his people as he appears we could say in the garden and we won't go there just now as he appears in the garden as he appears then again and again as he has called the angel of the lord as he appears to isaiah and the other prophets in various ways we see jesus who's been with his people from the start is with us now just one more evidence for us again as we said our journey through seeing the trinity in the old testament it's bits and pieces god shows it gently and slowly but he's building up god is building up to showing himself as fully triune father son and spirit that comes to the new testament but he's not been silent all way through quite the opposite and shadows and behind the scenes we could say god is leading his people and showing his people and appearing to his people as father son and spirit even this chapter just to conclude for us this chapter alone could be a sermon for us note we see yahweh we see the father being mentioned we see the angel of the lord who we're seeing as a son and note the very last verse of this chapter who is with samson the ruach yahweh the spirit of the lord the breath of the lord the breath of the lord the spirit of the lord began to stir in him and samson in this one chapter alone we see our godhead fully involved in every single part of the plan from start to the end brothers and sisters let's be confident the trinity is seen not just in one single word we saw in the shema but it's seen again and again throughout every single verse of the old testament let's pray let's pray together lord we thank you for the gift of your word and the promise we find in it that we're reminded that as we see and follow the journey of your people that wondrous and at times devastating journey as we see sin and evil and backsliding it's made even more apparent the evil of it as they committed these sins and that backsliding so often not just in your presence but in your direct presence before the face of the pre-incarnate son lord we have encountered tonight we know theology and learning that is difficult that is deep we thank you that your word interprets itself for us and we see from passages in it the clarity that though we are left with many questions we see the clarity you've been with your people from the very start the angel of the lord the son he has journeyed with his people behind them before them making the way for them preparing leaders for them until

[33 : 56] he himself was born fully man fully god help us lord again not to just leave this place having grown in our knowledge but leave this place having grown in love love of you for who you are we thank you lord we've seen this week we've heard this evening the theology last lord's day we saw the practical outworking of that theology we come to a triune god who has not just planned out your people's journey throughout the wilderness years but you've planned out every single new face and returning face we saw last lord's day lord we give you thanks for that especially this evening we are praying lord for one or for two you blessed us with 10 more 12 more 13 more than we had planned or hoped we would see we pray especially this week as the evil one we are no doubt is at work in the lives and in the minds of those who came out pray especially just now for those who came out for the first time those who ventured to come out to church and to spend time under your word and who left having heard the gospel we also pray with hearts full of thanksgiving as we saw some faces returning lord give us wisdom as your people to treat them well to be a welcoming congregation if we see them this week or next week lord we would conduct ourselves in a way that brings you glory that brings them comfort lord you be glorified for your goodness towards us that we are so aware that we did so little we prayed we planted we sought to water the seed the reminder for us is that you are in sole control of your people and you alone bring the increase and bring the new growth help us lord then to be encouraged not to be encouraged by how well we are doing but to be encouraged the fact that you are showing yourself as a god who is not yet finished with north ulster who is not yet finished with the people here as we seek to faithfully preach and share your word help us to do so well clearly encourage those who are still on the sidelines lord encourage them to come out those who are wondering about sunday school and those who are wondering about sending their children to church lord give them the strength to make that final step help us now not just to rest in our laurels but help us to strive to keep bringing this congregation and this denomination this village this congregation and this area to you lord help us to pray for north tulster and know that it belongs to you our triune god you know and you see and you love and you care eternally more than we do so leave all these things in your eternally capable arms in and through and for jesus name amen let's sing in the scottish altar to conclude we can sing psalm 114 psalm 114 which sings of the exodus which sings of god leading of the son of jesus leading his people out of egypt psalm 114 when israel out of egypt went and did his dwelling change when jacob's house went out from those that were of language strange he judah did his sanctuary his kingdom israel make the sea

it saw and quickly fled jordan was driven back psalm 114 the whole psalm to god's praise to god's praise his his dwelling his dwelling change when jacob's house went out from those that were of language strange he jude out did his sanctuary his kingdom is remain the city saw and quickly fled jordan was driven back like ramps the mountains and like land the hills skip to and throne and wherefore was it little hills that did escape thy grounds and wherefore was it little hills that ye deliver thy clans o at the presence of the lord have trenged the love for fear while as the presence of the god no chain of death appear who from the heart and stone may rock the sandy water bring and by his power he turned the slain into the water spring the grace of the lord jesus christ and the love of god the father and the fellowship of the holy spirit with you now and forever more amen