

WHO ARE THE BIBLICAL ANGELS? – A CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE, (#1)

Clifton A. Emahiser's
Non-Universal Teaching Ministries
1012 N. Vine Street, Fostoria, Ohio 44830 / emahiser.christogenea.org

There are an age-long kaleidoscope of concepts on this subject, some like the Sadducees, who reject the very existence of angels (Acts 23:8). This is a very extensive topic, and will require several papers to resolve all of the difficulties we are bound to encounter.

To start with, we will examine the Hebrew and Greek words for “angel/s” as used in the Scripture on this matter, for otherwise we may arrive at a mistaken conclusion. So please carefully note the following:

From Strong's #“**H4397** ... **mal'ak**, *mal-awk'*; from an unused root meaning to despatch as a deputy; a *messenger*, specifically of God, that is, an *angel* (also a prophet, priest or teacher):– KJV renderings: ambassador, angel, king, messenger.”

From Strong's #“**H4398** ... **mal'ak** (Chaldee), *mal-ak'*; corresponding to H4397; an angel:– KJV rendering: angel.”

From Strong's #“**H4399** ... **m°lâ'kâh**, *mel-awkaw'*; from the same as H4397; properly *deputyship*, i.e. ministry; generally *employment* (never servile) or work (abstractly or concretely); also *property* (as the result of *labor*):– KJV renderings: business, + cattle, + industrious, occupation, (+ -pied), + officer, thing (made), use, (manner of) work ([-man], -manship).”

From Strong's #“**H4400** ... **mel'âkûwth**, *mal-akooth'*; from the same as H4397; a *message*:– KJV rendering: message.”

From Strong's #“**H4401** ... **Mal'âkîy**, *mal-aw-kee'*; from the same as H4397; *ministrative*; *Malaki*, a prophet:– KJV rendering: Malachi (i.e., the prophet).”

From Strong's #“**G32** ... **aggelos**, *ang'el-os*; from ... **aggello** (probably derived from G71; compare G34; to *bring tidings*); a *messenger*, especially an “*angel*”; by implication a *pastor*:– KJV renderings: angel, messenger.”

From Strong's #“**G34** ... **agele**, *ag-el'-ay*; from G71 [compare G32] a *drove*:– KJV rendering: a herd.”

From Strong's #“**G71** ... **ago**, *ag'-o*; a primary verb; properly to *lead*; by implication to *bring*, *drive*, (reflexively) *go*, (specifically) *pass* (time), or (figuratively) *induce*:– KJV renderings: be, bring (forth), carry, (let) go, keep, lead away, be open.”

In the Greek, with Strong's #G34 we find something strange in the explanation of a “*drove*”, which the KJV renders as “herd.” Strong's #G34 is used seven times at Matt. 8:30, 31, 32; Mark 5:11, 13; Luke 8:32 & 33, and in every case it is a “herd” of swine. The simplest definition in English is: “a group of animals of one kind”, or herdsman. “to

assemble or move in a herd.” Therefore, it is easy to grasp how the good angels of Yahweh would keep watch over one race of people! Psalm 91:10-12 states:

“¹⁰ There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. ¹¹ For he shall give his angels^{H4397} charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. ¹² They shall bear thee up in *their* hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.”

Under this context, the terms “*drove*” and “*herd*” don’t seem out-of-place. The above passage is quoted at Matt. 4:6 thusly:

“And [*Satan*] saith unto him [*Christ*], If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels^{G32} charge concerning thee: and in *their* hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.”

In Adam Clarke’s 6-volume *Commentary*, he states the following on Psalm 91:12, vol. 3, p. 510:

“Verse 12. *They shall bear thee up in their hands*] Take the same care of thee as a nurse does of a weak and tender child: lead thee, – teach thee to walk, – lift thee up out of the way of danger, ‘lest thou shouldst dash thy foot against a stone,’ receive any kind of injury, or be prevented from pursuing thy path with safety and comfort.

“Let us remember that it is GOD, whose these angels are; HE gives them charge – from HIM they receive their commission, – to Him they are responsible for their charge. From GOD thou art to expect them; and for their help he alone is to receive the praise. It is expressly said, *He shall give his angels charge*; to show that they are not to be *prayed to nor praised*; but *GOD alone*, whose *servants* they are.”

Right from the start we have to comprehend the various entities involved for the designation, “angel/s”. For an example of this, I will cite the 5-volume *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*. vol. 1, page 163, under the title “Angel”, and the subtitle “B. Pre-incarnate Logos”:

“... For instance, He was not restricted to executing a single order, but like Jesus, He spoke with authority as though He were God Himself. Only the Logos, or some other manifest personification of God, would be able to do that. John declared that the Logos ‘was in the beginning with God’; that He was instrumental in the Creation; and, that ‘The Logos became flesh and dwelt among us’ (John 1:1-14). It is interesting to note that this angel did not appear on earth while Jesus was in the flesh. The angel who announced Jesus’ birth to the shepherds was probably Gabriel, but was referred to only as ‘an angel’ of the Lord (Luke 2:9).”

What we should grasp, according to this is the fact that Yahshua Christ and Gabriel were two distinctly different entities! However, sometimes Yahweh Himself is designated as an “angel”. Sometimes an “angel” can be an important male Israelite military leader or an Israelite judge. Yahweh in the flesh as Yahshua Christ is entity #1; the good angels are entity #2; and the bad angels are entity #3, and each are determined by the context of the text!

To give the reader an example of a man portrayed as an angel, I will cite Matthew Henry’s 6-volume *Commentary*, vol. 2, p. 2, under “Exposition, With Practical Observations” in part:

“... Though Joshua is not expressly mentioned in the New Testament as a type of Christ, yet all agree that he was a very eminent one. He bore our Saviour’s name, as did also another type of him, Joshua the high priest, Zec. 6:11, 12. The Septuagint, giving the name of Joshua a Greek termination, call him all along, *lesous (Jesus)*, and so he is called [at] Acts 7:45, and Heb. 4:8. Justin Martyr, one of the first writers of the Christian church (*Dialog. cum Tryph.* p. mihi 300), makes that promise in Ex. 23:20, ***My angel***^{H4397} *shall ... bring thee into the place I have prepared*, to point at Joshua; and these words, ***My Name is in him***, to refer to this, that his name should be the same with that of the Messiah. It signifies, He shall save. Joshua saves God’s people from the Canaanites; our Lord Jesus saves them *from their sins*. Christ, as Joshua, is the *captain of our salvation, a leader and commander of the people, to tread Satan under their feet*, to put them in possession of the heavenly Canaan, and to give them rest, which (it is said, Heb. 4:8) Joshua did not.” [emphasis mine]

We need also to take note that within the name of Joshua is found “salvation”, whereas in its latter corrupted Greek form “Jesus”, “salvation” is missing. I did an electronic search in the *Complete Works of Josephus*, and he used the name “Jesus” 74 times in his writings. As the name “Jesus” could have been used multiple times for one man, it would be difficult to determine how many individual men Josephus was talking about. Actually, one of the men Josephus wrote about was Yahshua Christ Himself. I then wrote the following note above my search:

The following references in Josephus to the name “Jesus” are to demonstrate there were many who had that name, therefore it is not unique to the Christ. I refer to the passage where there is “no other name under heaven whereby we must be saved”. Christ’s name therefore must contain the word “salvation’ within itself. The name that ended up being transliterated “Jesus” was a gradual translation corruption for the name “Yahshua.” It contains the abbreviated name of the Father, Yah. The second syllable is “shua”, which in the Hebrew means “salvation.” Thus, the truth of the matter is, if the “shua” is removed from the name, there is no longer any salvation or redemption! The main point that should be noticed here is the fact that the man Joshua (*i.e.*, Yahshua) was considered an “angel^{H4397}”.

At Gen. 18:1-5 we read three men as angels thus:

“1 And Yahweh^{H3068} appeared unto him [Abraham] in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day; 2 And he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men^{H376} stood by him: and when he saw *them*, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground, 3 And said, My Lord^{H136} [‘adonay’, later substituted by the Edomite-jews for Yahweh], if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant: 4 Let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree: 5 And I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort ye your hearts; after that ye shall pass on: for therefore are ye come to your servant. And they said, So do, as thou hast said ...”

Inasmuch as Yahweh^{H3068} is mentioned ten times in Gen. ch. 18, it seems to suggest that one of the three “men” mentioned at 18:2 may have been the Almighty

Yahweh Himself in the image of a man. Either that, or an angel serving as a mouthpiece in His place.

At Gen. 19:1 it speaks of two “angels”^{H4397}, and at v. 5, it speaks of these two angels as “men”^{H376}.” Strong’s #H376 is a contraction of #H582. Hence, it should be quite evident that the heavenly host of angels, like Adam, are also in the image of Yahweh, i.e., White and ruddy! Gen. 19:4-5 states:

“⁴ **But before they lay down, the men**^{H582} **of the city, even the men**^{H582} **of Sodom, compassed the house round, both old and young, all the people from every quarter: ⁵ And they called unto Lot, and said unto him, Where are the men**^{H582} **which came in to thee this night? bring them out unto us, that we may know [i.e., have sexual intercourse with] them ...”**

At Gen. 19:10-11, we find that these two men (i.e., angels), whom the sodomite men wanted to rape had extraordinary powers that ordinary fleshly men did not possess at that time:

“¹⁰ **But the men**^{H376} **put forth their hand, and pulled Lot into the house to them, and shut to the door. ¹¹ And they smote the men**^{H376} **that were at the door of the house with blindness, both small and great: so that they wearied themselves to find the door.”**

Interestingly, today, there are many news reports of airplane pilots being blinded by bright laser beams pointed at them from the ground. One question that we might ask the Almighty Yahweh is: “Where are those two angels with their blinding power today, when we are in so much need of them,?” 2 Peter 2:4-8 states:

“⁴ **For if Yahweh spared not the angels**^{G32} **that sinned, but cast *them* down to hell, and delivered *them* into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; ⁵ And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth *person*, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly; ⁶ And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrhah into ashes condemned *them* with an overthrow, making them an ensample^{G5262} unto those that after should live ungodly; ⁷ And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: ⁸ (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed *his* righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds)...”**

From Strong’s #G5262 *hupôdêigma* , *hoopod'-igue-mah*; from G5263; an *exhibit* for imitation or warning (figuratively *specimen, adumbration*):— KJV renderings: en- (ex-) ample, pattern.”

In English adumbration means the following: “(1) to foreshadow vaguely, or, (2) disclose partially”. So if it happened once before, it’s going to happen again, as sodomy has been legalized big-time by corrupt governments the world over!

To sum things up, “the three men”^{H376}” at Gen. 18:2, two of which were later designated as two “angels”^{H4397}” at Gen. 19:1, and again designated as men^{H376} at Gen. 19:5 can only be speaking **firstly** of the Almighty Yahweh Himself, or an angel representing Him, and **secondly**, what might be described as an assisting angel as at Acts 12:7 thusly:

“⁷ **And, behold, the angel**^{G32} **of Yahweh came upon *him*, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up**

quickly. And his chains fell off from *his* hands. ⁸ And the angel^{G32} said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals. And so he did. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me. ⁹ And he went out, and followed him; and wist not that it was true which was done by the angel^{G32}; but thought he saw a vision. ¹⁰ When they were past the first and second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city; which opened to them of his own accord: and they went out, and passed on through one street; and forthwith the angel^{G32} departed from him ...”

It should be strikingly apparent here that this angel was endowed by Yahweh with some sort of supernatural power. What kind of power did this angel use to break the iron shackles and chains from off Peter without injuring him? And what kind of power did this angel use to open this “iron gate” without ever touching it, that otherwise might take eight or ten strong-armed men to lift and open? And after all of this, the angel miraculously disappears out of Peter’s sight. His liberation is even more amazing than this, as Acts 12:6 states:

“And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains: and the keepers before the door kept the prison.”

Adam Clarke, in his 6-volume *Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 467 remarks on v. 6: “6. **Sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains** – Two soldiers guarded his person: his right hand being bound to the left hand of one, and his left hand bound to the right hand of the other. This was the Roman method of guarding their prisoners, and appears to be what is intimated in the text.” So we must also ask: What kind of power did this angel use to loosen the iron chains connecting Peter to two Roman guards on each side of him, without awakening them? It seems that it could have only been done by anesthetizing them into a deep sleep without ether or other sleep-causing anesthetics! (See Gen. 2:21.)

In the 1894 9th ed., *Encyclopedia Britannica*, vol. 2 p. 25, under the title “Angel” [with some corrections in brackets] it states in part:

“... Generally there is but one angel, but Abraham is visited by three (Gen. xviii.). Sometimes the dignity of the heavenly visitor is detected while he is present, at other times he is mistaken for a prophet, and recognized only by something supernatural in his disappearance (Judges vi. 21, *f.*, xiii. 20). Jacob wrestles all night with a ‘man,’ who at length with a touch dislocates his thigh (Gen. xxxii. 24, *ff*). At other times no human form is seen. It is the angel of Jehovah [sic Yahweh] who speaks to Moses in the burning bush, and leads the Israelites in the pillar of cloud and smoke (Exod. iii. 2, xiv. 19).

“In all this there is perfect indifference to the personality of the angel, who displays no individuality of character, refuses to give a name (Gen. xxxii.; Judges xiii.), acts simply as the mouthpiece of God. This is carried so far that in his mouth the pronoun *I* indicates Jehovah [sic Yahweh] himself; while the narrative passes, without change of sense, from the statement, ‘the angel of Jehovah [sic Yahweh] appeared, spoke,’ &c., to ‘Jehovah [sic Yahweh] appeared, spoke.’ (Cf., for example, Exod. iii. ver.

2 with ver. 4; xiii. 21 with xiv. 19.) Those who see the angel say they have seen God (Judges xiii. 22; Gen. xxxii. 30) ..." (as follows):

Exodus 3:2: **"And the angel of Yahweh appeared unto him [Moses] in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed."**

Exodus 3:4: **"And when Yahweh saw that he turned aside to see, the Almighty called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here *am* I."**

Exodus 13:21: **"And Yahweh went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night ..."**

Exodus 14:19: **"And the angel of the Almighty, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them ..."**

RE: "Those who see the angel say they have seen God (Judges xiii. 22; Gen. xxxii. 30) ...":

Judges 13:22: **"And Manoah said unto his wife, We shall surely die, because we have seen the Almighty."**

Genesis 32:30: **"And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen the Almighty face to face, and my life is preserved."**

RE: At "other times he is mistaken for a prophet, and recognized only by something supernatural in his disappearance (Judges vi. 21, f., xiii. 20).":

Judges 6:21: **"Then the angel of Yahweh put forth the end of the staff that was in his hand, and touched the flesh and the unleavened cakes; and there rose up fire out of the rock, and consumed the flesh and the unleavened cakes. Then the angel of Yahweh departed out of his sight."**

Judges 13:20-21: **"²⁰ For it came to pass, when the flame went up toward heaven from off the altar, that the angel of Yahweh ascended in the flame of the altar. And Manoah and his wife looked on *it*, and fell on their faces to the ground. ²¹ But the angel of Yahweh did no more appear to Manoah and to his wife. Then Manoah knew that he was an angel of Yahweh."**

RE: "... with a touch dislocates his thigh (Gen. xxxii. 24, *ff*)":

Genesis 32:24-25: **"²⁴ And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man^{H376} with him until the breaking of the day. ²⁵ And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him."**

RE: "... It is the angel of Jehovah [sic Yahweh] who speaks to Moses in the burning bush, and leads the Israelites in the pillar of cloud and smoke (Exod. iii. 2, xiv.19)":

Exodus 3:2: **"And the angel^{H4397} of Yahweh appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed."**

Exodus 14:19: **“And the angel^{H4397} of the Almighty, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them ...”**

Sometimes it is difficult to determine whether or not it is a direct message from Yahweh Himself, or if an angel is serving as a mouthpiece for Him. Sometimes the Almighty, or an angel, will speak to someone in a dream, or in a half-conscious trance. That doesn't mean that every dream or trance one might have experienced is a message from the Almighty, or an angel! But it also doesn't rule it out. I am particularly suspicious of anyone overly emphasizing “near death experiences”, although I do believe that our dying words (especially from a family member) are sometimes inspired by the Almighty! However, we should be very careful how we interpret these things, both Biblically and personally, as it is very risky, if the revelation is not true!