

Matching, Meaning of “Land” in some passages of Zechariah

Match the use of the term land (in the first column)
by writing the verses from Zechariah (from the third column)
on the line (in the middle column)

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|--|-------|---|
| The Whole World | <hr/> | 3:9, 4:14, 5:11, 5:9, 6:5, 6:6, 7:5, 8:12 10:10, 11:6 |
| Land of Israel | <hr/> | |
| Land of the Nations | <hr/> | |
| Earth as opposed to Heaven | <hr/> | |
| The ground out of which plants grow | <hr/> | |

The angel of the Lord

We often meet with someone called ‘the angel of the Lord’ in the Old Testament. Let us look briefly at two accounts of his appearing.

It was the angel of the Lord who spoke to Hagar in Genesis 16:7. He said to her, ‘I will so increase your descendants that they will be too numerous to count’ (Genesis 16:10). The angel of the Lord was going to do this great thing.

Secondly, when Abraham was about to offer his beloved son Isaac as a sacrifice to God on Mount Moriah, it was the angel of the Lord who called out, ‘Do not do anything to him’ (Genesis 22:12). This same angel called Abraham from heaven and said, ‘I swear by myself, declares the Lord, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore’ (Genesis 22:16–17).

Who then, is this one who appears as a human being and yet is divine? There is only one who fits the description. The angel of the Lord must be the God-man whom the New Testament reveals. The angel of the Lord is none other than the pre-incarnate Christ. He is Jesus revealed in the Old Testament, before he was born as a baby at Bethlehem.¹

¹ Michael Bentley, [*Building for God's Glory: Haggai and Zechariah Simply Explained*](#), Welwyn Commentary Series (Darlington, England: Evangelical Press, 1989), 106.

Barrett, Michael - Beginning at Moses

Person of the Christophany

One of the key lessons taught by Christophanies is that God is a person. He is not a force or an abstract energy: He is a personal being. But He is a spiritual being. God is an infinite, eternal, unchangeable Spirit. Unfortunately, we are incapable of comprehending what pure Spirit is. It defies definition. This is one reason the Bible so frequently uses anthropomorphisms (human forms) to describe God. Although God is without body parts, He reveals Himself with human terms to enable finite man to understand something about Him. God's having an arm or eyes does not mean that He has these body parts shaped in some ghost-like outline. The resemblance is one of function, not appearance. That God has an arm means that He is powerfully able to act. That God has eyes means that He sees and knows. Anthropomorphisms aid our finite minds in understanding something of the infinite. A Christophany was in one way a visible, rather than verbal, anthropomorphism—an effective means of revealing that God is a person. That it was the Second Person of the holy, eternal Trinity who made these special appearances reveals something of the mystery of the Godhead. These Christophanies introduce to man extremely profound theology concerning Christ and His place in the Trinity. And this is the Old Testament.

The Christophany as the Angel

The most common designation that identifies a Christophany is “the Angel of the Lord.” This title is also the most instructive concerning the nature of the divine manifestation. The reference to the Angel of the Lord does not occur in every Christophany, but it is safe to say that the Angel of the Lord always refers to Christ. Most of the appearances of the Angel occurred in actual circum-

stances of life, but sometimes He was part of a prophetic vision (particularly Zechariah's visions) or a historical account of an actual appearance. We may also identify some of the "unnamed" Christophanies in terms of the Angel of the Lord. For instance, Jacob wrestled all night with an unidentified man whom he ultimately recognized as God. After the wrestling match, Jacob named the place Peniel, explaining, "for I have seen God face to face" (Genesis 32:24-30). More than a thousand years later, the inspired prophet Hosea, referring to this historic episode, specifically identified the opponent as the Angel of the Lord (Hosea 12:4). On the basis of this inspired interpretation, we may very well conclude that all the Old Testament Christophanies can be understood as appearances of the Angel of the Lord.

Before considering what this Angel reveals about the person of God, we need to understand the expression itself. Part of the difficulty is the immediate association we make between the word "angel" and that great host of ministering spirits (Hebrews 1:14) that God created as agents of His providence. If this Angel is in the same class as Michael, Gabriel, the cherubim, and seraphim, then we cannot claim that this is a Christophany, because the Son of God is the Creator, not the created. The Old Testament word translated "angel," however, literally means "messenger"; it does not demand that we automatically classify any given messenger with the assembly of the created ministering spirits. Interestingly, the New Testament word for "angel" carries this same idea, as evidenced by its referring to the ministers of the seven churches in Revelation 3-4. The Angel of the Lord, therefore, is the Messenger of the Lord. It is the word's function or activity that applies to the Christophany. It is similar to the New Testament's referring to Jesus Christ as "the Apostle" (Hebrews 3:1). Obviously, the Lord

was not one of the twelve whom He Himself had called and commissioned, but He was called, commissioned, and sent to save His people. He was the ideal Apostle. Even before His Incarnation, Christ was the ideal Messenger.

A second issue of interpretation concerns the logical relationship between the word “Angel” and the word “Lord.” This “X of Y” type of construction is very common yet sometimes ambiguous. Although there are times when the context seems to warrant the idea that this is the Messenger *from* the Lord, I suggest that interpreting the word “Lord” as being in apposition to the word “angel” best explains and accounts for the mystery of this person. (Remember that apposition is a renaming of a noun, usually in a more specific manner.) In other words, the Angel of the Lord is the Angel *who* is the Lord.

The significance of this identification is profound when we recognize that the word “Lord” refers to Jehovah. Jehovah, of course, is that unique name of the one true and living God. Therefore, to equate the Angel with Jehovah irrefutably proves His deity. The significance of the name “Jehovah” is manifold, but at its heart is the declaration of God’s covenant promises to His people. Consequently, the coming Messenger, or Angel, of the covenant in Malachi 3:1 is the same Being as the Angel of the Lord. This Messenger is Jehovah Himself, who graciously enters into covenant with His people and graciously reveals Himself for the benefit of His people. Further, this interpretation is distinctively Christological in that by identifying God as the Second Person of the Trinity, it accounts for the times the Angel seems to be distinct from God the Father. These Angel contexts are complex, but what, after all, is more complex than the Trinity? Granted, the term “Trinity” does not occur in these texts, but neither does it in the New Testa-

ment. Nevertheless, Scripture does make clear that the Angel is Christ, who is God.

Zechariah 1:8-12

These are Christophanic visions in which the Angel of the Lord exercises priestly intercession in behalf of His people.

I suppose that one of the questions I am asked most frequently is how much of Christ Old Testament saints really knew. My typical response is that I don't know how much they knew, but I do know how much they should have known in the light of God's revelation to them. In addition to all the things God said to them, from time to time He allowed them to see with their eyes the promised Savior. Maybe they knew more than we want to give them credit for! Each of these Old Testament manifestations of Christ before the Incarnation testifies to God's eternal, immutable purpose to provide the necessary Mediator, the Prophet, Priest, and King. Even before the arrival of the fullness of time that would bring the climactic fulfillment of that purpose in the birth, life, death, resurrection, Ascension, Session, and Second Coming of Jesus of Nazareth, the Lord gave gracious tokens of His promise in these epoch appearances of the Second Person of the Trinity, the Mediator-elect.

In some ways, I think these gracious Christophanies parallel what we know and experience of the Holy Spirit. The New Testament says that the Holy Spirit is the "earnest of our inheritance" (Ephesians 1:14). In other words, the Holy Spirit is the down payment, the guarantee of the full and final salvation we will enjoy eternally. The Holy Spirit is a gracious and wonderful token of complete salvation. The evidence that we will be forever in the presence of the Lord is the Lord's abiding presence with us now in the person of His Spirit. Salvation is good now, but the best is yet to

be. Similarly, the Old Testament Christophanies were guarantees that the Messiah was on His way. “The messenger of the covenant . . . behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts” (Malachi 3:1). Those temporary manifestations were good, but the best was yet to come. Although we live on this side of the fullness of time, we can still profit from these impossible-to-be-repeated pre-incarnate appearances because they testify to the Lord’s unfailing faithfulness. After all, it is the same Christ.