

Exod 04-03-14b

Let's continue our study now in Exodus chapter 23, and we have paused in the forward movement through the giving of the ordinances of the law here, looking at the final section beginning in verse 20 that says, Behold, I send an angel before you to keep you in the way, and to bring you into the place which I have prepared. Beware of him and obey his voice. Do not provoke him, for he will not pardon your transgressions, for my name is in him.

But if you indeed obey his voice and do all that I speak, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries. For my angel will go before you and bring you into the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hivites, the Jebusites, and I will cut them off. And this brings up the subject.

It's as good a time as any. I thought about doing it when we were in Genesis, looking at the angel of the Lord, and it is a very widespread belief that this is a pre-incarnate appearance of the Lord Jesus, what they call a Christophany, and hence you see the capital A and the capital H when it is referring to this angel. We have looked at Hebrews chapter 1 in this connection.

To which of the angels did he ever say, Today you are my son, and I have begotten you? To which of the angels did he ever say, Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool? The Lord Jesus is not an angel, and Hebrews 1 makes a very clear distinction in that regard. I would also like to turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 10 for a little bit of additional light on this subject. 1 Corinthians chapter 10.

Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. Baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. Who is it that is leading the children of Israel for 40 years in the wilderness? Who are they following in terms of a person? It is Moses.

They are baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. Now look at verse 4 and verse 3. All ate the same spiritual food, all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ.

Now, I have always been taken aback by this particular verse because there is no record of a rock following Israel around in the wilderness. They drank of that spiritual rock that followed them. What rock followed them? I don't remember reading anywhere in Exodus or Numbers or Deuteronomy or Leviticus anything about a rock.

That would have to be like a rolling stone, right? Just rolling along behind them, bringing up the rear, cleaning up the stragglers or something. I mean, it's just not there. What does it mean, the rock followed them? It could say that spiritual rock that nourished them or strengthened them or gave water to them.

Why does it say followed them? Well, this doesn't make any sense. So, even though I haven't

tackled 1 Corinthians yet, I went to this passage and looked at it in Greek. 1 Corinthians 10.4 They all drank the same spiritual drink.

The word spiritual here is pneumatikos. Pneumatikos. The pneuma portion, you get the idea, is spirit.

And the etos is like UAL in our English. So, spiritual pneumatikos. Pneumatikon, pneumatikos, any of the little derivatives just depending on what taste and word is in the sentence.

Then the next sentence says, For they drank. This is from pino, which is the Greek verb that means to drink. They drank.

And this is the imperfect active indicative. They kept on drinking. Imperfect is ongoing action in past time.

So, they were drinking would be a good translation. For they were drinking from. This is ek, ek, out from.

They drank from. Then we have pneumatikos, akoloufouses, tetros. Pneumatikos, that's just pneumatikos again in a different construction.

So, for they drank from, or they were drinking from, the spiritual pneumatikos. Now we have akoloufouses. This is from the verb akoloufeo, akoloufeo, a-k-o-l-o-u-t-h-e-o, akoloufeo.

Now notice the construction, and you'll have to forgive me, I've got to inflict a little Greek on you here for it to make sense. So, if you've got the sentence, I'm going to put it up here on my air board. It says, They were drinking.

And then the word for, gar is the word for, j-a-r, and it's post-positive. You have the first word of this. In English, we always put for at the front.

Well, the Greeks always put it second. They give you the verb, and then whatever we would start, they put second. So, gar is post-positive.

It's the second word. So, we just slip it around there, and we say gar, and then the verb pino. So, for they were drinking, in perfect active indicative, act, from, spiritual, following, rock.

That's the word order. They were drinking, for, or for they were drinking, from, spiritual, following, rock. Following is our word, akko luteo.

Notice there is no word for them. Now, the translators are supposed to put non-existent words in italics, but they didn't do that here, did they? There is no them here. It is a spiritual, following, rock.

Now, let's get a little more clarification on akko luteo. What does it mean? By the way, these words are in the genitive case. The genitive is a fancy way of saying of or from.

So, these two words, spiritual and following, modify Petra, Petra, which is rock. P-E-T-R-A, Petra. That's where Peter gets his name.

Petra. So, they drank from, and then we have these two words in the genitive that modify Petra. One of them means spiritual.

It's a spiritual rock. And the other one means following. At least that's the gloss, the easy translation.

Akko luteo means to accompany, or to go along with. If Jesus left and his disciples followed him, it means they went with him. Now, did they always line up always behind him? And they never got ahead? Nobody ever scouted? It just means they accompanied.

They went where he went. They accompanied him. Sometimes akko luteo has emphasis on following someone who is in the lead.

Other times, it just means it accompanies. Now, what is a spiritual rock? What is a spiritual drink? When they were thirsty and crying out to Moses in the wilderness, did Moses say, Just drink your spiritual drink. Just eat your spiritual food.

That will quell the growling of your tummy. What is Paul saying here when he says, They ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink. As he says in many other places, these things are a picture.

The food that Israel ate in the wilderness is a spiritual picture for us. It wasn't spiritual food for the Israelites. The manna was real.

It was tangible. They could make things out of it. They could eat it, and it would nourish and sustain their bodies.

What they ate in the wilderness was not spiritual. It was literal. It was physical.

It was tangible. But for us, when we go through observation, interpretation, application, what does it become? The manna in the wilderness has a spiritual application for us. It's our spiritual food.

What literal manna was to them, that represents our spiritual food. What they drank in the wilderness, when two different times they were thirsty to the point of death, the first time, the rock was to be struck, and it splits, and water comes forth. The second time, the rock was to be spoken to, and it would split, and water would come forth.

Of course, Moses struck it the second time and got in big trouble. That's why he didn't get to go into the land. But that picture, the physical rock, physical water, is a spiritual picture.

What is it a picture of? He says, the rock is a spiritual picture of Christ. That rock was Christ. Now, for all of the Catholics, this is my body, which is broken for you.

If you're going to take that consistently, then Jesus is a rock. He's a piece of granite. That rock was Christ.

It doesn't say that rock represents Christ. It says that rock was Christ. Jesus says, I am the door.

So Jesus is a rock. Jesus is made out of wood. Jesus has a door latch and two hinges.

Obviously, you can't just selectively push the language in an abnormal way. And when Jesus says, this is my body, this is my blood, it is not hemoglobin and serum and red and white corpuscles. It is a spiritual picture.

This bread is my body in the same way that that rock that's split to provide water for Israel is a spiritual picture. Jesus is not the rock. The rock represents Jesus.

The bread and cup are not because we would all be cannibals. It's a weird, goofy thing. And misunderstanding that, even in Jesus' day, people didn't understand.

He'd go to John chapter 7 and then he turned back from following him because of these words. What do you mean I've got to eat your flesh and drink your blood? Isn't there some kind of a Dracula cult thing going here? What is this? And Jesus made that point on purpose to weed out those who had a spiritual sensitivity from those who didn't who were just woodenly literal and couldn't figure anything out. He said, all you woodenly literal people, eat my flesh and drink my blood.

Ooh, and they left. That was a good way to weed them out. So, they drank of that spiritual rock that accompanied them.

That rock is Christ. What is it that accompanied them? What is the spiritual thing that accompanied them? God's provision of food and drink accompanies. It is an accompanying.

So, we don't have to picture a rock rolling along behind the congregation of Israel stopping and squirting water out like it has spigots all over it. The rock represents Christ. With most of them, God was not well pleased.

Well, what do we learn from this? Christ accompanied them. The meaning of *akoluthéo* is to accompany or to follow, not to lead. It's a perfectly good word for lead in Greek and it's not used here.

They drank of that rock that led them. It doesn't say it led them. It either accompanied them or followed them.

It's in their midst. The angel, God says, will go before you, ahead of you. This says Christ, the picture of Christ in the camp, accompanied or followed, *akoluthéo*, not led.

So, this is another distinction. Now, what is it that angels actually do? What does the angel of the Lord do? If this is not a Christophany, if it's not a pre-incarnate Christ, then what exactly is

he doing? Well, turn back with me to Genesis chapter 16. This is the first instance, the first use of the angel of the Lord.

Genesis chapter 16. Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. She had an Egyptian maid.

Sarai said, take up with her, have a child. Sarai says in verse 5, my wrong be upon you. I give my maid into your embrace.

When she saw that she had conceived, I became despised in her eyes. The Lord judged between you and me. Abram says to Sarai, your maid is in your hand.

Do to her as you please. Verse 6, when Sarai dealt harshly with her, she fled from her presence. Verse 7, now the angel of the Lord found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, by the spring on the way to Shur.

She's already by the spring of water. This is not the rock that produces water or any such thing. The angel of the Lord found her by the spring of water.

He said, Hagar, you notice you got the capitals here as well. Hagar, Sarai's maid, where have you come from and where are you going? She said, I am fleeing from the presence of my mistress Sarai. The angel of the Lord said to her, return to your mistress and submit yourself under her hand.

Then the angel of the Lord said to her, I will multiply your descendants exceedingly. Now whose words are these? These are the words of God. God is the one who multiplies descendants.

God is the one who makes covenants with people. But the angel of the Lord speaks these words because he is representing, he is a visible means of communication with God. He speaks in the first person.

They shall not be counted for multitude. And the angel of the Lord said to her, behold, you are with child and you shall bear a son. You shall call his name Ishmael because the Lord has heard your affliction.

He shall be a wild man. His hand shall be against every man. Every man's hand against him.

He shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren. We studied this when we went through Genesis. It's actually kind of a wild ass of a man is the idea.

Then 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? Therefore the well was called Bir Lahai Roy. Look, it is between Kadesh and Bered.

Hagar bears Abram the son. Abram named his son whom Hagar bore Ishmael. Where did Abram get the name? Hagar gave it to him because the angel of the Lord gave it to her and God gave it to the angel of the Lord.

What does Ishmael mean? Ish is man, Ma is from, and El is God. Man from God, Ishmael. But this is the first instance and you can see how people would say well, the angel must be God.

But it's kind of simplistic. The angel is going to appear to Hagar again in chapter 21. Turn over a few pages to chapter 21.

Verse 8, the child grew and was weaned. Abraham made a great feast on the same day Isaac was weaned. Sarah saw the son of Hagar, the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, scoffing.

Therefore she said to Abraham, Cast out the bondwoman and her son. The son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son with Isaac. The matter was very displeasing in Abraham's sight because of his son.

God said to Abraham, Do not let it be displeasing in your sight because of the lad or because of your bondwoman. Whatever Sarah has said to you, listen to her voice. Of course, that's what Adam got in trouble for was listening to the voice of his wife.

But here God says, No, go ahead and listen to her. So anytime, if you're a wife, anytime someone says, well, see what God says about hearkening to the voice of the woman, you can just bring them over here. God says, listen to her voice.

In Isaac your seed shall be called. Yet I will also make a nation of the son of the bondwoman because he is your seed. So Abraham rose early in the morning, took bread and a skin of water, putting it on her shoulders.

He gave it and the boy to Hagar and sent her away. She departed and wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba. The water in the skin was used up.

She placed the boy under one of the shrubs. She went and sat down across from him at a distance of about a bow shot. For she said to herself, Let me not see the death of the boy.

So she sat opposite and lifted her voice and wept. God heard the voice of the lad. Then the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven and said to her, What ails you, Hagar? Fear not, for God has heard the voice of the lad where he is.

Now, if the angel of the Lord is speaking out of heaven and he is God, why would he talk about himself in the third person? This is the same angel that spoke to her in chapter 16, but now you see a little distinction here. He says, God has heard the voice of the lad where he is. Arise, lift up the lad and hold him with your hand for I will make him a great nation.

Now this is God speaking. God opened her eyes. She saw a well of water.

She went and filled the skin, gave the lad a drink. God was with the lad. He grew and dwelt in the wilderness, became an archer, etc.

He got a wife from the land of Egypt. All of the Ishmaelites began being three quarters Egyptian and one quarter Abraham. But you can see, just for a moment, the separation between the angel of the Lord and God himself.

When he says, God has heard the voice of the lad from heaven and then the angel speaks in the first person on behalf of God. God does not speak out of heaven to her. The angel does.

That's his job. For other instances, and we don't have time to look at them all, the man with whom Jacob wrestles until dawn over in Genesis 32, 24-30, he is not called the angel of the Lord, but it says he wrestled with a man until daybreak and then, when they have the conversation, I will not let you go until you bless me, he speaks in the first person. Genesis 32, 24 and following.

And once again, they capitalize all of these. A man, capital M, wrestled with him until the breaking of day. Now, when he saw that he had not prevailed against him, he touched the socket of his hip and the socket of Jacob's hip was out of joint as he wrestled with him.

He said, let me go for the day breaks. I will not let you go unless you bless me. What is your name? Jacob.

Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have struggled with God and with men and have prevailed. Jacob asked saying, tell me your name, I pray. He said, why do you ask about my name? And he blessed him there.

Called the name of the place Peniel. I have seen God face to face and my life is preserved. Well, he didn't see God face to face.

God does not engage in wrestling matches with people. This is the angelic man. And notice the non-technical use of the word man.

You find the same thing in Daniel and Ezekiel when they observe an angelic messenger. In fact, we'll see that here in a minute. The angel Gabriel is called a man in Daniel.

So, if he wrestles with a man, can it be an angel? I think so. We'll see it here in a minute. The angel of the Lord speaking from the burning bush, Exodus chapter 3, verses 1 through 8. Saw that a couple of weeks ago or more.

Verse 2, Exodus 3. The angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush. The bush was burning with fire. It was not consumed.

He turns aside. God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, Moses, Moses, do not draw near. Take your sandals off.

The place is holy ground. I am the God of your father. But this is the angel of the Lord speaking.

And speaking, being a speaker, is a perfectly good way of viewing this. God uses the angel to

inject audio, sound wave vibrations into the atmosphere of earth on Mount Sinai. So, you have the angel of the Lord in Exodus 14, 19 and 20, interposing himself between the armies of Egypt and the congregation of Israel before they cross the Red Sea.

Our passage here in Exodus 23, 20. Later on, Balaam, the angel of the Lord, blocks the path. Balaam can't see it.

The donkey can. And then he speaks. You might turn to that one.

Numbers 22, 22. God's anger was aroused because he went with the messengers of Balak. The angel of the Lord took his stand in the way as an adversary against him.

The donkey saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way with his drawn sword in his hand. The donkey turned his side out of the way, went into the field. By the way, you see here that the angel of the Lord is a warrior.

He possesses his own sword, which he holds in his hand. Doesn't issue forth out of his mouth, by the way, as the sharp sword in Revelation chapter 1 does. The angel of the Lord, verse 24, stood in a narrow path between the vineyards, wall on each side.

The donkey saw the angel of the Lord, pushed herself against the wall, crushed Balaam's foot. The angel of the Lord went further, stood in a narrow place where there was no way to turn to the right or the left. The donkey saw the angel of the Lord lay down under Balaam.

Balaam's anger is aroused, strikes the donkey with his staff. Then the Lord opened the mouth of the donkey and she said to Balaam, What have I done to you that you struck me these three times? He has a perfectly normal conversation with the donkey. Then, verse 31, the Lord opened Balaam's eyes.

He saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way with his drawn sword in his hand. He bowed his head and fell flat on his face. The angel of the Lord said to him, Why have you struck your donkey these three times? Behold, I have come out to stand against you because your way is perverse before me.

Capital M. Before God. Balaam says to the angel of the Lord, I have sinned. Verse 34, I did not know you stood in the way against me.

If it displeases you, I will turn back. The angel of the Lord says to Balaam, Go with the men, but only the word I speak to you that you shall speak. So, once again, it is easy to see why we have this historic confusion of the angel of the Lord with the Lord himself.

He is God's agent. He is God's proxy. He operates on God's behalf.

Gideon in Judges chapter 6. Elijah in 1 Kings 19. That's a good one. Turn to 1 Kings 19.

Four. One we haven't looked at in a while. Elijah by the brook.

Elijah went a day's journey into the wilderness and came and sat down under a broom tree and he prayed that he might die. Jonah wasn't even original, was he? Under a broom tree, he prayed that he might die. He said, it's enough.

Now, Lord, take my life. I'm no better than my father's. As he lay and slept under a broom tree, suddenly an angel touched him and said, Arise and eat.

There's a meal laid out on the fire. Comes back the second time. Arise and eat.

The journey is too great for you. He arises and eats again. Forty days and forty nights as far as Horeb, the mountain of God.

Went into a cave, spent the night in that place. This is the angel from God. Then, in verse 11, Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord.

And behold, the Lord passed by. Verse 11, A great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the Lord. But the Lord was not in the wind.

After the wind, an earthquake. But the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake, a fire.

But the Lord was not in the fire. After the fire, a still, small voice. Now, we go through this.

Everybody wants to get to the still, small voice. But you think about the wind. And you think about the earthquake.

You think about the fire. The wind tears. As the Lord passes by, there's all of this effect.

Things are torn up and blown away. The earthquake comes and shakes and splits and rattles the rocks down the mountainside. The fire comes and burns and scorches.

The Lord is not in any of those. They are His agent. They are markers and manifestations of His presence.

You know the Lord is there because you see these. The Lord is passing by. Here's wind and earthquake and fire.

Do you ever wonder where the band got its name, Earth, Wind and Fire? Right there. They want to make a big noise. So, the Scripture is specific.

Don't confuse the agency with the Lord Himself. The wind accompanies Him. The wind speaks for Him.

The earthquake operates on His behalf. There's going to be an earthquake when the Lord Jesus returns and it's going to split the Mount of Olives. But God is not the earthquake.

And He's not the Mount of Olives. But in His presence, these things operate. So, you can see the

unity.

Now, what are we supposed to do? We are supposed to be Christian, right? We are supposed to be Christ-like. Christ is supposed to be formed in us. That's the hope of glory.

May I so live that men see Christ in me. Right? But I am not Christ. But when people look at us, they should see Christ.

Jesus told His disciples, Let your light so shine before men that they would see your good works and glorify your Father. God the Father is spoken for and represented in your righteousness, in your righteous life, your life of faith. But it's not God.

I don't become God. I am not a Jehovah Witness. I don't think I'm going to become a God someday.

Right? So, this is the close representation of the angel of the Lord for God. He speaks in the first person, but He is not. God is not in the angel of the Lord.

He's like the wind and the earthquake and the fire or the still, small voice. So, the Lord speaks through the angel, but the Lord is not the angel. Time fails me to give you the rest of the passages.

You can look these up. You remember the threshing floor where the angel of the Lord is wreaking destruction and he stops over the threshing floor. David purchases the threshing floor, purchases the makings of a sacrifice, and this is where the temple will ultimately be built.

That's in 1 Chronicles 21, 16 and following. Isaiah 37, 36. The angel of the Lord delivers the city from the Assyrian army.

Remember that? The angel of the Lord strikes the camp, strikes fear into their hearts. They hear that the Egyptians are coming. They flee away.

The beggars go out and find the camp untouched and the prophecy is fulfilled. Let's turn to Daniel. This will be our final point on this subject.

Turn to Daniel chapter 10. Daniel chapter 10. He sees a vision of the Lord Jesus in verse 6. His body is like a barrel.

His face like the appearance of lightning. His eyes like torches of fire. His arms and feet like burnished bronze.

You remember the burnished bronze from Revelation chapter 1. And the sound of his words like the voice of a multitude. I, Daniel, alone saw the vision. The men who were with me did not see the vision.

A great terror fell on them. They fled to hide themselves. Therefore I was left alone when I saw

this great vision.

No strength remained in me. My vigor was turned to frailty in me. I retained no strength.

Yet I heard the sound of his words. And while I heard the sound of his words, I was in a deep sleep on my face, with my face to the ground. Suddenly a hand touched me.

This is not the hand of the one with arms and feet like burnished bronze. This is a different hand. Which made me tremble on my knees and on the palms of my hands.

And he said to me, O Daniel, man greatly beloved, understand the words I speak to you and stand upright, for I have now been sent to you. While he was speaking this word to me, I stood trembling. Then he said to me, Do not fear, Daniel.

From the first day you set your heart to understand and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard. And I have come because of your words. What did we see in Hebrews chapter 1? His angels are ministers sent to those who will inherit.

Daniel is a growing believer. And so God sends an angel to minister to him. Look at verse 13.

I was sent to you, but the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days. And behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left alone there with the kings of Persia. Now this is battle and conflict in the angelic realm.

These kings and princes are angelic. These are offices that are held throughout the scripture. How many times does Paul talk about principalities and powers and rulers? We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against these, the prince of the power of the heirs, another name for Satan.

Well, the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days. Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me. Now who is this that is speaking? He says, I've come to make you understand what will happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision refers to many days yet to come.

So when he had spoken such words, I turned my face to the ground and became speechless. Suddenly another one, having the likeness of the sons of men, touched my lips. I opened my mouth and spoke, saying to him who stood before me, My Lord, because of the vision my sorrows have overwhelmed me.

Verse 18, again the one having the likeness of a man touched me and strengthened me. Touched me and strengthened me. This is ministry.

Just like the angel of the Lord coming to Elijah, giving him food. Verse 20, Do you know why I have come to you? Now I must return to fight with the prince of Persia. When I have gone forth, indeed the prince of Greece will come.

But I will tell you what is noted in the scripture of truth. No one upholds me against these except Michael, your prince. So this Michael that was spoken of earlier, one of the chief princes, is the prince or the guardian angel or the national angel of Israel.

He gives this extended vision here. But if you go back to find out who this is, go back to chapter 9 and verse 20. While I was speaking, praying, and confessing my sin and the sins of my people Israel, presenting my supplication before the Lord my God for the holy mountain of my God, while I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly or being weary with weariness, reached me about the time of the evening offering.

He informed me. He talked with me. He said, Daniel, I have now come forth to give you skill to understand.

At the beginning of your supplications, the command went out. And I have come to tell you for you are greatly beloved, therefore consider the matter and understand the vision. And then he explains the vision of the 70 weeks, the man Gabriel.

And he says, this is the one that I saw before. I had seen in the vision at the beginning. Well, who did he see at the beginning? This was back in chapter 8, verse 15.

It happened when I, Daniel, had seen the vision and was seeking the meaning that suddenly there stood before me one having the appearance of a man. This is Gabriel. And I heard a man's voice between the banks of the Ulai who called me and said, Gabriel, make this man understand the vision.

So he came near where I stood. There is an instruction. The voice of God says, Gabriel, explain the vision to him.

I heard a man's voice who called and said, Gabriel, this is similar to the voice that says, this is my beloved son, to John the Baptist. So, Gabriel, make this man understand the vision. So he, Gabriel, came near where I stood, verse 17.

And when he came, I was afraid and fell on my face. But he said to me, understand, son of man, that the vision refers to the time of the end. As he was speaking with me, I was in a deep sleep with my face to the ground.

He touched me and stood me upright. And he said, look, I am making known to you what shall happen in the latter time of the indignation. For at the appointed time, the end shall be.

And then he explains the vision. And verse 27, I, Daniel, fainted and was sick for days. Afterward, I arose and went about the king's business.

I was astonished by the vision, but no one understood it. But Gabriel explains it to him that time. Gabriel explains it to him in chapter 9. Gabriel comes back in chapter 10, verse 10 and

following.

And we just saw, since you set yourself to understand, I have been sent to help you, but I was delayed. And when you get to the closing portion of this, and he says, in that day, Michael, the prince, shall stand up for your people. So Michael is an angel.

Gabriel is an angel. They operate on behalf of the Lord. They do God's work.

They speak at God's behest and for Him. So, back in Exodus chapter 23 now, when God says, I will send an angel before you to keep you in the way and to bring you into the place which I have prepared. Beware of him.

Obey his voice. Do not provoke him. He will not pardon your transgressions.

My name is in him. But if you obey his voice and do all that I speak, obey his voice and do all that I speak. This is the whole conundrum in one phrase, isn't it? It's his voice, but it's me speaking.

So who is the angel sent before you to keep you in the way and to bring you into the place which I have prepared? My angel will go before you and bring you in to the Amorites and the Perizzites and so on. So is the angel Moses? Can't be. Moses didn't bring them in.

Is it Joshua? No, because he's not the one who is going to go before them. Who is the angel of the Lord? Look at verse 27. I will send my fear before you.

I will cause confusion among all the people to whom you come. Verse 28. I will send hornets before you which will drive out the Hivite, Canaanite, and Hittite from before you.

The Bible tells us that the law was delivered through the instrumentality of messengers. This is an office that is being spoken of. It is the office of leadership in Israel.

My messenger is God's leader. He speaks with a voice. How many times does it say, Obey His voice.

Obey His voice. Do all that I speak and I will bless you. He will go before you and bring you in.

So this is the office of leadership. There's not a specific person being spoken of here because Moses is going to lead them for 40 years. Joshua is going to take them on into the land to defeat all of the Hittites.

So Moses is his angel, his messenger, just like Malachi. Nobody has a problem with Malachi being the prophet as the last book of the Old Testament. Moses is my messenger.

Moses is the angel of the Lord in this context to Israel. Joshua is going to take his place as they go into the land. Obey His voice.

He will not pardon your transgressions. My name is in Him. What is God's name? It's authority.

It's ruling authority. Leadership office is what is being spoken of here. But He does not have authority to forgive.

That God retains. Authority to lead, not to forgive. Well, I hope we've shed at least some light on the angel of the Lord in the Old Testament.

We don't have time to look at angel appearances in the New. Of course, it's very manifest that when Mary is carrying the Lord Jesus in her womb and Gabriel shows up as an angel of the Lord, that's not a Christophany. Jesus doesn't come to announce Himself.

But the angels perform the same function in the Gospels and Acts that they do in the Old Testament. Same idea. They speak for God and often speak in the first person.

That's all the time we have this morning. Let's close in a word of prayer. Father, thank You for the opportunity of studying Your Word.

We pray that God the Holy Spirit will enliven it and make it real to us so that we will live in a way that is pleasing in Your sight. We pray it in Jesus' name, Amen.