

## “THE JUDGES AND ANGELS”

Then the Angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said: "I led you up from Egypt and brought you to the land of which I swore to your fathers; and I said, 'I will never break My covenant with you. And you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall tear down their altars.' But you have not obeyed My voice. Why have you done this? Therefore I also said, 'I will not drive them out before you; but they shall be thorns in your side, and their gods shall be a snare to you.'" So it was, when the Angel of the LORD spoke these words to all the children of Israel, that the people lifted up their voices and wept. Then they called the name of that place Bochim; and they sacrificed there to the LORD. (Judges 2:1-5 NKJV)

There is an overlapping of the book of Joshua and the book of Judges. The book of Joshua ends with the death of Joshua. However, the first chapter of the book of Judges begins by recapping the conquests in the land of Canaan and also what the Israelites failed to conquer. The second chapter begins with this appearance of the Angel of the LORD who spoke to the Israelites. This may have been when Joshua called the leaders together and spoke to them just before his death. After the Angel of the LORD speaks, the people weep and offer sacrifices. Then we read a passage similar to the end of Joshua:

And when Joshua had dismissed the people, the children of Israel went each to his own inheritance to possess the land. So the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the LORD which He had done for Israel. Now Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died when he was one hundred and ten years old. And they buried him within the border of his inheritance at Timnath Heres, in the mountains of Ephraim, on the north side of Mount Gaash. (Judges 2:6-9 NKJV)

This year I have been reading several pages a day from John Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. This week, reading in his section defending the doctrine of the Trinity, Calvin used the passage from the beginning of Judges 2. It was Calvin's belief that the Angel of the LORD and every occasion of the LORD speaking directly to man was the Son of God. He was Immanuel "God is with us" in the Old Testament just as certainly as He was in the person of Jesus Christ.

1.) "Speak, you who ride on white donkeys, Who sit in judges' attire, And who walk along the road. Far from the noise of the archers, among the watering places, There they shall recount the righteous acts of the LORD, The righteous acts for His villagers in Israel; Then the people of the LORD shall go down to the gates. "Awake, awake, Deborah! Awake, awake, sing a song! Arise, Barak, and lead your captives away, O son of Abinoam! "Then the survivors came down, the people against the nobles; The LORD came down for me against the mighty... 'Curse Meroz,' said the angel of the LORD, 'Curse its inhabitants bitterly, Because they did not come to the help of the LORD, To the help of the LORD against the mighty.' (Judges 5:10-13,23 NKJV)

During the period of the Judges, there was no king in the land and everyone did what was right in his own eyes. The people of Israel would do evil in the sight of the LORD. He would allow them to fall under the dominion of a pagan ruler who would occupy their land and oppress them cruelly. Then the people would cry out to the LORD for help. He would send a deliverer who would lead the people in driving out the occupying forces. That deliverer would judge the people and keep them in the ways of righteousness. When that judge would die the people would drift back into evil ways again and the LORD would let them fall to some heathen people again.

Jabin, king of Canaan ruled over the people of Israel twenty years and oppressed them cruelly. His army commander, Sisera, had 900 chariots of iron. Deborah was a prophetess and the judge of Israel at that time. She called Barak and told him that the LORD commanded him to muster 10,000 men at Mount Tabor and attack the army of the Canaanites. He said that he wouldn't go unless Deborah went with him. She agreed. The Israelites defeated the Canaanite soldiers with their swords and with the LORD going before them. Not one Canaanite soldier remained alive.

After the victory Deborah sang a song which recounts the events. In the song we learn that twice the Angel of the LORD came to her.

2.) Now the Angel of the LORD came and sat under the terebinth tree which was in Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, while his son Gideon threshed wheat in the winepress, in order to hide it from the Midianites. And the Angel of the LORD appeared to him, and said to him, "The LORD is with you, you mighty man of valor!" Gideon said to Him, "O my lord, if the LORD is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all His miracles which our fathers told us about, saying, 'Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt?' But now the LORD has forsaken us and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites." Then the LORD turned to him and said, "Go in this might of yours, and you shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Have I not sent you?" So he said to Him, "O my Lord, how can I save Israel? Indeed my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house." And the LORD said to him, "Surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat the Midianites as one man." ...The Angel of God said to him, "Take the meat and the unleavened bread and lay them on this rock, and pour out the broth." And he did so. Then the Angel of the LORD put out the end of the staff that was in His hand, and touched the meat and the unleavened bread; and fire rose out of the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened bread. And the Angel of the LORD departed out of his sight. Now Gideon perceived that He was the Angel of the LORD. So Gideon said, "Alas, O Lord GOD! For I have seen the Angel of the LORD face to face." Then the LORD said to him, "Peace be with you; do not fear, you shall not die." (Judges 6:11-16, 20-23 NKJV)

Notice: The Angel of the LORD appears and speaks to Gideon seven times AND eight times it says that the LORD spoke to Gideon.

The people of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and the LORD gave them into the hand of Midian for seven years. Whenever the people of Israel planted crops, the Midianites and the Amalekites came into the land, pitched their tents and let their animals graze on the Israelites crops until nothing was left. They were like locusts. The Israelites cried to the LORD for help. He came to Gideon and called him a man of valor. Gideon saw himself as a weak man but the LORD said to him, "The LORD is with you, you mighty man of valor...Go in this might of yours, and you shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Have I not sent you?...Surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat the Midianites as one man." Read the rest of the story in Judges 6 & 7. Gideon defeated an army of thousands with 300 men!

3.) Again the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and the LORD delivered them into the hand of the Philistines for forty years. Now there was a certain man from Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah; and his wife was barren and had no children. And the Angel of the LORD appeared to the woman and said to her, "Indeed now, you are barren and have borne no children, but you shall conceive and bear a son. "Now therefore, please be careful not to drink wine or similar drink, and not to eat anything unclean. "For behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. And no razor shall come upon his head, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines." So the woman came and told her husband, saying, "A Man of God came to me, and His countenance was like the countenance of the Angel of God, very awesome; but I did not ask Him where He was from, and He did not tell me His name. (Judges 13:1-6 NKJV)

So Manoah arose and followed his wife. When he came to the Man, he said to Him, "Are You the Man who spoke to this woman?" And He said, "I am." Manoah said, "Now let Your words come to pass! What will be the boy's rule of life, and his work?" So the Angel of the LORD said to Manoah, "Of all that I said to the woman let her be careful. "She may not eat anything that comes from the vine, nor may she drink wine or similar drink, nor eat anything unclean. All that I commanded her let her observe." Then Manoah said to the Angel of the LORD, "Please let us detain You, and we will prepare a young goat for You." And the Angel of the LORD said to Manoah, "Though you detain Me, I will not eat your food. But if you offer a burnt offering, you must offer it to the LORD." (For Manoah did not know He was the Angel of the LORD.) Then Manoah said to the Angel of the LORD, "What is Your name, that when Your words come to pass we may honor You?" And the Angel of the LORD said to him, "Why do you ask My name, seeing it is wonderful?" So Manoah took the young goat with the grain offering, and offered it upon the rock to the LORD. And He did a wondrous thing while Manoah and his wife looked on- it happened as the flame went up toward heaven from the altar-the Angel of the LORD ascended in the flame of the altar! When Manoah and his wife saw this, they fell on their faces to the ground. (Judges 13:11-20 NKJV)

The Angel of the LORD six times, the Angel of God twice, and Man of God or the Man five times appear and speak to Manoah and his wife and promises them a child (who was Samson), "the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb; he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines."

During four hundred years of spiritual darkness and idolatry in Israel, God responded with deliverers whenever the people of Israel cried out to Him. Those dark times, to four godly persons, the Angel of the LORD appeared more times than to all the patriarchs and Moses.