



# Small Group Guide: The Angel of the Lord - Introduction

## Series Overview

This guide accompanies the introductory message of the series "The Angel of the Lord," an exploration of a mysterious yet significant figure who appears at least 15 times throughout the Old Testament. The central question of this series is whether this figure is a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus Christ, and what these encounters reveal about the heart and character of God.

## Key Takeaways

**1. The Old Testament was given to us to illuminate what we know about Jesus.** Just as Tolkien's "The Hobbit" was written before "The Lord of the Rings" yet was meant to be read as its foundation, the Old Testament was given to us to deepen and inform our understanding of Jesus and the heart of the Father. Reading the two testaments as disconnected works with different gods causes us to miss the unified story of Scripture.

**2. The angel of the Lord is distinct from other angels in three significant ways.**

- He speaks with divine authority rather than pointing to the authority of God
- He accepts worship rather than redirecting it
- He carries the name of Yahweh and holds the power of Yahweh

**3. Every page of Scripture reveals the heart of God.** Whether or not one concludes that the angel of the Lord is a pre-incarnate Jesus, these encounters reveal the character, authority, compassion, and sovereignty of God in ways that deeply enrich our understanding of who He is.

**4. Jesus is a fierce warrior, not merely a comforting shepherd.** Revelation 19 and Exodus 14 together paint a picture of Jesus as a sovereign, powerful, and fierce defender and judge. This dimension of His character does not contradict His gentleness and compassion but completes the full picture of who He is.

**5. Jesus has been active in every part of history.** He was not absent between creation and the incarnation. The appearances of the angel of the Lord throughout the Old Testament suggest that Jesus was actively entering into the stories of men and women long before Bethlehem. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and He is active in our stories as well.

## Discussion Questions

### Opening (Choose One)

1. The sermon opened with the comparison of "The Hobbit" and "The Lord of the Rings," noting that the prequel enriches the later story. Can you think of a time when going back to an earlier part of something, a book, a relationship, a season of life, helped you better understand something you were experiencing in the present?
2. When you picture Jesus in your mind, what does He look like? How does He typically respond in the scenarios you imagine? Where did that picture come from?

### Digging In

3. The sermon noted that we sometimes read the Old and New Testaments as if they feature two different gods. Have you ever experienced that tension? What passages or stories have contributed to that feeling for you?
4. Three evidences were presented for the angel of the Lord being a pre-incarnate Jesus: he speaks with divine authority, he accepts worship, and he carries the name and power of Yahweh. Which of these three was most compelling or surprising to you, and why?
5. In Exodus 23, God tells Israel that the angel of the Lord will travel with them and that His name is in him. He also says this angel holds the prerogative to pardon or not pardon transgressions. How does that connect to the moment in the Gospels when Jesus forgives the paralyzed man and the Pharisees ask who can forgive sins but God alone?
6. The sermon pointed to Revelation 19 and Exodus 14 as passages that reveal Jesus as a fierce warrior. How does that image of Jesus sit with you? Does it challenge, encourage, or unsettle you? Why?
7. The story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego was referenced as an example of Jesus entering into suffering and exile. King Nebuchadnezzar, a pagan king, identified the fourth figure in the fire as one who looked like the son of God. What does it mean to you that Jesus would enter the furnace rather than simply prevent it?
8. The sermon closed with this challenge: "I wonder if you can see Him there." Are there seasons of your life, past or present, where it has been difficult to see Jesus at work? What has made it hard to see Him?

## Going Deeper

9. Psalm 34:7 was referenced at the close of the sermon. Read that verse together. What does it mean for the angel of the Lord to encamp around those who fear Him? How does that promise connect to the image of the angel of the Lord moving to stand between Israel and the Egyptian army in Exodus 14?
10. The sermon suggested that when we see Jesus in our story, healing, purpose, and hope come to our story. Do you agree? Can you point to a moment in your own life where recognizing the presence of Jesus in a difficult season brought one of those things?

## Practical Applications

### This Week, Choose One:

- **Read with fresh eyes.** Pick one Old Testament story you are already familiar with, whether it is the burning bush, the story of Gideon, the binding of Isaac, or another, and

read it slowly through the lens of what it reveals about the heart of God. Ask yourself: what does this story tell me about who God is and how He relates to people?

- **Expand your prayer posture.** Set aside time this week to pray, but begin by sitting quietly and reflecting on the fullness of who Jesus is, not only the gentle shepherd but the fierce warrior, the righteous judge, the one whose eyes are like flames of fire. Let that fuller picture shape the way you come before Him.
- **Attend the intercessory prayer night.** If you are in a season where you need to see the Lord in your story, consider coming to the church's intercessory prayer night on Tuesday from 6:30 to 8:30. You do not need to have the words. The team there is ready to pray with you and for you.
- **Have an honest conversation with God.** If there is a season of your life where you genuinely cannot see Jesus at work, bring that honestly to Him this week. Use this simple prayer as a starting point: "God, I do not see you in my story, but I want to. Would you open my eyes?"

## Closing Prayer Focus

Close your group time by praying together for the following:

- That God would open each member's eyes to see Jesus present and active in their current circumstances
- That the series ahead would expand your group's view of Jesus in meaningful and lasting ways
- For anyone in the group walking through a season of confusion, suffering, or silence from God, that they would experience His presence as unmistakable

## Looking Ahead

Next week the group will examine the first explicit appearance of the angel of the Lord in Scripture, his encounter with Hagar in the wilderness of Genesis 16. In preparation, read Genesis 16 in full and consider: What does it tell us about God that the first person the angel of the Lord appears to is a woman who has been cast out, abandoned, and forgotten?