

# The Invisible and Visible YHWH

*The angel of the Lord, the cloud rider, and the God no one has seen made known*

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| SPEAKER  | Matt Ryniker                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| DATE     | Sunday, November 28, 2021                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| PASSAGES | John 1:18; Genesis 22:11-18; Genesis 32:24-30; Hosea 12:3-4; Genesis 48:15-16; Exodus 3:2-6; Exodus 23:20-22; Joshua 5:13-15; Judges 6:11-23; Daniel 7:9-14; Matthew 26:63-65; Leviticus 17:11; Deuteronomy 6:4 |
| MESSAGE  | Begins at 1:06:03 in the service                                                                                                                                                                                |

## THE BIG IDEA

The Old Testament already shows a God whom no one has seen and a God who appears — the angel of the Lord, who speaks as God, wrestles Jacob, burns in the bush, and stands before Joshua with a drawn sword. The apostles did not invent a multi-personal God; he was hidden in plain sight all along. The child we celebrate at Christmas is Yahweh made flesh, and the blood he shed for us is the very life of God.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ◆ “The life of the flesh is in the blood.” Whose life was given for us matters: man’s blood, and the very life of God.
- ◆ “Angel” is a job description — messenger — not a species. The angel of the Lord speaks, blesses and swears as the Lord himself.
- ◆ A simple equal sign doesn’t resolve it: God sends the angel, his name is in him, and yet it is God who goes before his people.
- ◆ Gideon’s story puts both on the stage at once: the angel of the Lord vanishes, and the Lord is still speaking.
- ◆ “No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known.” John was drawing on what was already there.

- ◆ Only God rides the clouds. When Jesus claimed Daniel's cloud-riding Son of Man, the high priest knew exactly what he meant.
- ◆ The Shema's "one" is the same word as husband and wife becoming one: one being, not necessarily one person.

► 1:06:05

With Advent beginning, Matt paused the Old Testament figures to teach on the coming of Christ — two Sundays on two truths that are both essential to Christology and to our salvation: that Christ is God, and that Christ is man. This week was the first.

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## Whose life was given?

► 1:06:43

"For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life."

LEVITICUS 17:11 ↗

One of Matt's favorite verses. So whose life was shed for us? He is incarnate, so it is man's blood, "but he's God — the very life of God given for man."

► 1:07:26

To dovetail with the series, he revisited passages the church had already read, to show something he had not wanted to dwell on before: that "Yahweh God is maybe more than meets the eye," and that the New Testament did not make up a multi-personal God. "We're going to see where it already was hidden in plain sight."

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## The angel who says "me"

► 1:08:30

“But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, ‘Abraham, Abraham!’ And he said, ‘Here I am.’ He said, ‘Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.’”

GENESIS 22:10–12 ↗

► 1:09:45

The angel talks about God almost as a third person — “you fear God” — and then says “from *me*.” Abraham names the place “The LORD will provide.” Then the angel calls a second time: “By myself I have sworn, declares the LORD,” and promises offspring like the stars, “because you have obeyed my voice” (Genesis 22:15–18). Who is swearing, blessing, speaking? Whose voice did Abraham obey?

► 1:11:16

Remember, Matt said, “angel” is not a kind of thing. “It’s a job description.” The word means messenger: it could fit John the Baptist, you, a donkey, a celestial being — or Christ.

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## Face to face

► 1:11:51

Back to the man who wrestled Jacob until daybreak. “Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God.” And Jacob names the place Peniel, “for I have seen God face to face, and yet my life has been delivered” (Genesis 32:24–30).

► 1:12:57

“In the womb he took his brother by the heel, and in his manhood he strove with God. He strove with the angel and prevailed.”

HOSEA 12:3–4 ↗

“All I want us to see is the angel of God so far doesn’t just represent God merely, but is God. And I’m not saying that God is a mere angel. I’m saying this angel is Yahweh.” Matt suspected Paul taught Greeks this very lesson in preparing them for the Bible’s trinitarian monotheism.

► 1:13:40

At the end of his life, Jacob blesses Joseph’s sons: “The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has been my shepherd all my life long to this day, the angel who has

redeemed me from all evil, bless the boys” (Genesis 48:15–16). The verb is singular, and the lines are in parallel. The redeeming angel and the shepherd God are the same person.

## In the bush, and “my name is in him”

► 1:14:50

At Horeb “the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire,” yet it is God who calls from the bush, “I am the God of your father,” and Moses hides his face, afraid to look at God (Exodus 3:2–6). Later Moses tells the elders that the LORD “has appeared to me.” Who was in the bush?

► 1:16:00

Some resolve it with an equal sign: the angel of the Lord equals Yahweh. Matt didn’t think that works, because of what comes next:

► 1:16:28

“Behold, I send an angel before you to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place that I have prepared. Pay careful attention to him and obey his voice; do not rebel against him, for he will not pardon your transgression, for my name is in him.”

EXODUS 23:20–22 ↗

► 1:17:03

What does it mean that God’s name is in him? Isaiah says, “Behold, the name of the LORD comes from afar ... his lips are full of fury, and his tongue is like a devouring fire” (Isaiah 30:27). How does a name have lips? “The name of the Lord is the Lord.” And then: “If you carefully obey his voice and do all that I say, then I will be an enemy to your enemies.” Whose voice? Who goes before the people — the angel, the one who sent him, God’s presence, God? “Yes. That’s the answer. Yes.”

► 1:17:44

When Moses pleads, “Show me now your ways, that I may know you,” the answer is, “My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest” (Exodus 33:13–14). Others say the angel is merely an emissary representing God. That fails too: “The angel of the LORD went up from Gilgal to Bochim. And he said, ‘I brought you up from Egypt’” (Judges 2:1). Who brought them out of Egypt? God did.

► 1:19:33

*“This multi-personal singular being was already in the Old Testament, and it played right into the hands of the apostles’ message.”*

Jews who knew their Scriptures could not object that God can't be multi-personal. "It was all right here all along."

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## The commander of the army of the Lord

► 1:20:16

"And Joshua went to him and said to him, 'Are you for us, or for our adversaries?' And he said, 'No; but I am the commander of the army of the LORD. Now I have come.' And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped ... And the commander of the LORD's army said to Joshua, 'Take off your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy.'"

JOSHUA 5:13-15 ↗

"And he said, No. I love that." We sometimes root for Israel like a sports team with irrational loyalty; "we should really be rooting for God." This is a man — corporeal, visible, touchable, holding a drawn sword — who receives worship and commands God's armies. And the parallel with Moses is plain: both are commissioned face to face and told to take off their sandals, "because there was a holy one there."

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## Both on the stage at once

► 1:21:32

The angel of the LORD sits under the terebinth at Ophrah and greets Gideon, "The LORD is with you, O mighty man of valor." Gideon asks where all the old miracles went, "and the LORD turned to him" — physical language — "Go in this might of yours ... do not I send you?"

► 1:22:42

Gideon brings an offering; the angel touches it with his staff, fire springs from the rock, and the angel vanishes.

► 1:23:09

"Then Gideon perceived that he was the angel of the LORD. And Gideon said, 'Alas, O Lord GOD! For now I have seen the angel of the LORD face to face.' But the LORD said to him, 'Peace be to you. Do not fear; you shall not die.'"

JUDGES 6:11-23 ↗

If this were a play, Gideon is still on stage and the angel is not — “but Yahweh is still there.” It is as if, all along, there is a God who is invisible, and an angel, a man, who is the true God, appearing to make God known.

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## No one has ever seen God

► 1:23:41

“No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known.”

JOHN 1:18 ↗

“It’s the same stuff. The apostles weren’t making things up.” There is a God no one has seen, and the true God at his side who makes him known — and when Jesus says, “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father” ([John 14:9](#)), we are forced to a conclusion.

► 1:25:08

“It wasn’t some church council that got together with cigars in the back rooms — all right, let’s do this Trinity thing. No. We’re forced to conclude that there’s one God, but he’s multi-personal. We have no other option. The texts force us into that corner.” We wouldn’t otherwise go there, because it is beyond our comprehension. “In other words, it makes sense that it doesn’t make sense.”

► 1:25:34

That is how you get “the LORD rained on Sodom and Gomorrah sulfur and fire from the LORD” ([Genesis 19:24](#)). Likewise the word of the Lord comes “in a vision” ([Genesis 15:1](#)); with Samuel, the Lord “came and stood” and revealed himself “by the word of the LORD” ([1 Samuel 3:10–21](#)); and to Jeremiah, the Lord “put out his hand and touched my mouth” ([Jeremiah 1:9](#)). Ideas don’t stand. John’s Word made flesh draws on this theme ([John 1:14](#)).

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## The cloud rider

► 1:27:24

Baal was hailed in the north as the charioteer of the clouds — a divine thing no human could do. [Psalm 104:3](#) takes the title back: “he makes the clouds his chariot.” Not Baal. “Yahweh is the cloud rider.”

► 1:28:32

“As I looked, thrones were placed, and the Ancient of Days took his seat ... I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him.”

DANIEL 7:9–14 ↗

The Ancient of Days is seated — that is God. And one like a son of man, someone you could see and touch, comes riding the clouds. He is distinct from the Ancient of Days, “but then again he has to be the same, because he’s God — because only God could do the thing he’s doing.”

► 1:29:40

So when the high priest adjures Jesus to say whether he is the Christ, Jesus answers, “From now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven,” and the high priest tears his robes: “He has uttered blasphemy” ([Matthew 26:63–65](#)). Why was it so obvious? “That’s only a God thing.”

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## “The Lord is one”

► 1:30:12

What about the Shema — “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one” ([Deuteronomy 6:4](#))?

► 1:30:55

The same word, *echad*, appears when husband and wife “shall become one flesh” ([Genesis 2:24](#)). “If you’re married, are you multi-personal? Surely you’re not the same person — I think you’ve realized that by now.” And at Babel God says, “they are one people” ([Genesis 11:6](#)) — however many there were. The Lord being one means one being, not only one person. “We worship one God, but he’s multi-personal.”

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## Who is this child?

► 1:32:06

Matt said he could do the same with the Holy Spirit. But this is what we celebrate now: a Word, a man who is truly God, making known the God no one has seen. So when we celebrate the birth of our Lord, who is that?

► 1:32:39

The offense for many was not that God could be touched; the angel of the Lord could be. Perhaps it was: why a baby, instead of a fully formed adult with lightning? And why that guy? “We know his parents. We know that he’s a carpenter.”

► 1:33:16

*“It’s important that he’s not just a really great guy. This is not just an uber-prophet. The person who shed his blood for us is Yahweh made flesh.”*

That is why we are so secure in his offering: “the very source of life giving his own life to us.” Matt prayed that God would help the church behold him as he really is, receive him, and long for his return: “You’re not sending someone else. You’re sending yourself.”

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**FOR FURTHER STUDY****SCRIPTURE IN THIS MESSAGE**

- [Leviticus 17:11](#)
- [Genesis 22:10–12](#)
- [Genesis 22:15–18](#)
- [Genesis 32:24–30](#)
- [Hosea 12:3–4](#)
- [Genesis 48:15–16](#)
- [Exodus 3:2–6](#)
- [Exodus 23:20–22](#)
- [Isaiah 30:27](#)
- [Exodus 33:13–14](#)
- [Judges 2:1](#)
- [Joshua 5:13–15](#)
- [Judges 6:11–23](#)
- [John 1:18](#)
- [John 14:9](#)
- [Genesis 19:24](#)
- [Genesis 15:1](#)
- [1 Samuel 3:10–21](#)
- [Jeremiah 1:9](#)
- [John 1:14](#)
- [Psalm 104:3](#)
- [Daniel 7:9–14](#)
- [Matthew 26:63–65](#)
- [Deuteronomy 6:4](#)
- [Genesis 2:24](#)
- [Genesis 11:6](#)

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**FOR YOUR HOPE GROUP**

1. Why does it matter, as Leviticus 17:11 suggests, whose life was given for us on the cross?
2. Which of the angel-of-the-Lord passages most surprised you, and what does it show about who God is?
3. How does it change your reading of the Old Testament to see that the apostles were drawing on what was already there, not inventing something new?
4. Matt said “it makes sense that it doesn’t make sense.” How do you hold a truth about God that is beyond your comprehension?
5. As Advent begins, how might knowing that the child in the manger is Yahweh made flesh shape the way you celebrate and wait this week?

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**ABOUT THE SPEAKER**

Matt Ryniker is Hope Chapel's senior pastor — his own description of the job — and reports to the church's governing board, who he cheerfully calls his boss. He and his wife Mandy have been held up from Hope's own pulpit as an example to the congregation. He spent a stretch of his working life as a public school teacher, and he still teaches the parent dedication classes where families commit to raising their children to follow Jesus — a theme that runs straight into this message.

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**Watch the full message:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bqx4844hBhk&t=3963s>

These notes summarise a message preached at Hope Chapel in Austin, Texas. They are a reader's aid, not a transcript — scripture references link to the full passage so you can read it in context.