



Provided by the Church of the Lutheran Confession - Board of Missions

## A Systematic Study of Bible Teachings (Dogmatics) Lesson 2.7.2 – The Doctrine of God

### Evidence of the Trinity in the Old Testament

All the passages in our previous lesson were from the New Testament. There is no doubt that the New Testament speaks of the three Persons of God. In the Old Testament, God did not reveal Himself as the Triune God as clearly as He did in the New Testament. Nevertheless, there are hints of the Trinity also in the Old Testament. When God created human beings, He spoke of Himself in the plural. He said: **“Let Us make man in Our image”** (Genesis 1:26). When God confused human languages and brought an end to the building of the tower of Babel, He said: **“Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech”** (Genesis 11:7).

In a prophecy of the coming Messiah, the prophet Isaiah, speaking for God, says: **“Behold! My Servant whom I uphold, My Elect One in whom My soul delights! I have put My Spirit upon Him”** (Isaiah 42:1). Jesus is the Servant of God whom God (the Father) was sending into the world, and God says He will put His Spirit on His Son. Notice that the three Persons of God are distinguished from each other.

So also, we have a hint of the Trinity in Isaiah’s vision of God where he hears the seraphim (angels) crying out to one another: **“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts”** (Isaiah 6:3). Bible students have also recognized the three Persons of God in the blessing that God gave to the first high priest Aaron, Moses’ brother: **“The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace”** (Numbers 6:24-26).

In particular there are passages in the Old Testament that clearly distinguish between the Father and the Son, and call both Father and Son God. In Psalm 45 God (the Father) is speaking to a King whom He calls God. God says to Him, who is also God: **“Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom. You love righteousness and hate wickedness. Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness more than Your companions”** (Psalm 45:6-7). Psalm 2 refers to this anointed King as the Son of God in these words: **“I have set My King on My holy hill of Zion”**. These are the words of the Father. Then we hear the words of the Son: **“I will declare the decree: The LORD has said to Me, ‘You are My Son, today I have begotten You’”** (Psalm 2:6-7). Likewise Psalm 110 refers to both Father and Son in these words: **“The LORD said to my Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool’”** (Psalm 110:1).

In both the Old and the New Testaments, the word<sup>1</sup> that is usually translated as “angel” literally means “messenger”. In the New Testament, “angel” usually refers to a created spirit being or to a messenger from God, like a pastor (for example, in Revelation 2 and 3). But in the Old Testament, the word “Angel” often refers to One who is the Lord God Himself. In the Old Testament, the Son of God is often called the Angel (or Messenger) of God. For example, when Moses was 80 years old and taking care of the sheep of his father-in-law, **“the Angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush”** (Exodus 3:2). This was not a created angel, for the Bible then says of Him: **“The LORD saw that he (Moses) turned aside to look”** (Exodus 3:4). Then this Angel of the LORD (who was Himself the LORD) said to Moses: **“I am the God of your father – the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob”** (Exodus 3:6). Later in the conversation, this Angel said to Moses: **“I AM WHO I AM”**

<sup>1</sup> the Hebrew word is *mal'ak* (מַלְאָךְ) and the Greek is *angelos* (ἄγγελος), both of which mean “messenger”.

(Exodus 3:14).

Similarly, the Angel of the Lord appeared to Hagar (Genesis 16 and 21), Abraham (Genesis 22), Jacob (Genesis 31 and 32), the Israelites as they crossed the Red Sea (Exodus 14), Gideon (Judges 6), Samson's parents (Judges 13), and Zechariah (Zechariah 3). Malachi 3:1 identifies the Angel of the Lord as the promised Messiah, Jesus, the Son of God. God says to the people through Malachi: **"Behold, I send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me, and the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight. Behold, He is coming."** The first messenger is clearly John the Baptist, whom God sent to prepare the way for the Messiah. The second Messenger (or Angel) is the Lord Himself, for whom John prepared the way. He is called the Messenger of the covenant. Thus, the Old Testament believers also had evidence from God's Word that the Messiah, who would be sent by God would also be God.

### Questions

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1. How is the Trinity taught in the book of Genesis?
2. How did the prophet Isaiah refer to the three Persons of God?
3. In what two passages does the number three seem to hint at three Persons?
4. Since there is only one God, what does it mean when God anoints God in Psalm 45?
5. What is the meaning of the word "angel"?
6. How do we know that the Angel of God in the Old Testament is God Himself?
7. How does Malachi show that the Angel or Messenger of God is Jesus?