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Jesus and the angel

The sending of the angel in Revelation 22



JESUS AND THE TRINITY

Thinking biblically and entering into conversation

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Is the Lord Jesus the God of the spirits of the prophets?

Revelation 22:6 and 22:16 as testimony to Jesus’s deity

Revelation 22:6 says that “the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets” sent his angel. Only ten verses later Jesus expressly declares:

> I, Jesus, have sent my angel.
>
> Revelation 22:16

Both statements speak of the same angel, the same revelatory commission, and the same messages to the churches. A strong conclusion therefore suggests itself: Jesus is the Lord designated in Revelation 22:6 as God of the spirits of the prophets.

The grammar of an individual word does not compel this identification. The immediate context, however, makes it very strong. Even the alternative explanation leads to a high Christology: the Lord God’s angel is also Jesus’s own angel and stands under his immediate authority.

Translation note: Complete English translation of the supplied German source. Biblical quotations are translated from the wording of that source, not quoted verbatim from an official English Bible. Greek, references, repeated arguments, and the source’s qualifications are retained; no independent theological revision has been made.

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1. The two decisive statements

Two strikingly similar statements stand at the end of Revelation.

Revelation 22:6

> And the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants what must happen soon.
>
> Revelation 22:6

Revelation 22:16

A few verses later Jesus says:

> I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify these things to you for the churches.
>
> Revelation 22:16

The parallel is obvious:

Revelation 22:6	Revelation 22:16
The Lord God sent	I, Jesus, sent
His angel	My angel
To show his servants	To testify to you for the churches
What must happen soon	These things

> **THE PARALLEL**
> In verse 6 the Lord God sends his angel. In verse 16 Jesus says that he has sent his angel.

The decisive question is therefore:

> **THE QUESTION**
> Is Jesus himself “the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets”?

2. Who is “the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets”?

The wording in verse 6 does not designate two different persons.

It does not say:

> The Lord and the God of the spirits of the prophets.

The expression is:

> ὁ κύριος ὁ θεός
>
> “the Lord, the God”

“The God of the spirits of the prophets” explains more closely who “the Lord” is.

The grammatical structure is:

- The Lord.
- That is:
- The God of the spirits of the prophets.

Both expressions stand in the same case and number and refer to the same subject.

The full sense is therefore:

> The Lord, namely the God to whom the spirits of the prophets are subject, sent his angel.

If Jesus is the referent of this subject, he is not merely called “Lord” here. He is designated as:

> The God of the spirits of the prophets.

This would be a direct and very strong statement about his deity.

3. The meaning of “his angel”

Revelation 22:6 has:

> τὸν ἄγγελον αὐτοῦ
>
> “his angel”

The pronoun “his” most naturally refers to the sentence’s subject:

> The Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets.

The angel thus belongs to this Lord in a special way. He stands under his authority and is sent by him.

The word need not express material possession. An angel is not an object. What is meant is an immediate relationship of:

- Belonging.
- Authority.
- Commission.
- Dominion.

“His angel” means:

> The angel who is subject to him and acts on his commission.

4. Jesus says: “my angel”

In Revelation 22:16, all uncertainty concerning the speaker is removed:

> ἐγὼ Ἰησοῦς
>
> “I, Jesus”

The personal pronoun ἐγώ is expressly supplied and thereby emphasized. Jesus additionally identifies himself by name.

Then he says:

> ἔπεμψα τὸν ἄγγελόν μου
>
> “I sent my angel.”

Jesus does not say:

- “God sent his angel.”
- “I forwarded God’s angel.”
- “I sent an angel.”
- “The Father made his angel available to me.”

He says:

> My angel.

Jesus thereby claims his own immediate relationship of authority over this angel.

> **THE CORE OF THE ARGUMENT**
> The Lord God’s angel in verse 6 is Jesus’s own angel in verse 16.

This is the core of the argument.

5. Is it the same angel?

The immediate context speaks very strongly in favor of this.

Both verses stand in the conclusion of the same revelation. Both speak of:

- Sending an angel.
- Communicating the revelation.
- The servants or churches.
- Things that must happen.
- The same prophetic book.

Revelation 22:6 takes up the beginning of the book:

> Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must happen soon; and he made it known by sending through his angel.
>
> Revelation 1:1

At the end it says again:

> The Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants what must happen soon.
>
> Revelation 22:6

And finally:

> I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify these things to you for the churches.
>
> Revelation 22:16

The repetitions connect the beginning and end:

Revelation 1:1	Revelation 22:6	Revelation 22:16
Show	Show	Testify
His servants	His servants	You and the churches
What must happen soon	What must happen soon	These things
Through his angel	His angel	My angel

It would be very unnatural to assume three different angels or completely independent sendings without any indication.

> **ONE COMMISSION**
> The text most naturally speaks of one revelatory commission, one angel, and one connected sending.

6. Is mere authorization a sufficient explanation?

One might object:

> God the Father is the actual sender. Jesus acts only as his authorized representative.

Authorization can explain why Jesus says:

> I have sent the angel.

But it does not fully explain why Jesus says:

> I have sent my angel.

An official can send the king’s messenger away with a message. He can say:

> I have dispatched the messenger.

But if the messenger is subject exclusively to the king, the more precise statement would be:

> I have dispatched the king’s messenger.

Jesus, however, uses the direct possessive pronoun:

> My angel.

The angel is thereby described as more than a messenger whom Jesus temporarily forwards. He is Jesus’s angel. He stands under Jesus’s own authority.

Mere authorization is therefore not a sufficient explanation.

Two possibilities remain

Possibility 1: Jesus is the Lord God of verse 6

The sequence is then very straightforward:

> The Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent his angel. This Lord then declares: “I, Jesus, have sent my angel.”

Jesus would thereby be the referent of:

> The Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets.

Possibility 2: the angel belongs to both the Father and the Son

Then the angel is:

- God’s angel.
- Simultaneously Jesus’s angel.

He stands under the shared authority of the Father and the Son.

This possibility too goes far beyond the idea of a created authorized representative. Jesus then shares with God immediate dominion over angels and revelation.

> **THE TWO POSSIBILITIES**
> Either Jesus is directly called “the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets,” or he shares with the Father divine authority over the same angel.

Both possibilities are compatible with Jesus’s deity. The first is the more direct reading.

7. The significance of Revelation 1:1

Revelation 1:1 is frequently used as an objection:

> If God gave Jesus the revelation, Jesus cannot be the same God named in Revelation 22:6.

This conclusion is not necessary.

Revelation 1:1 distinguishes God and Jesus personally:

- God gives.

- Jesus receives.

The doctrine of the Trinity, however, does not maintain that Jesus is the same person as the Father.

It distinguishes:

- The Father.
- The Son.
- The Holy Spirit.

The Father's giving the revelation to the Son therefore does not contradict the Son's deity. It shows the order of the revelatory process.

The Son receives as mediator

In Revelation Jesus Christ is:

- The Son.
- The slain Lamb.
- The messianic King.
- The mediator of revelation.

As such, he receives the content of revelation from the Father and passes it on.

But that does not yet answer the question of what divine authority he himself possesses.

Revelation 22:16 shows:

> **HIS OWN ANGEL**
> The angel is his angel, and he himself has sent him.

The "giving" in Revelation 1:1 therefore concerns revelation's content. The text does not say that Jesus has no authority of his own over the angel.

Receiving does not exclude deity

In the New Testament Jesus receives:

- All authority in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:18).
- Judgment (John 5:22).
- The name above every name (Philippians 2:9).
- The kingdom (Daniel 7:13–14; Luke 22:29).
- The scroll from God's hand (Revelation 5:7).

At the same time:

- He makes alive whom he wills (John 5:21).
- He is to be honored as the Father (John 5:23).
- He is worshiped by all angels (Hebrews 1:6).
- He is called "God" (Hebrews 1:8).
- He receives the worship of all creation (Revelation 5:13–14).

Receiving describes his salvation-historical position as Son and Messiah. It does not make him an ordinary creature.

GIVING AND AUTHORITY

The Father gives the Son the revelation. Nevertheless, the Son possesses the angel, sends him, and speaks with divine authority.

8. The strongest conclusion

The argument should be formulated neither more weakly nor more strongly than the text permits.

Too weak

> Jesus was merely a messenger who forwarded God’s angel.

That does not explain “my angel.”

Too strong

> A single grammatical ending proves with mathematical necessity that Jesus is the God of the spirits of the prophets.

This too goes too far. The pronoun alone does not expressly name its referent. The identification arises from the relationship between verse 6 and verse 16.

In accordance with the text

> Revelation 22:6 says that the Lord God sent his angel. Revelation 22:16 says that Jesus sent his own angel. Since both verses describe the same angel and the same revelatory commission, identifying Jesus with the Lord God of verse 6 strongly suggests itself.

This reading explains all details with the smallest number of additional assumptions:

- The Lord God sent his angel.
- Jesus says: “I sent my angel.”
- Conclusion: Jesus is the Lord God named.

The alternative explanation, by contrast, must assume:

- Verse 6 speaks of the Father.
- Verse 16 speaks of Jesus.
- Both possess the same angel.
- Both send the same angel.
- Both are responsible for the same revelatory commission.

This alternative is possible. But it likewise leads to a remarkable unity of divine authority between Father and Son.

9. Possible objections

Objection 1: human beings too can send angels

The sources evaluated here do not demonstrate that an ordinary human envoy calls a heavenly angel “my angel” and sends him to the churches on his own authority.

Jesus does not stand here as one prophet alongside others. He is the Lord who possesses and sends the prophetic angel.

> **PROPHETS AND JESUS**
> Prophets receive messages through angels. Jesus sends the angel.

Objection 2: the angel can belong to God and Jesus simultaneously

That is possible. But this answer does not decisively weaken the argument for Jesus's deity.

Jesus then possesses together with God:

- The same angel.
- The same servants.
- The same revelatory commission.
- The same sending authority.

A created being would thereby be placed within God's immediate sphere of dominion over angels and prophets.

This reading therefore also presents a high Christology.

Objection 3: "Lord" need not always mean "God"

That is correct in principle. But Revelation 22:6 does not merely say:

> The Lord.

It says:

> The Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets.

The second expression explains the first. If Jesus is the Lord of this verse, he is expressly called "God."

Objection 4: Revelation 21:22 distinguishes God from the Lamb

Revelation 21:22 speaks of:

> The Lord, God, the Almighty, and the Lamb.

This distinguishes Father and Son. It does not, however, prove that the Son is not divine.

The doctrine of the Trinity also distinguishes Father and Son. The question is not whether they are the same person, but whether the Son shares in divine identity, honor, and dominion.

Revelation simultaneously says:

- God and the Lamb are distinguishable.
- God and the Lamb jointly receive worship (Revelation 5:13–14).
- God and the Lamb possess a shared throne (Revelation 22:1–3).
- God's angel is Jesus's own angel (Revelation 22:6, 16).

10. The apologetic argument in brief

The detailed chain of reasoning

1. Revelation 22:6 says that the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent his angel.

2. Revelation 22:16 expressly says that Jesus sent his angel.

3. Both statements concern the same angel and the same revelatory commission.

4. Jesus calls this angel not merely “the angel,” but “my angel.”

5. Mere authorization does not sufficiently explain this relationship of possession and authority.

6. The most natural reading is therefore that Jesus is the Lord named in verse 6.

7. Since “the God of the spirits of the prophets” more closely defines this Lord, Jesus is thereby designated as God.

The short response

> In Revelation 22:6 the Lord God sends “his angel.” In Revelation 22:16 Jesus says: “I have sent my angel.” Since the same angel and the same revelatory commission are involved, it strongly suggests that Jesus is the Lord and God of the spirits of the prophets named in verse 6.

The shortest debate form

> Whose angel is it? Revelation 22:6: the Lord God’s angel. Revelation 22:16: “my angel,” says Jesus. The natural conclusion is that Jesus is this Lord God.

11. Conclusion

Revelation 22 begins with the statement:

> The Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel.
>
> Revelation 22:6

Later the sender himself speaks:

> I, Jesus, have sent my angel.
>
> Revelation 22:16

The text compels the reader to connect the two statements.

Anyone accepting the direct identification obtains a clear Christological statement:

> **DIRECT IDENTIFICATION**
> Jesus is the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets.

Anyone distinguishing Father and Son must nevertheless acknowledge:

SHARED AUTHORITY

The Lord God's angel is simultaneously Jesus's own angel and stands under his personal authority to send.

In either case, Jesus cannot be reduced to the level of a prophet, angel, or ordinary authorized representative.

Prophets receive revelation.

Angels communicate revelation.

Jesus possesses and sends the angel through whom revelation reaches the churches.

LORDSHIP

Jesus does not stand beneath the prophetic spirits. He is Lord over them and over the angel sent to them.

The connection between Revelation 22:6 and 22:16 is therefore a strong argument for the Lord Jesus's deity. It is particularly powerful because it does not rest on an isolated title. It combines:

- The designation as God.
- The authority to send.
- Dominion over angels.
- The possessive claim "my angel."
- Jesus's express self-identification.

CONCLUDING THESIS

The Lord God sent his angel. Jesus sent his angel. The text suggests that Jesus is this Lord.