

A list of passages from the New Testament with the word *angel* or in Greek, *aggelos*. Please note that I put in parentheses only those verses followed by comments. Also, a number of passages are redundant, a fact which precludes commentary:

MATTHEW

1.20: "as he [Joseph] considered this, behold, an *angel* of the Lord appeared to him in a dream." Note the break in flow of events: Joseph was in the act of considering Mary "being with child" [vs 19] when the angel appeared to him in a dream. The word for "behold," *idou*, signifies a sudden interruption of Joseph's "considering" or thought process with regard to something he could not fathom.

1.24: "When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him." Joseph wakes up after having been startled by that *idou* or the angel's intrusion into his life. We make take *idou* to represent a *kairos*, a divine event where perception of ordinary time (*chronos*) is altered, which permanently alters his life. Note other references just below where *idou* or "behold" has the same function.

2.13: "Now when they had departed, behold, an *angel* of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream." That is, the Magi to whom Christ's birth was revealed by a star; they too were warned in a dream (vs 12) not to return to Herod. Note that while dreaming is done when asleep and in isolation, it has social ramifications.

2.19: "But when Herod died, behold, an *angel* of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt." Observe the parallel between Joseph in Egypt and his predecessor, Joseph, who also was in Egypt; not only was he a dreamer but an interpreter of dreams.

4.6: "He will give his *angels* charge of you." (from Ps 91.11-12). The devil quotes two further passages from Deuteronomy, Dt 6.16 & Dt 6.13, passages which expound the first commandment, "that you may fear the Lord" (vs 1).

4.11: "Then the devil left him, and behold, *angels* came and ministered to him." What could this "ministering" (*diakonoo*) be? For a similar instance, cf. Lk 22.43 ("an angel from heaven, strengthening him"). Former instance of angelic help is after the devil's temptation; latter instance is prior to his passion.

13.39: "the harvest is the close of the age, and the reapers are *angels*." "Close" or *sunteleia* connotes completion. Refer to passages concerning angels in the Book of Revelation cited below where they play an important role with regard to this *sunteleia* at the end of time and the dawn of eternity.

13.41: "The Son of man will send his *angels*, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers." Use of verb *apostello* ("to send") connotes the dispatch of the twelve Apostles whose mission is similar.

13.49: "The *angels* will come out and separate the evil from the righteous." Note that this follows another use of *sunteleia* ("completion") in the same verse which indicates the time for angels to assist in God's work. They "separate the evil from the midst (*ek mesou*) of the righteous" with whom they dwell. Refer to my remarks concerning the three men sent to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah following this section.

16.27: "For the Son of man is to come with his *angels* in the glory of his Father." Angels come not only with Christ but *in* the Father's glory which accompanies them all.

18.10: "See that you do not despise one of these little ones; for I tell you that in heaven their *angels* always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven." Here the angels "behold" or see the Father's face unlike Moses, Ex 33.20: "You cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live."

22.30: "For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like the *angels* in heaven." The angels who see the Father's face find this vision sufficient to refrain not so much from physical intercourse (they are obviously incapable of it), but their vision of the Father precludes the need for begetting on the corporeal level of existence.

24.31: "he will send out his *angels* with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds." Such "winds" represent the four cardinal points of the compass. The elect have not been scattered like the Jews, but have been *sent* like the Apostles to evangelize all peoples. Perhaps this verse suggests completion of the evangelization process.

24.36: "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the *angels* of heaven." Such "not knowing" of temporal fulfillment is not so important as knowing the endurance of Christ's words (vs 35). One clue of fulfillment lies in vs 38, "they were eating and drinking," etc, at Noah's time, the flood. I.e., close attention to an undue concern for propagating temporal existence in any form (the "vanity" of Ecclesiastes) is a first step of withdrawing to a higher plane.

25.31: "When the Son of man comes in his glory, and all the *angels* with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne." A preparation for final judgment. Note its context, within the mundane perception (of lack of it) of seeing Christ in persons who are deprived (vss. 35-46). Another way of seeing Christ's identification with such persons are in his words to Paul in Acts 9.4, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute *me*?" I.e., the "me" of Jesus Christ represents his identity with the Church.

25.41: "Then he will say to those at his left hand, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his *angels*.'" Appalling words for those who like Paul prior to his conversion, did not perceive the identity of Christ with persons in need.

26.53: "Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of *angels*?" The next verse reads, "But how should the scriptures be fulfilled?" Note the constant appeal to such fulfillment of scripture (Old Testament passages) which run throughout the accounts of Christ's passion.

28.2: "And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an *angel* of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat upon it." This verse has its precedent in Gen 29.10 when Jacob rolled back a stone blocking a well too big for "the shepherds" to remove (vs 3). Such a well is like Christ's tomb which contains "water welling up to eternal life" (Jn 4.14) and requires more than human strength to remove.

28.5: "But the *angel* said to the women, 'Do not be afraid.'" We can say that these women who were fearful like Adam and Eve "hid themselves" from the "*sound* of the Lord walking in the garden" (Gen 3.8). Note the role of "sound" (actually "voice") in both instances which instills a sense of anxiety. However, in the latter case, the women run *with joy* to tell the disciples about the empty tomb (vs 8) in contrast to our first parents who fled out of fear at God's "voice."

MARK

1.13: "And he was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the *angels* ministered to him." Mark points out Jesus having the company of "wild beasts" as well as angels. Such beasts are not necessarily symbolic of brutishness; rather, draw a parallel between Jesus and Adam (i.e., the Second and First Adams) when he gave names to all the animals (Gen 2.20).

8.38: "For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of man also be ashamed, when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy *angels*." Here we have a double shame, that with respect to Christ himself and his words. I.e., Christ's words which contain eternal life bear a close identity with his divine person. Obviously the angels are not ashamed of such words because they can be *seen* as well as *heard* as they are spoken between Christ and his Father prior to his "coming."

12.25: For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like *angels* in heaven.

13.27: And then he will send out the *angels*, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

13.32: but of that day or that hour no one knows, not even the *angels* in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

LUKE

1.11: "And there appeared to him [Zechariah] an *angel* of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense." This is reminiscent of Is 6.1-8 when one of the seraphim took a coal from the altar to purify Isaiah's lips.

1.13: But the *angel* said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer is heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John.

1.18: And Zechariah said to the *angel*, "How shall I know this?"

1.19: "And the *angel* answered him, 'I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you, and to bring you this good news.'" Here we have one of the few instances when the name of an angel is revealed. Gabriel identifies himself by saying that he stands in God's presence, a chief function of an angel.

1.26: "In the sixth month the *angel* Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth." Contrast this sending with the other sending of three men by God to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 18).

1.30: "And the *angel* said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.'" Note the Greek *para* to theo for "with God;" the preposition *para* signifies more a being-in his presence similar to Gabriel in 1.19 above.

1.34: And Mary said to the *angel*, "How can this be, since I have no husband?"

1.35: "And the *angel* said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you." Note three uses of the preposition *epi*: "come upon you (*epeleusetai epi se*)," and "overshadow you (*epi se*)." Then Mary, who is under this overshadowing, is bidden to call her son "Jesus." He concealment parallels the "hovering" by God's Spirit at creation at which time he imparts names to the various days.

1.38: "And Mary said, 'Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.' And the *angel* departed from her." As soon as Mary utters her *idou* or "behold" the angel says nothing more and departs. Note the angel's "word" is *rhema* or utterance which differs from *logos*, also "word" which in the New Testament connotes Jesus Christ as *Logos* (Jn 1.1). A number of the Greek Church Fathers play with this relationship between *logos*-*Logos*.

2.9: "And an *angel* of the Lord appeared to them [shepherds], and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear." Note the "shining around" (*perilampo*) of God's glory whose immediate human response is fear. This response is documented in Eden (Gen 3.8) when Adam and Eve fled from God's walking there in the "cool of the day."

2.10: "And the *angel* said to them, 'Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people.'" Parallel this second announcement of "good news" to the shepherds with its first announcement to Mary from the angel Gabriel.

2.13: "And suddenly there was with the *angel* a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest.'" After this incident the shepherds visit Mary, Joseph and the babe and inform them about their experience. Despite "all who heard it wondered at it" (vs 18), there is no mention of rejoicing by Mary; she simply was "*pondering* (*sumballo*, literally, 'placing them to make a comparison') these things in her heart" (vs 19).

2.15: "When the *angels* went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, 'Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened.'" Parallel this with Moses who said when he noticed the burning bush, "I will turn aside and see this great sight" (Ex 3.3).

2.21: "And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the *angel* before he was conceived in the womb." Christ remains (publically, as it were) without a name for seven days even though Mary received his name from the angel Gabriel.

4.10: "He will give his *angels* charge of you, to guard you." [Ps 91.11-12].

9.26: when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy *angels*.

12.8: "everyone who acknowledges me before men, the Son of man also will acknowledge before the *angels* of God." The sense of "acknowledging" as *homologeō* implies "to confess." Note the parallel: a simultaneous acknowledging "before men" and "before the *angels* of God" (not necessarily "before God!").

12.9: "but he who denies me before men will be denied before the *angels* of God." The opposite sense of "acknowledging" of vs 8 through the act of denial.

15.10: "Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the *angels* of God over one sinner who repents." Again, the angels are the ones who are happy; nothing explicitly mentioned with regard to God. Such joy appears bound up with the angelic purpose of being mediators between the human and divine spheres, that is, their going back and forth.

16.22: "The poor man died and was carried by the *angels* to Abraham's bosom." Since the poor man lived on the same (human) level as the rich man who ignored him, the passages implies that the angels bore Lazarus across that "great chasm" of vs 26 which is infinitely narrow yet infinitely deep.

24.23: "and they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of *angels* who said that he was alive." It was bad enough for the disciples to hear of the empty tomb, but the vision of angels implies that this report was an added absurdity. Parallel the women announcing their report with the shepherds at Christ's birth who similarly proclaimed their extraordinary experience.

JOHN

1.51: "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the *angels* of God ascending and descending

upon the Son of man.” A reference to Jacob’s dream, Gen 28.12: “And he dreamed that there was a ladder set up on the earth...and behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.”

12.29: “The crowd standing by heard it [Father’s voice] and said that it had thundered. Others said, ‘An *angel* has spoken to him.’” Despite various opinions by witnesses, Christ pinpoints the real purpose of this noise by saying “This voice has come *for your sake*, not for mine.”

20.12: “and she [Mary Magdalene] saw two *angels* in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet.” There is a certain sense of humor here on the angels’ part; they seem to be just “hanging around” while waiting for someone to come and see that Christ has risen.

ACTS

5.19: But at night an *angel* of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out.

6.15: “And gazing at him [Stephen], all who at in the council saw that his face was like the face of an *angel*.” This “gazing” (atenizo) means to “look without extension;” the wonder of Stephen’s expression, like an angel, shows that he is in the act of beholding God which takes place outside the realm of space and time. Hence, Stephen lacked “extension.”

7.30: Now when forty years had passed, an *angel* appeared to him [Moses] in the wilderness of Mount Sinai in a flame of fire in a bush.

7.35: God sent as both ruler and deliverer by the hand of the *angel* that appeared to him in the bush.

7.38: This is he who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the *angel* who spoke to him at Mount Sinai.

7.53: you who received the law as delivered by *angels* and did not keep it.

8.26: But an *angel* of the Lord said to Philip, “Rise and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.”

10.3: About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in vision an *angel* of God coming in and saying to him, “Cornelius.”

10.7: When the *angel* who spoke to him [Peter] had departed.

10.22: Cornelius...was directed by a holy *angel* to send for you [Peter] to come to his house and to hear what you have to say.

11.13: And he [Peter] told us how he had seen the *angel* standing in his house.

12.7: and behold, an *angel* of the Lord appeared, and a light shone in the cell; and he struck Peter on the side and woke him.

12.8: And the *angel* said to him, “Dress yourself and put on your sandals.”

12.9: he did not know that what was done by the *angel* was real, but thought he was seeing a vision.

12.10: and immediately the *angel* left him.

12.11: Now I am sure that the Lord has sent his *angel* and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all at the Jewish people were expecting.

12.15: but she insisted that it was so. They said, “It is his *angel*!”

12.23: Immediately an *angel* of the Lord smote him, because he did not give God the glory.

23.8: For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor *angel*, nor spirit.

23.9: What is a spirit or an *angel* spoke to him [Paul]?

27.23: For this very night there stood by me an *angel* of the God to whom I belong and whom I worship.

ROMANS

8.38: “For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor *angels*...will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Such love or agape is so intense that the two most basic realities, life and death, cannot “separate us.” The same applies to angels, those beings whose function is to behold God.

1 CORINTHIANS

4.9: we have become a spectacle to the world, to *angels* and to men.

6.3: “Do you not know that we are to judge *angels*?” Despite their lofty status, angels are subordinate to humans when it comes to our relationship with Christ.

11.10: "That is why a woman ought to have a veil on her head, because of the angels." Apart from ancient cultural considerations, perhaps this veiling of a woman's head implies that angels are inclined to associate themselves with this gender who are more disposed to that angelic vocation of beholding God.

13.1: If I speak in the tongues of men and of *angels*, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

2 CORINTHIANS

11.14: for even Satan disguises himself as an *angel* of light.

GALATIANS

1.8: "But even if we, or an *angel* from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we preached to you, let him be accursed." The very word "gospel" means good news so at first glance it seems that the preaching of "good news," regardless of its source, would be welcome. However, transmission of "good news" requires a certain discipline or order coming from the Apostles.

3.19: it [Law] was ordained by *angels* through an intermediary.

4.14: "you did not scorn or despise me, but received me as an *angel* of God, as Christ Jesus." Paul saw Christ at his conversion, a parallel with the function of angels to behold God. Thus the affinity between Christ, angels and Paul.

COLOSSIANS

2.18: Let no one disqualify you, insisting on self-abasement and worship of *angels*.

2 THESSALONIANS

1.7: when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty *angels* in flaming fire.

1 TIMOTHY

3.16: "He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated in the Spirit, seen by *angels*, preached among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory." Note the passive tense of all six verbs which implies being acted upon by someone.

5.21: In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect *angels* I charge you to keep these rules without favor, doing nothing from partiality.

HEBREWS

1.4: having become as much superior to *angels* as the name he has obtained is more excellent than theirs.

1.5: For to what *angel* did God ever say, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you?" [Ps 2.7]

1.6: when he brings the first-born into the world he says, "Let all God's *angels* worship him." [Dt 32.43]

1.7: Of the *angels* he says, "who makes his angels winds, and his servants flames of fire." [Ps 104.4].

1.13: but to what *angel* has he ever said, "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a stool for your feet?" [Ps 110.1].

2.2: For if the message declared by *angels* was valid and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution.

2.5: For it was not to *angels* that God subjected the world to come.

2.7: "You made him a for a little while lower than the *angels* [Ps 8.4]." Yes, lower than angels but not lower than human beings.

2.9: But we see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the *angels*, crowned with glory and honor.

12.22: But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable *angels* in festal gathering.

13.2: "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained *angels* unawares." The Rule of St. Benedict speaks of this when monks receive guests. The "unawares" implies a sense of mystery, of not fully knowing what is going on.

1 PETER

1.12: "those who have preached the good news to you through the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which *angels* long to look." This "longing" (*epithumia*) implies ardent or passionate desire. Coupled with "looking" or *parakupto* which means "peeping," we get a somewhat humorous sense as when we desire to peep or see something off limits to us.

3.22: who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with *angels*, authorities, and powers subject to him.

2 PETER

2.4: For if God did not spare the *angels* when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of nether gloom to be kept until the judgment.

2.11: whereas *angels*, though greater in might and power, do not pronounce a reviling judgment upon them before the Lord.

JUDE

1.6: And the *angels* that did not keep their own position but left their proper dwelling have been kept by him in eternal chains in the nether gloom until the judgment of the great day.

REVELATION

The Book of Revelation by far has the greatest number of references to "angel." Keep in mind that such heavenly beings are ministering to the Church as she approaches the end (*telos*, in the sense of completion, fulfillment) of time. Thus angels are associated with the various churches, a fact which implies their basic unity throughout the world.

1.1: "he made it know by sending his *angel* to his servant John."

1.20: the seven stars are the *angels* of the seven churches.

2.1: To the angel of the *church* in Ephesus write:

2.8: And to the *angel* of the church in Smyrna write:

2.12: And to the *angel* of the church in Pergamum write:

2.18: And to the *angel* of the church in Thyatira write:

3.1: And to the *angel* of the church in Sardis write:

3.5: I will confess his name before my Father and before his *angels*.

3.7: And to the *angel* of the church in Philadelphia write:

3.14: And to the *angel* of the church in Laodicea write:

5.2: and I saw a strong *angel* proclaiming with a loud voice.

5.11: Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many *angels*.

7.1: After this I saw four *angels* standing at the four corners of the earth.

7.2: Then I saw another *angel* ascend from the rising of the sun, with the seal of the living God, and he called with a loud voice to the four *angels* who had been given power to harm earth and sea.

7.11: And all the *angels* stood round the throne and round the elders and the four living creatures.

8.2: Then I saw the seven *angels* who stand before God.

8.3: And another *angel* came and stood at the altar with a golden censer.

8.4: and the smoke of the incense rose with the prayers of the saints from the hand of the *angel* before God.

8.5: Then the *angel* took the censer and filled it with fire from the censer.

8.6: Now the seven *angels* who had the seven trumpets made ready to blow them.

8.7: The first *angel* blew his trumpet and there followed hail and fire mixed with blood.

8.8: The second *angel* blew his trumpet, and something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea.

8.10: The third *angel* blew his trumpet, and a great star fell from heaven.

8.12: The fourth *angel* blew his trumpet, and a third of the sun was struck, and a third of the moon, and a third of the stars.

8.13: at the blast of the other trumpets which the three *angels* are about to blow!

9.1: And the fifth *angel* blew his trumpet, and I saw a star fallen from heaven to earth.

9.11: They have as kings over them the *angel* of the bottomless pit; his name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek he is called Apollyon.

9.13: Then the sixth *angel* blew his trumpet, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar before God.

9.14: release the four *angels* who are bound at the great river Euphrates.

9.15: So the four *angels* were released who had been held ready for the hour, the day, the month and the year to kill a third of mankind.

10.1: Then I saw another mighty *angel* coming down from heaven wrapped in a cloud.

10.5: And the *angel* who I saw standing on sea and land lifted up his right hand to heaven.

10.7: in the days of the trumpet call to be sounded by the seventh *angel*.

10.8: Go, take the scroll which is open in the hand of the *angel* who is standing on the sea and on the land.

11.15: Then the seventh *angel* blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven.

12.7: Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his *angels* fighting against the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought.

12.9: and his *angels* were thrown down with him.

14.6: Then I saw another *angel* flying in midheaven, with an eternal gospel.

14.8: Another *angel*, a second, followed, saying, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great."

14.9: And another *angel*, a third followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If any one worships the beast and its image."

14.10: he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy *angels* and in the presence of the Lamb.

14.15: another *angel* came out of the temple, calling with a loud voice to him who sat upon the cloud, "Put in your sickle and reap."

14.17: another *angel* came out of the temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle.

14.18: another *angel* came out from the altar, the *angel* who has power over fire.

14.19: So the *angel* swung his sickle on the earth and gathered the vintage of the earth.

15.1: Then I saw another portent in heaven, great and wonderful, seven *angels* with seven plagues, which are the last.

15.6: and out of the temple came the seven *angels* with the seven plagues, robed in pure bright linen.

15.7: And one of the four living creatures gave the seven *angels* seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God.

15.8: no one could enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven *angels* were ended.

16.1: a voice from the temple telling the seven *angels*, "Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God."

16.2: the first *angel* went and poured his bowl on the earth.

16.2: The second *angel* poured his bowl into the sea.

16.4: The third *angel* poured his bowl into the rivers.

16.5: And I heard the *angel* of water say, "Just are you in your judgments."

16.8: The fourth *angel* poured his bowl on the sun.

16.10: The fifth *angel* poured his bowl on the throne.

16.12: the sixth *angel* poured his bowl on the river.

16.17: The seventh *angel* poured his bowl into the air.

17.1: one of the seven *angels* who had the seven bowls came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot."

17.7: But the *angel* said to me, "Why marvel?"

18.1: I saw another *angel* coming down from heaven having great authority.

18.21: Then a mighty *angel* took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea.

19.9: And the *angel* said to me, "Write this: blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb."

19.17: Then I saw an *angel* standing in the sun.

20.1: Then I saw an *angel* coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain.

21.9: Then came one of the seven *angels* who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues, and spoke to me, saying, "Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb."

21.12: It had a great, high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve *angels*.

21.17: He also measured its wall, a hundred and forty-four cubits by a man's measure, that is, an *angel's*.

22.6: And the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his *angel* to show his servants what must soon take place.

22.8: I fell down to worship at the feet of the *angel*.

22.16: I Jesus have sent my *angel* to you with this testimony for the churches.

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A comparison may be drawn between Sg 8.6: "Set me as a *seal* upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm" and Heb 1.3: "He reflects the glory of God and bears the very *stamp* of his nature." The "seal" which the bride requests of her bridegroom in the Song lies close to his heart, the seat of feeling and love with which she asks to be identified. For a similarity to this seal, consider the "stamp" of Hebrews. Here we have an exact reproduction of God's nature, a character; the stamp as Jesus Christ therefore is that "seal" upon the Father's heart.

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God visited Abraham in the presence of three men (Gen 18.1-2) en route "to see whether they (Sodom and Gomorrah) have done altogether according to the outcry which has come to me; and if not, I will know" (vs 21). Shortly afterwards Abraham interceded with God to spare these two towns (22-33). Note that vs 22 reads "but Abraham still stood before the Lord," that is, he remained in God's presence after the three visitors had departed. Abraham then bargains with the Lord who agrees not to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah "for the sake of ten" (vs 32).

This story discloses the *generality of evil* in comparison with the more *specific nature of righteousness*. Evil is pervasive enough to make its appearance for all to behold, whereas personal (divine) inspection is needed to pick out goodness. Hence, the need for God to visit Sodom and Gomorrah in the person of the three men as well as Abraham's bargaining with God (which went from fifty to ten righteous persons). Thus Abraham was attempting to delineate this goodness in the midst of evil circumstances much like God's on hand inspection of the two cities.

"The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great" (vs 20), that is, general or all-pervasive. This cry implies that it ascended to God, whereas later the towns' destruction...the backlash of the outcry...returns as brimstone and fire out of heaven (vs 24). In other words, both the outcry and the destruction form one conspicuous reality as opposed to the little noticed escape of God-fearing Lot and his family (19.16). At the last minute Lot "lingered" and the three men were compelled to seize him and lead him from the city. Such lingering suggests Lot's desire to locate even less than the minimum ten righteous persons, the limit at which Abraham stopped when bargaining with God.