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TESTING THE SPIRITS:  
A BIBLICAL ASSESSMENT OF THE ISLAMIC JIBRIL

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A Dissertation  
Presented to  
the Faculty of  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Philosophy

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by  
Dolin Luke Bray  
December 2021

**APPROVAL SHEET**

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“A man is to know and understand, that all from the Earth to the Firmament is full (and no place is empty) of Troops, of spirits, together with their Chieftains all of which have their Residence and Fly up and down in the Air; some of them incite to peace, others to War; some to Goodness, and Life, others to Wickedness and Death.”

—George Hammond, *A Modesty Enquiry into the Opinion Concerning a Guardian Angel*

This dissertation is dedicated to my family, God’s chief blessing in my life. To Kimberly, who holds my heart. To Caedmon, Hudson, Violet, Rowan, and Priya, you are my treasures, and I love you without reserve.

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## PREFACE

The completion of this dissertation represents numerous hours of analysis, writing, collaboration, and support. I have been the recipient of much generosity, critique, prayer, and encouragement.

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Finally, I am grateful to the Lord, who called me out of darkness and into marvelous light. I am indebted to the Lord Jesus for rescuing me from the powerful control of the evil one and redeeming me for service in his kingdom. May the Lord use this project to heal those blinded by the deception of the devil and reveal to many “the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God” (2 Cor 4:4).

Luke Bray

Dallas, Texas

December 2021

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

In the letter the apostle John wrote to the believers in Asia Minor in the late first century, he explained the importance of thinking critically about the voices to which the church grants authority and esteem. He wrote, “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1).<sup>1</sup> This command indicates the importance of carefully examining supernatural forces at work in the world that desire to distract and inhibit the church’s accomplishment of God’s mission. However, John did not provide an instrument for this critical analysis. Therefore, Christians must apply biblical principles for identifying spiritual beings to effectively obey John’s command to test the spirits.

The supernatural ties inherently to religion. Around the world, religious adherents submit to a variety of rituals, hoping to obtain an audience with the spiritual world. Tribal shamans whisper incantations to alleviate curses. Vajrayanan monks lie in prostration to rid themselves of impurities inherited from their ancestors.<sup>2</sup> Yoruban women stand, anxiously longing to be selected for ritual spirit possession.<sup>3</sup> In addition, devotees of Kali, wailing with anticipation for the answer to their prayers, decapitate black goats,

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<sup>1</sup> All Scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version, unless otherwise noted.

<sup>2</sup> Vajrayana, or Tibetan Buddhism, is the third largest stream of Buddhism in the world. It began in India as an offshoot of Mahayanaism. Tibetan Buddhist rituals are practiced today in a variety of places. The religion has spread to Mongolia, Nepal, Bhutan, and the northern Indian states. Of course, with the advancement of modern travel as well as internet technology, Tibetan Buddhism now experiences a global following. For more information regarding Vajrayanan Buddhism, see John Powers, *Introduction to Tibetan Buddhism* (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 1995).

<sup>3</sup> Modern Voodoo finds its root in the Yoruba’s religious tradition. Yorubans devote much of their religious life to inviting the fetish or god to possess a member of the community. Through possession, the community believes they will receive messages from the god. For more information on the Yoruban religion, see Gert Chesi, *Voodoo: Africa’s Secret Power* (Cape Town, ZA: C. Struik, 1980).

offering them as sacrifices before her altar.<sup>4</sup> Even as religions vary indelibly within the world, the common thread is that they always reach for the invisible, the divine, the supernatural, or the demonic. While a critical study of spiritual beings presented in the world's religions is needed, the focus of this dissertation is limited to Islam.

Many authors have written about Islam from a Christian perspective. From Islam's beginning, Christians have written apologetic refutations of Islam's claims of religious superiority. Thoughtful apologetics have always played a vital role in the Christian duty of destroying "arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and [taking] every thought captive to obey Christ" (2 Cor 10:5). In recent years, much has been written about the missiological engagement of Muslims. Authors have covered subjects such as accurately understanding Islamic practice and theology, contextualization, the matter of intercultural interaction, evangelistic methodology, and church planting in great detail. All these topics are essential to the overall evangelistic engagement of Muslims. However, they primarily focus on Christian understandings of Islam and evangelistic methodologies among Muslims. This dissertation examines the Islamic claim that Jibril<sup>5</sup> was an angel of God who delivered the Qur'anic revelation to Muhammad.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Kali is the Hindu mother goddess and the consort of Shiva. Inspiring terror and dread, she is usually depicted as an old hag, black in color and completely naked with a garland of human skulls draped around her neck. She wears earrings of dead infants and huge tusks protrude from her mouth. Between the tusks, she brandishes a red tongue while dancing on the chest of Shiva. She is the personification of the divine feminine energy called *shakti*. For a more detailed examination of the origins and descriptions of Kali, see John Bowker, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 524–25.

<sup>5</sup> To ensure clarity, this project will distinguish the biblical representation of Gabriel from the Islamic representation of Gabriel by using the term *Jibril* in reference to the Islamic representation Jibril.

<sup>6</sup> Some scholars contest this statement, asserting Muhammad was mentally ill during the time he "received" his revelations. Dede Korkut argues Muhammad suffered from hydrocephalus and special kinds of visual and auditory neurological ailments. See Dede Korkut, *Life Alert: The Medical Case of Muhammad* (Enumclaw, WA: WinePress Publishing, 2001). This dissertation presumed Muhammad experienced a real encounter with a spiritual being as maintained by Islamic tradition. The authenticity of the encounter was not examined; but rather, the representations of the encounter were compared to similar angelic epiphanies in the Bible.

Much of the world's population believes in spiritual beings. Interestingly, religious adherence or belief in the spiritual realm seems to be on the rise, or at the very least, holding steady, a trend that runs against claims<sup>7</sup> made by journalists.<sup>8</sup> In a global research project spanning 34 countries, Pew Research Forum observed that 45 percent of people asserted that belief in God was necessary to be moral, 61 percent believed God played an important role in their life, and 62 percent stated that religion was important in their lives.<sup>9</sup> A survey of world history supports the conclusion that the many human beings, regardless of epoch, religion, or experience, have believed in spiritual beings.<sup>10</sup> Christianity affirms a monotheistic creator who is triune. This God created the universe, which includes spiritual beings—i.e., angels and demons. Regarding the church's historical understanding of spiritual beings, Gregg Allison notes, "The church has historically affirmed belief in the reality of another sphere of existence beyond the realm of human beings and the visible world."<sup>11</sup> In addition, Wayne Grudem describes the traditional Christian understanding of angelic beings as "created, spiritual beings with moral

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<sup>7</sup> Gabe Bullard, "The World's New Major Religion: No Religion," *National Geographic*, April 22, 2016, <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/2016/04/160422-atheism-agnostic-secular-nones-rising-religion>.

<sup>8</sup> While this article specifically addresses the trends of spirituality among Hispanics living in America, the global support for spirituality remains strong as well. Emma Green, "A Lot of Americans Think the Spirit World Exists," *The Atlantic*, May 7, 2014, <https://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2014/05/have-you-been-possessed-by-spirits/361680>.

<sup>9</sup> This article examines the global trends of belief in God and religious expression in 34 countries. The study interviewed 38,426 people. Additional statistics related to morality, geographical dynamics, economic impact, and educational status are also addressed. Christine Tamir, Aidan Connaughton, Ariana Moinque Salazar, "The Global God Divide," *The Pew Research Forum*, April 15, 2021, <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2020/07/20/the-global-god-divide/>.

<sup>10</sup> Jack Miles provides a thorough study of Western approaches to comparative religion. His chapter explores human religious expression and belief. Jack Miles et al., *The Norton Anthology of World Religions* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2015), 1–49.

<sup>11</sup> Gregg R. Allison, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 298.

judgment and high intelligence but without physical bodies . . . [whereas demons] are evil angels who sinned against God and who now continually work evil in the world.”<sup>12</sup>

Several theologians of the early church wrote extensively on angelic and demonic beings.<sup>13</sup> The early church father, Augustine of Hippo, believed that the pagan gods worshipped by various religious traditions were authentic spiritual beings, but were demonic:

It was by means of the true religion alone that it could be made manifest that the gods of the pagans were nothing but unclean spirits who used the memory of people departed or the images of earthly creatures to get themselves reckoned as gods and who then rejoiced with proud impurity that divine honors should be paid to such

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<sup>12</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 412.

<sup>13</sup> Theologians who addressed key issues related to demonic possession and general spiritual warfare include Athenagoras, Tertullian, Clement of Rome, Cyril of Alexandria, Irenaeus, Tatian, and Justin Martyr. Athenagoras describes the origins of evil spirits and their future destruction. He links the fall of the angels with the story recorded in Genesis regarding the Nephilim. Athenagoras, “A Plea for the Christians,” in *Fathers of the Second Century: Hermas, Tatian, Athenagoras, Theophilus, and Clement of Alexandria (Entire)*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, trans. B. P. Pratten, vol. 2, The Ante-Nicene Fathers (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), 142. Tertullian not only acknowledges the existence of angels and demons but proposes the potential attachment of demonic entities on philosophers such as Socrates and Plato. Tertullian, “The Apology,” in *Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, trans. S. Thelwall, vol. 3, The Ante-Nicene Fathers (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), 36–37. Clement of Rome describes how God divided the nations based upon the number of the angels of God. This reference is related to Deut 32:8. Clement of Rome, “The First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians,” in *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, vol. 1, The Ante-Nicene Fathers (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), 12–13. Cyril, in a letter to Nestorius of Constantinople, calls upon the elect angels of God to stand as witnesses to the truth of his words. While Cyril does not give more full angelological explanation, his distinction of elect angels indicates his belief in non-elect angels. Cyril of Alexandria, “The Epistle of Cyril to Nestorius,” in *The Seven Ecumenical Councils*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Henry R. Percival, vol. 14, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Second Series (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1900), 198. Irenaeus describes the demonic influence over a man who has had detrimental influence. He further explains the significant impact of the demonic on the work of Christians and their ministry. Irenaeus of Lyons, “Irenæus against Heresies,” in Roberts, Donaldson, and Coxe, *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, 334. Tatian explores the nature of the angelic and the demonic by explaining that these creatures are not corporeal, but rather spiritual like fire or air. Tatian, “Address of Tatian to the Greeks,” in Roberts, Donaldson, and Coxe, *Fathers of the Second Century*, 71. Justin Martyr declares the Christian’s victory over demonic powers. He emphasizes the importance of exorcising demons through the power of Jesus Christ. Justin Martyr, “Dialogue of Justin with Trypho, a Jew,” in Roberts, Donaldson, and Coxe, *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, 241.

disgusting and indecent things, all the while hating to see men's souls turn to the true God.<sup>14</sup>

The Scripture supports Augustine's view. In the Old Testament, Moses articulated a similar understanding about the Israelites' unfaithfulness to the Lord and their worship of demonic beings, saying, "They stirred [the Lord] to jealousy with strange gods; with abominations they provoked him to anger. They sacrificed to demons that were not gods, to gods they had never known, to new gods that had come recently, whom your fathers had never dreaded" (Deut 32:16–17).

In the New Testament, the apostle Paul argued that pagan idols represented preternatural beings: "What pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be participants with demons" (1 Cor 10:20). Accordingly, Paul linked the identity of foreign gods to rulers and the authorities in heavenly places: "For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places" (Eph 6:12). This demonic religious strategy is the "scheme of the devil" (Eph 6:11) to effectively "deceive the nations" (Rev 20:8), to blind the "minds of the unbelievers, and to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God" (2 Cor 4:4).

### **Thesis**

The purpose of this dissertation is to compare the representations of the Islamic Jibril and the representations of the biblical Gabriel and to assess their natures and characters utilizing biblically derived criteria for identifying spiritual beings. I hypothesize that the Islamic representations of Jibril are different from the biblical representations of the biblical Gabriel. The identity of this particular angel is significant for both Christians and Muslims because of his essential role as God's messenger in both religions. A

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<sup>14</sup> Augustine of Hippo, *The City of God, Books I–VII*, ed. Hermigild Dressler, trans. Demetrius B. Zema and Gerald G. Walsh, vol. 8, *The Fathers of the Church* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1950), 389–90.

thorough investigation of Gabriel/Jibril's identity will yield clarity regarding his origin and allegiance. If the Islamic claims of Jibril's status as an angel of God are false, then the correlation between the angelologies of the Bible and the Qur'an will be further distanced, providing missiologists additional opportunity to point toward the uniqueness of the Bible, its messengers, and the God who is its author as they bear witness to the "faith that was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3).

Gabriel is one of two angels named in canonical Scripture. He stands in God's presence (Luke 1:19) and serves as God's messenger (Luke 1:19, 26; Dan 8:16, 9:21). Only the book of Daniel and the Gospel of Luke mention him by name. In both instances, Gabriel disseminates God's message. In Daniel, Gabriel proclaims God's plan to restore the people of Israel after the exile. In the Gospel of Luke, Gabriel announces the arrival of the Messiah and his forbearer.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, Jibril plays a vital role in Islam. Traditionally, Muslims believe that Muhammad received the words contained in the Qur'an through Jibril's dictation. Additionally, various *hadith*<sup>16</sup> describe Jibril as teaching and modeling Muslim faithfulness.<sup>17</sup> The deity he represents is significant for both Christianity and Islam.

Because spiritual beings exist in every religious context, angelology and demonology should be essential to the study of all world religions, including Islam. The development of biblical criteria for identifying spiritual beings represented in various religious traditions is needed. From ancient times, humans have worshipped various gods and spirits, granting to these preternatural beings access and control over their lives.

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<sup>15</sup> The angels Gabriel and Michael are the only two angels named in canonical Scripture. Hans Klein gives a brief survey of Gabriel's appearances in the New Testament birth narratives. See Hans Klein, "The Angel Gabriel according to Luke 1," in *Angels: The Concept of Celestial Beings—Origins, Development and Reception*, ed. Friedrich V. Reiterer, Tobias Nicklas, Karin Schopflin (New York: Walter de Gruyter & Company, 2007), 313–23.

<sup>16</sup> The terms *Hadith* or *Sunna*, when capitalized, refer to the overall collection of literature that record the sayings of Muhammad. Individual accounts are also referred to as *hadīth* or *sunna*, but in lowercase.

<sup>17</sup> Muhammad ibn Ismail Bukhari, *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, trans. Muhammad Muhsin Khan (Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: Darussalam, 1997), 1:50, 6:260.

Some Christian scholars have written with the assumption that these deities were imaginative projections of the primitive mind,<sup>18</sup> while others have argued for the beings' existence while assuming their diabolical identity.<sup>19</sup>

The Bible assumes the existence not only of a transcendent God who created the world but also of other spiritual beings. Some of these beings desire human flourishing; others yearn for and strategically plan for humanity's destruction. Stephen Noll notes,

Angels, like the moon, do not generate their own light. As it is impossible to gaze directly at the sun, so it may be proper to learn about God indirectly in the lunar glory of the angels. The divine assembly shows that God's lordship is supreme but not totalitarian. While his will is done on earth, it is carried out through spiritual intermediaries, principalities and powers, even demonic spirits.<sup>20</sup>

Ignoring the supernatural in favor of reason is unfaithful to the authorial intention of Scripture, and ignoring the implications of spiritual warfare despite the warnings given in Scripture is unwise.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> For a critical historical examination of the devil and demonic spirits from a demythologizing perspective, see Gerald Messadie, *A History of the Devil* (New York: Kodansha International, 1996); Jeffrey Burton Russell, *The Devil: Perceptions of Evil from Antiquity to Primitive Christianity* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977).

<sup>19</sup> See the following authors for more discussion regarding gods and goddesses, spirits, and their potential identity. Michael Heiser provides a robust assessment of the spirits and gods worshipped by the world's religions. He examines the important topic of biblical supernaturalism, especially as it relates to the topic of the divine council. Michael Heiser, *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015), 23–37. Stephen Noll provides an academic treatment of angelology in his examination of principalities and powers. He assesses various texts related to angelic beings, both good and evil, in relation to human worship and experience. Stephen Noll, *Angels of Light, Powers of Darkness: Thinking Biblically about Angels, Satan & Principalities* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2003), 124–53. Edward Langton assesses the ancient Semitic religious milieu and the relation of evil spirits to the gods in his books on biblical demonology and biblical supernaturalism. For more information on Semitic demonology, see Edward Langton, *Essentials of Demonology: A Study of Jewish Christian Doctrine: Its Origin and Development* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1949), 1–35. For more information on supernaturalism and church history, see Edward Langton, *Supernatural the Doctrine of Spirits, Angels, and Demons, from the Middle Ages until the Present Time* (London: Rider & Co., 1934), 1–382.

<sup>20</sup> Noll, *Angels of Light, Powers of Darkness*, 47.

<sup>21</sup> Some liberal Christian scholars diverge from the historic understanding of spiritual beings, believing that demons are little more than ancient descriptions of physical and mental illness. For more information, see Roger A. Johnson, *Rudolf Bultmann: Interpreting Faith for the Modern Era* (San Francisco: Collins Press, 1987), 290–91, 293.



Merrill Unger believed that the study of spiritual beings and comparative religions was of great importance:

[It] is practically impossible to interpret accurately and to evaluate properly the religious phenomena and practices of various peoples, which frequently are confusingly involved, without a discriminating grasp of [demonology]. Without such a basic knowledge the student of religions, no matter what his qualifications for his task . . . cannot be expected to make accurate evaluations or reach valid conclusions. His estimate both of Christianity and of non-Christian religions must be expected to be faulty and misleading.<sup>22</sup>

In his classic work, *Biblical Demonology: A Study of Spiritual Forces at Work Today*, Unger acknowledges that “despite the importance of Biblical demonology in the sphere of Christian theology and in the domain of comparative religion, the problems and perplexities that surround it are undeniably great and provocative of diligent research and investigation for their solution.”<sup>23</sup>

While some scholars may reject the reality of spiritual beings represented by various world religions, this project assumed their authenticity and assessed the traditional Islamic claim of angelic involvement in the revelations reportedly given to Muhammad to properly compare the biblical representations of Gabriel with the Islamic representations of Jibril.

### **Limitations and Delimitations**

My Arabic proficiency limited my ability to examine Islamic sources in their original language thoroughly. Engaging Islamic sources through translations limited this study in some respects; however, the selected volumes are editions translated by noted Islamic scholars. I examined *The Qur'an: A New Annotated Translation*, translated by

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<sup>22</sup> Merrill Frederick Unger, *Biblical Demonology: A Study of Spiritual Forces at Work Today* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1994), 1.

<sup>23</sup> Unger, *Biblical Demonology*, 1–2.

Arthur J. Droge;<sup>24</sup> selected English translations of Sunni *hadith*;<sup>25</sup> and Alfred Guillaume's English translation of *The Life of Muhammad*, by Ibn Ishaq.<sup>26</sup> The use of translations had little impact on the overall conclusions.<sup>27</sup> Where there are translation discrepancies, I pursued clarification from Arabic language scholars.

In terms of delimitation, some Islamic studies scholars regard the traditional accounts of Muhammad's Qur'anic revelation as a-historical.<sup>28</sup> This dissertation does not examine the historical veracity of the traditional accounts;<sup>29</sup> instead, it engaged the traditional Sunni accounts of Muhammad's interaction with Jibril, as understood by Sunni Muslims. The majority of Muslims in the world practice Sunni Islam. The Sunni tradition represents approximately 85 percent of the global Muslim population, while Shi'ite and other smaller groups make up the remaining 15 percent. Because Sunni Islam possesses

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<sup>24</sup> The primary English translation used in this study will be Arthur J. Droge, trans., *The Qur'an: A New Annotated Translation* (Bristol, CT: Equinox, 2013). Droge's translation is a positive addition to the field of Qur'anic studies. According to Ayman Ibrahim, Droge's edition "provides the field of Qur'anic studies with a rich and meticulously researched translation that is particularly appropriate at a time when interest in the Qur'an is growing." For Ibrahim's full review, see Ayman Ibrahim, "A Review of A. J. Droge, *The Qur'an: A New Annotated Translation*," International Qur'anic Studies Association, April 21, 2014, <https://iqsaweb.wordpress.com/2014/04/21/droge/>.

<sup>25</sup> The two *Hadith* collections examined in this project are Sahih Muhammad ibn Ismail Bukhari, Sahih Al-Bukhari, trans. Muhammad Muhsin Khan, vols. 1-7 (Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: Darussalam, 1997); and Abul Hussain Muslim ibn Al-Hajjaj Al-Hajjaj, *English Translation Of Sahih Muslim*, trans. Nasiruddin Al-Khattab, vols. 1-7 (Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: Darussalam, 2007).

<sup>26</sup> Ibn Ishaq, *The Life of Muhammad: A Translation of Ibn Ishaq's Sirat Rasul Allah*, trans. Alfred Guillaume (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1982).

<sup>27</sup> Ayman Ibrahim, conversation with author, Louisville, September 14, 2017.

<sup>28</sup> For more information on the discussion regarding the historicity of the Islamic traditions, see Gabriel Said Reynolds, "Introduction: The Golden Age of Qur'anic Studies," in *New Perspectives on the Qur'an: The Qur'an in Its Historical Context 2*, ed. Gabriel Said Reynolds (New York: Routledge, 2011), 1-26.

<sup>29</sup> For more information regarding the historicity of the traditional claims regarding Muhammad, see F. E. Peters, "The Quest of the Historical Muhammad," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 23 (1991): 291-315.

the most global Islamic influence, I delimited my research to the most revered traditional Sunni sources.<sup>30</sup>

In this dissertation, I do not attempt a full study of all spiritual beings found in the Qur'an or other Islamic sources. I provide a summary of the spiritual context related to spiritual beings, but I only examine Jibril in great depth. Several resources are available that address the spiritual beings (i.e., angels, demons, and *jinn*) described in Islamic sources.<sup>31</sup> An attempt to examine all records regarding Islamic spiritual beings would undermine the effectiveness of this study to assess and compare the biblical Gabriel and Islamic Jibril.

Because the details provided regarding Jibril within the Qur'an are limited, I consider other sources, such as *hadith*, to engage a fuller Islamic understanding of Jibril. However, *hadith* and other sacred writings are numerous. *Hadiths* were most often transcribed by professional teachers or students. *Hadith* texts were compared with others and those which shared the strongest similarities were considered the most authentic or "sound" (*Sahih*). Both of the *Hadith* collections examined in this project are considered "sound" warranting their closing examination.<sup>32</sup>

According to *Encyclopedia of the Qur'an*, "Certain collections of hadith, six in all, were compiled in the latter half of the third/ninth century and became generally considered as so reliable by the Sunni Muslim religious authorities of the day that they

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<sup>30</sup> *Sunni* Islam is based primarily on *sunnah*, which refers to the customs or sayings of the prophet. For more about Sunni Islam, see Michael E. Marmura, Jacques Waardenburg, and Joseph A. Kéchichian, "Sunni Islam," *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World*, accessed February 7, 2020, <http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t236/e0764>.

<sup>31</sup> For more information regarding Islamic demonology and the nature of the *jinn*, see Umar S. Al-Ashqar Ashqar and Jamaal al-Din M Zarabozo, *The World of the Jinn and Devils* (Boulder, CO: Al-Basheer Company, 1998); Amira El-Zein, *Islam, Arabs, and the Intelligent World of the Jinn* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2009); Ibn Taymiyah and Abu Ameenah Bilal, *Ibn Taymiyah's Essay on the Jinn* (Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: Tawheed Publications, 1989); and Leo Jung, *Fallen Angels in Jewish, Christian, and Mohammedan Literature* (New York: Ktav Publishing, 1974).

<sup>32</sup> John Burton, *An Introduction to the Hadith* (Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press, 2001), 111.

were canonized as it were, eventually acquiring a sanctity second only to the Qur'an."<sup>33</sup> Each collection contains scattered commentary examining various Qur'anic verses, descriptions of the purpose of revelation, and other exegetical material. Because of the voluminous and repetitive nature of Sunni *hadith*, a thorough examination of all *hadith* is outside the parameters of this study. I have chosen to examine the two largest collections from *al-kutub al-sitta*<sup>34</sup> (the six books), *Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim*, which form the foundation of Sunni *hadith*.

### Methodology

First, I examined biblical data regarding spiritual beings and developed biblical criteria for identifying them. To discover these criteria, I collected all references to angels<sup>35</sup> and demons,<sup>36</sup> whether explicit or implicit,<sup>37</sup> in both the Old and New Testaments to

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<sup>33</sup> G. H. A. Juynboll, "Hadith and the Qur'an," in *Encyclopedia of the Qur'an*, vol. 2, ed. Jane D. McAuliffe (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2002), 376.

<sup>34</sup> These six traditions (*al-kutub al-sitta*), originally collected and categorized by ibn al-Qaisarani in the eleventh century, are identified by their original collectors: Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Dawud, Tirmidhi, Nasa'i, and Ibn Majah (listed in order of importance).

<sup>35</sup> The word ἄγγελος (angel) is used 275 times in the New Testament. While the word varies in usage, it typically conveys the meaning of a divinely appointed messenger. The Old Testament term מַלְאָכִים, which is often translated as "angel," can be understood as an ambassador, envoy, and messenger. In both Old and New Testaments, these terms can be used to describe human beings; however, they usually describe divinely appointed messengers. Accurately understanding the hermeneutical context is essential for distinguishing the divinely appointed messenger from the human messenger.

<sup>36</sup> The following texts describe incidents in Scripture involving Satan and/or demons: Gen 3:1–19; Lev 17:7; 1 Chron 21:3; 2 Chron 11:15; Dan 10:12–14, 20–21; Isa 13:21, 34:14; Ezra 28:12–19; Zech 3:1–5; Matt 4:1–11, 4:24, 8:28–34, 9:32–34, 12:22–28, 16:21–23, 17:14–21; Mark 1:12–13, 1:21–28, 1:32–39, 3:11–12, 3:22–26, 5:1–20, 6:7–13, 7:24–30, 8:31–33, 9:14–29, 9:38–41; Luke 4:1–13, 4:31–41, 6:17–19, 8:1–3, 8:26–39, 9:37–43, 9:1–6, 9:49–50, 10:1–20, 11:14–19, 13:10–17, 22:3–6, 22:31–34; John 8:43–51, 13:26–30; Acts 5:1–6, 5:12–16, 8:4–8, 10:34–38, 13:8–12, 16:16–18, 19:11–17, 26:16–18; 1 Cor 5:4–5; 1 Thess 2:18; 2 Thess 2:9; 1 Tim 1:19–20, 5:15; 2 Tim 2:24–26; Jas 2:19; Jude 9; and Rev 2:9–10, 2:24–25, 12:1–17, 16:13–14, 20:1–4, 20:10.

<sup>37</sup> While most angel and demon references in the Scriptures use specific Hebrew and Greek words to describe the spiritual beings, not every account does. I have integrated additional terms used to describe spiritual beings.

perform textually based grounded theory analysis.<sup>38</sup> To preserve the integrity of the findings, I excluded accounts in the Old and New Testaments that explicitly mention Gabriel. Once I recorded data from these sources, I coded the information through Atlas.ti qualitative data analysis software. In the coding process, I began with open coding, which established a list of characteristics revealed from the texts. I then performed selective coding, which established basic categories (i.e., appearance, behavior, message, personality, and status) regarding the specific occurrences. I then performed theoretical coding, which took each occurrence and developed propositions related to the categories discovered in the coding process.<sup>39</sup> Through this qualitative analysis, I developed a biblical instrument for identifying and differentiating between angelic and non-angelic beings.<sup>40</sup> Afterward, I evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of the research design and summarized the conclusions of the research.

Second, I performed a thorough exegetical examination of the biblical teaching on Gabriel. Two Old Testament accounts name Gabriel specifically—Daniel 8 and 9. I also examined two New Testament accounts that name Gabriel specifically. While Luke’s Gospel alone names the angelic figure in the birth narrative, I also examined Matthew’s birth narrative because it is uniquely similar to Luke’s account. I performed an exegesis of these passages. In my examination of literary structure and syntax, I examined the text’s literary genre and identify structural significance within the text. In addition, I

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<sup>38</sup> Grounded theory is a research methodology that is performed inductively. The study begins with data collection. As the data is reviewed, the researcher analyzes the data for themes, concepts, or ideas that emerge. Afterward, the researcher labels these instances with specific codes that have been extracted from the data. Kathy Charmaz provides a detailed exploration of grounded theory highlighting the importance of interview methodologies, focused coding, theoretical sampling, principle construction, and project drafting. Kathy Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory* (Washington, DC: Sage, 2014).

<sup>39</sup> John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches* (Washington DC: Sage, 2013), 83–88.

<sup>40</sup> I have chosen to use the term *non-angel* to describe spirits who are most often labeled demons, evil spirits, ghosts, apparitions, fallen angels, etc. The term *demon* is related to a Greek term (δαμόνιον), which post-dates the Old Testament passages examined in the project. Additionally, the term *demon* categorizes the entity undercutting the impact of the data analysis.

examined select terms and the relationship between these terms in Daniel and the gospel birth narratives,<sup>41</sup> thereby discovering significant themes regarding Gabriel's appearance, behavior, message, and personality. Finally, I applied the biblical instrument, developed through qualitative data analysis for identifying angelic beings, to the Gabriel passages in the Bible. This approach revealed the instrument's integrity and provided a baseline for comparing Gabriel and Jibril.

Third, I examined the figure of Jibril from Islamic sources. I began this examination with the Qur'an. While I may refer to the entirety of the Qur'an, I only examined *surahs* referencing Jibril. I also examined selections referencing Jibril from *Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim* and Ibn Ishaq's *The Life of Muhammad*. I interpreted key passages to discover significant themes regarding Jibril's appearance, behavior, message, and personality, as described in the Qur'an, *Sahih al-Bukhārī*, *Sahih Muslim*, and Ibn Ishaq's *The Life of Muhammad*. I then applied the biblical instrument, developed through qualitative data analysis for identifying angelic beings, to the Jibril passages in the Islamic sources, and discussed subsequent findings.

Finally, after examining the biblical and Islamic representations of Gabriel/Jibril, I compared the accounts found in the Old and New Testaments to the Islamic sources to assess the similarities and differences in Gabriel's and Jibril's appearances, behaviors, messages, personalities, and statuses. A visual chart demonstrated the differences between Jibril's characteristics and Gabriel's characteristics. I then evaluated the Islamic understanding of Jibril in light of the biblical instrument for identifying angelic beings, which determined the validity of my thesis that the Islamic representation of Jibril is different from the biblical representation of Gabriel.

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<sup>41</sup> The passages that will be examined are Matt 1:18–25 and Luke 1:5–25, 26–38.

## CHAPTER 2

### SURVEY OF ANGELOLOGY

#### Historical Perspectives

The work of theologizing about angels is a dubious undertaking.<sup>1</sup> Since the seventh century, over 4,500 books have been written on the topic, and in the 1990s alone, four hundred books were published on angels in the United States. Many of these works are speculative and lack adequate references explains George Marshall:

Most of the works published make all sorts of claims about angels with never a footnote nor a reference to support the claims. Other works make claims about angels based upon first—or secondhand experience, without seeming to be aware of the problems involved in resting such claims on a faith in those who make them. One gets the impression that these authors are writing in a vacuum, unaware that there is a rich religious and intellectual tradition concerning angels.<sup>2</sup>

Regardless of how some Christians have approached angelology in the past, Thomas Nettles does not view “angelic questions and wonder as a matter of evil speculation but as natural intelligent inquisitiveness in the face of an indecipherable mystery.”<sup>3</sup>

For millennia, Christians have engaged the theological doctrine of angels, often mixing philosophical presuppositions and biblical teaching. From Stephen Noll’s perspective, “two theologians stand at the fountainhead of classical angelology of the Western and Eastern churches: Augustine (354–430) and Pseudo Dionysius (sixth century).

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<sup>1</sup> Stephen Noll asserts that the study of angels is dubious today because the topic of spirits or supernaturalism was neglected in the twentieth century. However, Noll notes a fresh interest has risen regarding angels and demons in recent years giving some scholars reason to investigate the topic and causing others to take a more suspicious theological stance. Stephen F. Noll, *Angels of Light, Powers of Darkness: Thinking Biblically about Angels, Satan & Principalities* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1998), 11.

<sup>2</sup> George Marshall, *Angels: An Indexed and Partially Annotated Bibliography of Over 4300 Scholarly Books and Articles Since the 7th Century B.C.* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 1999), 1.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas J. Nettles, “Spurgeon on Angels: The Baptist Connection” (paper presented at the Andrew Fuller Conference, online, September 25, 2020), 16.

These streams from East and West ultimately converged in the great synthesis offered by Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274).”<sup>4</sup> However, the early church fathers debated this topic well before the medieval period. According to Corneliu Simuț, one of the earliest references regarding the existence of angelic beings is found in the Shepherd of Hermas, which explained that angels were the first beings created by God and exist in some form of hierarchy.<sup>5</sup> Various early church fathers explored the notion of angelic and demonic beings. Simuț summarizes these discussions:

In his Letter to the Corinthians, Clement of Rome alludes to the fact that angels exist in multitudes, while Justin Martyr explains in his First Apology that angels are made to be “like God” and they appear to exist in hosts. Tatian is a bit more explicit about the reality of angels as God’s creatures because, in his Oration against the Greeks, he points out that they appear to have been created by the Logos, who is seen as the “framer of angels.” He also indicates that angels were “made free to act as it pleased” but this angelic freedom does not imply that angels have “the nature of God.” Angels, however, can be brought to perfection, Tatian implies, and they do have freedom of choice. In other words, according to Tatian, angels can refrain “from transgressing the will of God” since they were created by God himself. Angels are creatures and they cannot create. In the words of Irenaeus, specifically in his *Against Heresies*, angels do not possess the power “to make an image of God,” so they cannot create human beings because, as John A. McGuckin writes, angels are “distinct creatures of God” in Irenaeus, “not a system of divine emanations,” so they exist as creatures. This idea is reinforced by Athanasius, who makes it clear in his *Four Discourses against the Arians* that angels should be seen as creatures who are not “able to frame.”<sup>6</sup>

Augustine explored the topic of angels in many of his works. In *City of God*, Augustine links angels’ primary activity to the ongoing work of humanity’s salvation. Additionally, Augustine believed angels have a holy nature and existence that enables them to accomplish God’s will. Because of his often-allegorical hermeneutical approach, Augustine interpreted the terms “morning” and “evening” in the creation narrative related to angelic knowledge—both creaturely and divine. Noll summarizes Augustine’s perspective:

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<sup>4</sup> Noll, *Angels of Light, Powers of Darkness*, 14.

<sup>5</sup> Corneliu C. Simuț, “Angels: Augustine and the Patristic Tradition: The Reality, Ontology, and Morality of Angels in the Church Fathers and Augustine” (paper presented at the Andrew Fuller Conference, online, September 25, 2020), 2.

<sup>6</sup> Simuț, “Angels: Augustine and the Patristic Tradition,” 2–3.



This twofold knowledge corresponds to the distinction in each rational creature between nature and grace. Satan and his angels chose to worship a lesser god in the moment of creation, their own angelic nature, rather than find their true worship in God. The good angels, on the other hand, looked to God's grace and received the assurance of eternal bliss.<sup>7</sup>

The author who used the pseudonym Pseudo-Dionysius created the normative angelology for both East and West churches for centuries. In his angelology, Pseudo-Dionysius describes angels as having the essence of fire:

You will find it, then, representing not only wheels of fire, but also living creatures of fire, and men, flashing, as it were, like lightning, and placing around the Heavenly Beings themselves heaps of coals of fire, and rivers of flame flowing with irresistible force; and also it says that the thrones are of fire; and that the most exalted Seraphim glow with fire, it shews from their appellation, and it attributes the characteristic and energy of fire to them, and throughout, above and below, it prefers pre-eminently the representation by the image of fire.<sup>8</sup> . . . One might find many characteristics of fire, appropriate to display the supremely Divine Energy, as in sensible images. The Godly-wise, then, knowing this, depict the celestial Beings from fire, shewing their Godlikeness, and imitation of God, as far as attainable.<sup>9</sup>

He continues by describing the swirling dance of God's eternal worship:

The first rank of the Heavenly Beings which encircle and stand immediately around God; and without symbol, and without interruption, dances round His eternal knowledge in the most exalted ever-moving stability as in Angels; viewing purely many and blessed contemplations, and illuminated with simple and immediate splendours, and filled with Divine nourishment,—many indeed by the first-given profusion, but one by the unvariegated and unifying oneness of the supremely Divine banquet, deemed worthy indeed of much participation and co-operation with God, by their assimilation to Him, as far as attainable, of their excellent habits and energies, and knowing many Divine things pre-eminently, and participating in supremely Divine science and knowledge, as is lawful.<sup>10</sup>

Additionally, Dionysius extrapolated the concept of the nine triadic choirs of angelic hosts. At the top was God, who presides over all creation, both corporeal and non-corporeal. In service beneath him are seraphim, cherubim, thrones, dominions, powers, authorities, principalities, archangels, and angels.

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<sup>7</sup> Noll, *Angels of Light, Powers of Darkness*, 14–15.

<sup>8</sup> Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, *The Works of Dionysius the Areopagite*, trans. John Parker (London: James Parker and Co., 1899), 2:56.

<sup>9</sup> Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, *The Works of Dionysius the Areopagite*, 2:57.

<sup>10</sup> Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, *The Works of Dionysius the Areopagite*, 2:29–30.

Anselm, in his treatise *Cur Deus Homo*, assumes the existing teaching on angels from the pre-Scholastic period, but ties angelic existence and service to his theory of atonement.<sup>11</sup> His primary contention was that God would restore the number of fallen angels through his reconciliation of human beings through Jesus.<sup>12</sup> Bernard embraced both the hierarchical structure of the angelic hosts and their continual service toward God and human beings. He described them as spirits who were mighty and glorious created as immortal spirits for the purpose of praising and serving God eternally.<sup>13</sup> Prior to Thomas Aquinas, Peter Lombard's angelology stands out as the most robust of the Scholastic period. Edward Langton states that Lombard acknowledged "at the time of creation four attributes were assigned to the angels, namely, simple essence, that is indivisible and immaterial; distinction of personality; memory and will or choice; and freedom of will, that is, they had the faculty of turning their will either to good or to evil."<sup>14</sup>

Thomas Aquinas synthesized the ideas of Pseudo-Dionysius, Augustine, and the pre-Scholastics. Jean-Pierre Torrell notes the overall strength of Aquinas' work; however, some portions remain "incomplete:"

To assert that [the *Summa Theologica*] stands out by its rare clarity, rigor, and coherence is not to revive the naïve theory that saw the *Summa* as the summit of medieval thought. . . . For all that, the *Summa* is not a monolith and we can detect in

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<sup>11</sup> Edward Langton, *The Doctrine of Angels* (Kent, UK: Imagier Publishing, 2016), 33.

<sup>12</sup> For a more full examination of Anselm's argument, see Langton, *The Doctrine of Angels*, 34. Anselm's argument regarding the connection between the fallen angel population being replaced by human saints originated with Augustine. In *Enchiridion to Laurentius on Faith, Hope, and Charity*, Augustine asserts that God, in his desire to repopulate heaven "supplied whatever loss that fall of the devil had brought on the fellowship of the Angels' by exalting humans into the heavenly family. . . . For this has been promised to the Saints at their resurrection, that they shall be equal to the Angels of God." Augustine of Hippo, *Seventeen Short Treatises of Augustine, Bishop of Hippo* (London: Oxford, 1847), 104. Additionally, Augustine declares that angels have called humanity into a proper relationship with God through their heralding of the gospel: "The holy angels have announced this City and have invited us to their society, desiring us to be fellow citizens with them. They do not wish that we should honor them as our gods, but that we should, with them, worship Him who is their God and our God" Augustine of Hippo, *The City of God, Books VIII–XVI*, ed. Hermigild Dressler, trans. Gerald G. Walsh and Grace Monahan, vol. 14, *The Fathers of the Church* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1952), 163.

<sup>13</sup> Langton, *The Doctrine of Angels*, 38–39.

<sup>14</sup> Langton, *The Doctrine of Angels*, 48.

places certain incomplete elements. Nevertheless, it offers to those who know how to read it the means to extend and even correct Thomas's thought.<sup>15</sup>

In *Summa Theologica*, Aquinas explored numerous topics relating to angelic beings and their substance, immaterial existence, location, movement, knowledge, will, love, creation, perfection, and even the judgement of demons.<sup>16</sup> Even though Aquinas' intellectual treatment of angelology is thorough and deeply philosophical, much of the biblical grounding concerning his exploration of the topic, is weak. Aquinas' study on angels has been criticized by theologians such as Karl Barth: "This work of probably the greatest angelologue of all Church history unfortunately has nothing whatever to do with the knowledge of the 'truth of the catholic faith' or with attention and fidelity to the Biblical witness to revelation."<sup>17</sup>

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Protestant exploration of angelology continued to develop. While much of the Reformed Church's position on angels remained similar to the Roman Catholic Church, some key leaders discarded medieval "amplifications of doctrine, and especially the scholastic speculations on certain aspects of angelology, upon which the mind of man can never hope to attain to certain knowledge under present conditions, the Reformers maintained the age-long belief in the existence and activity of angels."<sup>18</sup> According to Edward Langton, Martin Luther advocated for the church's recognition of angelic ministry's essentiality. Angelic ministry and allegiance were of notable significance for the church, and the importance of angelic function served as an appropriate model of Christian humility and service.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Jean-Pierre Torrell, *Aquinas's Summa: Background, Structure, & Reception* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 131–32.

<sup>16</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, vol. 1, *Summa Theologica: Complete English Edition in Five Volumes* (Allen, TX: Christian Classics, 1981), 259–323.

<sup>17</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, trans. Geoffrey Bromiley (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1960), 3.3.391.

<sup>18</sup> Langton, *The Doctrine of Angels*, 86.

<sup>19</sup> Edward Langton, *Essentials of Demonology: A Study of Jewish and Christian Doctrine, Its Origin and Development* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2014), 88.

Noll describes two different approaches to angelology that emerged during the period of the Reformation. He suggests John Milton's epic poem, "Paradise Lost," was an embrace of a *maximalist* approach leaning heavily upon prior speculative doctrine regarding angelic and demonic beings. Conversely, John Calvin engaged in angelology from a *minimalist* perspective because he rejected ecclesiastical traditions extraneous from biblical texts. Instead, he prioritized *sola scriptura*.<sup>20</sup> Even though Calvin refrained from contemporary speculation, his understanding of angelic service was robust, being drawn from the Scripture. Herman J. Selderhuis, summarizing Calvin's insights about angelic beings, states,

That the angels are heavenly spirits that God has in His service to carry out His counsel is found everywhere in Scripture. They are also called an army because they surround their Sovereign like bodyguards. As warriors they always pay attention to the sign of their captain to carry out His commands. To our consolation, Scripture teaches that the angels are in the service of God working for our benefit. They watch over our salvation and take care of our protection. The angels protect the Church as the body of Christ: "The angel of the LORD hath set himself round about those who fear him" (Ps 34:8). But they also stood by Christ, the Head of the Church, in all His afflictions (Luke 22:43). The angels are fighting against our enemies.<sup>21</sup>

John Calvin, like Luther on angels, rejected "the medieval speculations as to their nature, number, and hierarchical arrangements as being unwarranted, and bases his belief upon the statements of Scripture alone."<sup>22</sup> According to Elizabeth Reis, Calvin's innovative teachings amplified the sovereignty of God and underplayed the reality of angels: "Though saints and angels were celebrated and revered in medieval Europe, in John Calvin's revolutionary religious teachings their significance was deemphasized in favour of God's centrality and supremacy."<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Noll, *Angels of Light, Powers of Darkness*, 17.

<sup>21</sup> Herman J. Selderhuis, "Calvin's View Concerning Angels" (lecture, Andrew Fuller Conference, online, September 25, 2020), 3–4.

<sup>22</sup> Langton, *Essentials of Demonology*, 90.

<sup>23</sup> Elizabeth Reis, "Otherworldly Visions: Angels, Devils, and Gender in Puritan New England," in *Angels in the Early Modern World*, ed. Peter Marshall and Alexandra Walsham (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 282.

Like Calvin, the Puritans' worldview was wholly shaped by the Bible, and many considered the age of the miraculous to be complete. They affirmed the precedent of God to communicate to his people through dreams, visions, and angels. However, Puritans viewed angelic visitations as unreliable, unlike the biblical text. Reis notes, "Protestants distinguished themselves from Catholics by downplaying miracles, at least in their theological writings. Neither were visits by angels or direct revelations from God himself commonly observed."<sup>24</sup> Even so, Puritan leaders like Cotton Mather recorded a personal angelic appearance signifying the belief in angels, but the Protestant cultural environment demanded caution. Puritans also believed in the devil and his fallen angels to attack human beings devoted to Christ. Tom Schwanda summarizes the Puritan understanding of angelic ministries:

Angels served as guardians for people of all ages, providing warning of impending doom and judgment. This was often related to the admonishment of wickedness. Angels were also agents of God's gracious deliverance, including both physical and spiritual needs. A final category pertained to consolation and the cure of illnesses which could be manifested in deathbed manifestations.<sup>25</sup>

In the last two centuries, angelology has received a mixed reception. The rise of rationalism and the scientific method changed Western culture, spawning the industrial revolution, which provided a fertile context for theological skepticism about angels. Michael Plato notes, "At once marginalized and yet highly popular (at least outside the walls of academe), [angelology] has disappeared and reappeared in unexpected places, usually on the fringes of respectability. It is at one moment summarily dismissed as outdated superstition, and at another moment, it is embraced to the point of mystical indulgence."<sup>26</sup>

The study of spiritual beings is an important arena of Christian theology;

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<sup>24</sup> Reis, "Otherworldly Visions," 283.

<sup>25</sup> N. Tom Schwanda, "Isaac Ambrose and the Puritan Teaching on Angels" (paper presented Andrew Fuller Conference, online, September 25, 2020), 5.

<sup>26</sup> Michael Plato, "C. S. Lewis and Billy Graham on Angels" (paper presented at the Andrew Fuller Conference, online, September 25, 2020), 1.

however, many systematic and biblical theologies give minimal analysis of the subject.<sup>27</sup> Few topical monographs and exegetical commentaries highlight the importance of supernatural beings depicted in biblical texts. The issues of spiritual warfare and biblical demonology are more widely discussed in lay Christian publishing.<sup>28</sup> More rigorous

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<sup>27</sup> A survey of the most influential systematic theologies demonstrates minimal academic interest concerning angelology and demonology. By far, E. Y. Mullins, John Dagg, Michael Horton, and Norm Giesler's neglect to even acknowledge the angelic or demonic stands out as a notable failure of theological rigor. See Edgar Y. Mullins, *The Christian Religion in Its Doctrinal Expression* (Philadelphia: Judson, 1917); John L. Dagg, *Manual of Theology and Church Order* (Harrisonburg, VA: Gano Books, 1982); Michael S. Horton, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011); and Norman L. Geisler, *Systematic Theology*, vols. 1–3 (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2002). Daniel Akin's *A Theology for the Church*, Charles Hodge's three volume systematic theology, and Millard Erickson's *Christian Theology* spend less than 1 percent of their writing on angels or demons. See Daniel L. Akin, David P. Nelson, and Peter R. Schemm, *A Theology for the Church* (Nashville: B & H, 2007), 293–337; Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 457–75; Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vols. 1–3 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 472–80. James Montgomery Boyce, in *Abstract of Systematic Theology* gives 1.8 percent of his writing to the subject of demonology. See James P. Boyce, *Abstract of Systematic Theology* (Louisville: SBTS Press, 2013), 157–70. Gregg Allison gives over 2.5 percent to the subject of demonology in *Historical Theology*. See Gregg R. Allison, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 298–318. Wayne Grudem gives 3 percent of his *Systematic Theology* to the subject of angelology and demonology. See Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 397–438.

<sup>28</sup> Significant works on spiritual warfare over the last quarter of a century include the following. Books listed here are theologically diverse and are not necessarily recommended; however, these are some of the most influential contemporary writings on the subject. Neil T. Anderson, *The Bondage Breaker* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2000); Clinton E. Arnold, *3 Crucial Questions about Spiritual Warfare* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997); Clinton E. Arnold, *Power and Magic: The Concept of Power in Ephesians* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2001); James K. Beilby, Paul R. Eddy and Walter Wink, *Understanding Spiritual Warfare: Four Views* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012); Bob Bevington, *Good News about Satan* (Minneapolis: Cruciform Press, 2015); Gregory A. Boyd, *God at War: The Bible & Spiritual Conflict* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997); Mark I. Bubeck, *The Adversary: The Christian versus Demon Activity* (Chicago: Moody, 1975); C. Fred Dickason, *Angels Elect and Evil* (Chicago: Moody, 1995); C. Fred Dickason, *Demon Possession & the Christian* (Chicago: Moody, 1987); Duane A. Garrett, *Angels and the New Spirituality* (Nashville: B & H, 1995); Billy Graham, *Angels* (Dallas: Word, 1994); John MacArthur, *How to Meet the Enemy* (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1992); Edward F. Murphy, *The Handbook for Spiritual Warfare* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1996); Karl I. Payne, *Spiritual Warfare: Christians, Demonization, and Deliverance* (Washington, DC: WND Books, 2011); Kent Philpott, *A Manual of Demonology and the Occult* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976); Merrill F. Unger, *Demons in the World Today: A Study of Occultism in the Light of God's Word* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1971); Merrill F. Unger, *What Demons Can Do to Saints* (Chicago: Moody, 1991); Merrill F. Unger, *Biblical Demonology: A Study of Spiritual Forces At Work Today* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1994); C. Peter Wagner, *Engaging the Enemy: How to Fight and Defeat Territorial Spirits* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1991); C. Peter Wagner, *Strategies for Church Growth: Tools for Effective Mission and Evangelism* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1987); Walter Wink, *Naming the Powers: The Language of Power in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984); Walter Wink, *Unmasking the Powers: The Invisible Forces That Determine Human Existence* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986).

academic discussion of the theological principles underpinning practices, such as exorcism, deliverance ministries, territorial spirits, prayer walks, and power encounters is needed. Recent works, such as Michael Heiser’s *Unseen Realm* and *Angels*, as well as Graham Cole’s *Against the Darkness*, provide a much-needed reorientation toward the biblical foundations of spiritual beings, ancient biblical cultural context, and in the manner which this invisible world interacts with humanity today.<sup>29</sup> Because of this gap in theological examination, more academic consideration should be given to the topics of angels, demons, spirits, and spiritual warfare. The study of these topics is essential to the fields of Christian apologetics, world religions, and missiology. Notable world missions’ experts express concern regarding the impact of spiritual warfare on church planting effectiveness, cross-cultural evangelism, and pastoral training. David Hesselgrave summarizes historical missiological perspectives regarding the interplay between cross-cultural missions and spiritual warfare in *Paradigms in Conflict*. While recognizing the complexity of the topic and the reality of spiritual warfare, Hesselgrave concludes, “The truth of God takes first priority in the personal struggle with the world, flesh, and Satan or in any encounter with the world system of which Satan is god.”<sup>30</sup> Paul Hiebert highlights the necessary caution missiologists must practice when exploring spiritual warfare. He writes, “Interest in spiritual matters must be both welcomed and tested. It must be welcomed because the church too often has bought into the worldview of a secular science that denies the reality of sin and spiritual realities. It must be tested because we are in danger of returning to the views of pagan past.”<sup>31</sup> Hiebert contends that the church must continue to explore the

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<sup>29</sup> Additional books have been published in recent years which focus upon spiritual warfare and spiritual beings in general. See William Cook and Chuck Lawless, *Spiritual Warfare and the Storyline of Scripture: A Biblical, Theological, and Practical Approach* (Nashville: B & H, 2019), John Gilhooly, *40 Questions about Angels, Demons, and Spiritual Warfare* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2018).

<sup>30</sup> David J. Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in Conflict: 10 Key Questions in Christian Missions Today* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2005), 198, 167–201.

<sup>31</sup> Paul J. Heibert, *Anthropological Reflections on Missiological Issues* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 203–15.

concepts of eternal good and contingent evil, shalom and holiness, and the battlefield of the human heart. Additionally, Tommy Lea acknowledges the increased focus of many missionaries and Christians toward spiritual warfare, angels, and demons. In *Missiology: An Introduction to the Foundations, History, and Strategies of World Missions*, Lea cautions missionaries from over-spiritualizing the missionary task while at the same time pursuing a balanced approach to spiritual warfare in their ministry.<sup>32</sup>

### **Angels of Holiness and Angels of Evil According to Scripture**

#### **Angels of Holiness**

Much has been written about the angelic hosts of heaven. Like human beings, angels are distinct from God in that they are created beings and they serve the triune God in various ways to accomplish his will. The terms *mal'akh* and *angelos* are typically translated from both Hebrew and Greek texts as angel. However, each of these terms can refer to celestial messengers or human messengers.<sup>33</sup> The Greek term *angelos* in the LXX is most often understood in European languages as a divine spiritual being. Aleksander Mickalak notes, “In the Latin Vulgate, however, there is a distinction between *angeli* and *nuntii*. The former refers to the celestial messenger whereas the *nuntius* is the human envoy.”<sup>34</sup> The terms *mal'akh* and *angelos* portray a functional responsibility held by angels to serve God and herald his messages.<sup>35</sup> The Bible does not give precise information about the timing and process of God’s creation of his angels. Fred Dickason explains, “[Angels] certainly did not evolve, nor were they formerly men, for they were

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<sup>32</sup> Tommy D. Lea, “Spiritual Warfare and the Missionary Task,” in *Missiology: An Introduction to the Foundations, History, and Strategies of World Missions*, ed. John Mark Terry, Ebbie Smith, and Justice Anderson (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1998), 626–38.

<sup>33</sup> Aleksander R. Michalak, *Angels as Warriors in Late Second Temple Jewish Literature* (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 31.

<sup>34</sup> Michalak, *Angels as Warriors*, 32.

<sup>35</sup> Valery Rees, *From Gabriel to Lucifer: A Cultural History of Angels* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2013), 1.



created as *angels*. Each angel is a direct creation from God, for they do not procreate as do humans (Mt 22:28-30). . . . The exact time of their creation is not certain, but we know that ‘all the sons of God’ sang with joy at the creation of the earth.”<sup>36</sup>

Angels are not embodied creatures, as the author of Hebrews explains, “Are [angels] not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?” (1:14). Billy Graham asserts that because angels are spiritual creatures “it seems that angels have the ability to change their appearance and shuttle in a flash from the capital glory of heaven to earth and back again.”<sup>37</sup> In agreement with Peter Schemm, Graham Cole offers five propositions regarding the nature and function of angels. According to Cole, angels are personal spirits who can manifest physically, and when they choose to do so, their visage is glorious. Angels are wise and intellectual creatures but not omniscient. Similarly, angels are mighty, but not without limitations. Lastly, angels travel quickly but do not possess omnipresence, distinguishing them from God.<sup>38</sup>

### **Angels of Evil**

Scholars debate the existence of evil spirits.<sup>39</sup> Merrill Unger noting this discussion, writes, “Today, in an age of scientific progress and enlightenment, the most effective barrier to the adequate understand of demonology is not fanatical gullibility

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<sup>36</sup> C. Fred Dickason, *Angels: Elect and Evil* (Chicago: Moody, 1995), 25.

<sup>37</sup> Billy Graham, *Angels* (Dallas: Word, 1994), 19.

<sup>38</sup> Graham Cole, *Against the Darkness: The Doctrine of Angels, Satan, and Demons* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019), 35–36.

<sup>39</sup> The belief in non-physical beings remains suspicious to scholars who hold to a naturalistic worldview. Belief in the supernatural or evil spiritual beings is understood as primitive and potentially dangerous in the modern world. Jeffrey Russell explains this view: “Is belief in the Devil of positive value, or not? On the one hand, belief in the Devil is harmful, because attributing evil to the Devil may excuse us from examining our own personal responsibility for vice, and the responsibility of unjust societies, laws, and governments for suffering. It is also harmful in that people who experiment with Satanism open themselves to serious psychological dangers.” Jeffrey Burton Russell, *The Devil: Perceptions of Evil from Antiquity to Primitive Christianity* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977), 260. Unger provides additional discussion of modern arguments undermining the existence of evil spirits, which instead assert ancient diseases were designated as evil spirits because of superstition. Merrill F. Unger, *Biblical Demonology: A Study of Spiritual Forces at Work Today* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1994), 41.

embracing mere superstition, but a radical skepticism rejecting the supernatural.”<sup>40</sup> However, in recent scholarship, the reality of non-human spirits has returned to the forefront of academic discussion. In an article published in the *Journal of Religion and Health*, Anderson Betty implores skeptical psychiatrists to challenge the psychological norms of their field: “Consider the possibility that a person might be a mix of two different kinds of reality working in harmony when the person is mentally healthy and in disharmony when not. The invisible part of the mix should not be assumed to be unreal or a mere epiphenomenon of brain states just because it is invisible.”<sup>41</sup> He encourages doctors to critically examine the literature investigating paranormal activity and conduct research to determine if methods used by deliverance ministers or exorcists provide better solutions than drugs and psychiatric therapies. Recently, Richard Gallagher, a board-certified psychiatrist, published a book entitled *Demonic Foes* in which he presents the case for demonic attack and paranormal activity from a psychiatric perspective. Gallagher has served alongside catholic clergy for over twenty-five years investigating the credibility of demonic oppression and possession. While Gallagher would not completely agree with Betty’s assessment, he does express the need for an “interdisciplinary approach.”<sup>42</sup> Gallagher argues that the vast number of patients he has helped in his career did not suffer from demonic attack or a mixture of mental illness and demonization.<sup>43</sup> However, he maintains the need for legitimate discourse between theologians and psychiatrists to address the rising numbers of individuals experiencing these extraordinary diabolical challenges.

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<sup>40</sup> Unger, *Biblical Demonology*, 6.

<sup>41</sup> Anderson Betty, “The Growing Evidence for ‘Demon Possession’: What Should Psychiatry’s Response Be?” *Journal of Religion and Health* 44, no. 1 (2005): 28.

<sup>42</sup> Richard Gallagher, *Demonic Foes: My Twenty-Five Years as a Psychiatrist Investigating Possessions, Diabolic Attacks, and the Paranormal* (New York: HarperOne, 2020), 7.

<sup>43</sup> Gallagher, *Demonic Foes*, 7.

Belief in supernatural spirits, both good and evil, exists throughout the Bible. According to Michael Heiser, belief in the existence of spiritual beings is woven into the fabric of the ancient Semite worldview.<sup>44</sup> As previously noted, angels of holiness were created by God and eternally worship and serve him. Where did angels of evil originate? Three primary explanations of the origin and identity of demonic spirits exist. First is the view that demons are the disembodied spirits of inhabitants of a pre-Adamic earth. This view is connected with Greek mythology and lacks scriptural credibility. Second is the view that demons are the offspring of fallen angels and antediluvian women. This view emerged in Jewish writings like *the Book of Enoch* in the second temple period before the birth of Christ. Third is the view that demons are angels who rebelled against God and fell from their heavenly places of service and who are now manifesting extreme malice toward human beings, especially those who belong to God through Jesus Christ.<sup>45</sup> This view is most widely supported among Christian scholars and has ample support from the Bible (Ezek 28:18; Matt 25:41; Rev 12:4).

Descriptions of demons or evil angels begin in the Hebrew scriptures and are given greater clarity in the New Testament. John Walton summarizes the Near Eastern concept of evil spirits:

No general term for “demons” exists in any of the major cultures of the ancient Near East or in the Hebrew Bible. They are generally considered one of the categories of “spirit beings” (along with gods and ghosts). The term *demons* has had a checkered history; in today’s theological usage the term denotes beings, often fallen angels, who are intrinsically evil and who do the bidding of their master, Satan. This definition, however, only became commonplace long after the Hebrew Bible was complete.<sup>46</sup>

According to Langton, fallen angels or demons are described by various terms in the Old Testament. Hebrew demonology, similar to Babylonian and Assyrian

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<sup>44</sup> Michael Heiser, *The Unseen Realm* (Marlton, NJ: Lexham Press, 2019), 11–20.

<sup>45</sup> Cole, *Against the Darkness*, 112.

<sup>46</sup> John H. Walton, “Demons in Mesopotamia and Israel: Exploring the Category of Non-Divine but Supernatural Enemies,” in *Windows to the Ancient World of the Hebrew Bible: Essays in Honor of Samuel Greengus*, ed. Bill T. Arnold, Nancy L. Erickson, and John H. Walton (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2014), 229.

demonology, associates serpents with the demonic.<sup>47</sup> Additionally, he relates words like *se'irim* (hairy demons), *ziyyim* (wild beasts), *'ochim* (doleful creatures), *benoth ya'anah* (ostriches), *'iyyim* (wolves), *tannim* (jackals), *Azazel* (scapegoat), *lilith* (night demon), *deber* (pestilence), *keteb* (destruction), *'alukah* (horseleech or vampire), and *shêdîm* (demons) with Semitic demonology.<sup>48</sup> Most biblical scholars do not accept such a robust demonological taxonomy.

Instead, the terms most often translated as “demon” are *shêdîm* and *daimon* or *daimonion*. According to Dickason, demonological terms include *shedhim*, *seirim*, *'eliim*, *gad*, *qeter*, *daimon*, *daimonion*, and in some cases *pneumata*. Dickason explains that there is no specific equivalent in the Hebrew for the word *daimon* or *daimonion*. He also points out that there are five words most often translated as demon in the Old Testament: *shedhim*, *seirim*, *'eliim*, *gad*, *qeter*, and *daimon*. Pagan deities and their images were understood as visible symbols for unseen demonic entities.<sup>49</sup> Unger argues that the term *shedhim* comes from the root *shudh*, which means to rule or to be lord and thereby has an underlying significance in relationship to idolatry. He explains,

It is clear that the *shedhim* are not only identified with idolatrous images, who are denied all reality as gods, but at the same time are separated from them, as being real spiritual existences behind them, energizing their worship. The same double aspect is to be noted in the passage in the Psalms, where, falling again into idolatry, the Israelites are said to have “sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto demons (*daimonian*, *Shedhim*) . . . unto the idols of Canaan” (Ps 106:37–38).<sup>50</sup>

In the New Testament, the primary term used to describe evil spirits is *daimon* or *daimonion*. However, Dickason explains,

Forty-three times demons are termed *pneuma* or *pneumata* (spirits). The context makes clear that these spirits are demons: for instance, the demon-possessed (*daimonizomenous*) were treated by Jesus, and He cast out “the spirits” *pneumata*. . . . The unusual usage, “spirits of demons,” in Revelation 16:14 is apparently intended

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<sup>47</sup> Langton, *Essentials of Demonology*, 37.

<sup>48</sup> Langton, *Essentials of Demonology*, 39–42.

<sup>49</sup> Dickason, *Angels: Elect and Evil*, 153.

<sup>50</sup> Unger, *Biblical Demonology*, 59.

to distinguish them from human spirits. Not only are they “unclean spirits” (v. 13), but they are not merely human, rather supernatural—“spirits of demons” (v. 14).<sup>51</sup>

Demonic activity is presented throughout the Bible. In the Old Testament, demonic activity is connected to pagan sacrificial rituals of the peoples who worshiped other gods (Lev 17:7; Deut 32:17; Ps 106:37). In the New Testament, demonic activity is often described as a personal attack against an individual through demonization.<sup>52</sup> The primary focus of demonic attack is deception and false teaching (2 Cor 4:4; Rev 12:7–12); however, physical attacks include muteness (Mark 9:17), illness (Matt 8:16; 10:1), paralysis (Luke 13:11), deafness (Mark 9:25), epileptic-like seizures (Luke 9:39), and physical manipulation or possession (Mark 5:2–8; 7:25; Luke 8:2).

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<sup>51</sup> Dickason, *Angels: Elect and Evil*, 153.

<sup>52</sup> Christian scholars have long debated the way demons interact with human beings. Many Christians have assumed that demonic activity is limited because of the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, and as a result, demons are unable to truly possess a believer. Instead, demons are limited with their attack of Christians. Demons are only allowed to oppress and tempt. However, Dickason provides an explanation of the etymology behind the word *demonization*:

Etymology deals with the meaning of a word by analyzing its elements, considering its root and derivation. When we look at the word for demonization, improperly translated “demon possession,” it is highly instructive to notice its root and structure. The verb *daimonizomai* means “to be possessed by a demon.” The participle from the same root, *daimonizomenos*, is used twelve times in the Greek New Testament. It is used only in the present tense, indicating the continued state of one inhabited by a demon, or demonized. This participle has components to its structure. First there is the root, *daimon*, which indicates the involvement of demons. Second is the causative stem, *iz*, which shows that there is an active cause in this verb. Third is the passive ending, *omenos*. This conveys the passivity of the person described as demonized. Putting it all together, the participle in its root from means “a demon caused passivity.” This indicates a control other than that of the person who is demonized; he is regarded as the recipient of the demon’s action. In other words, demonization pictures a demon controlling a somewhat passive human.” (Fred Dickason, *Demon Possession & the Christian: A New Perspective* [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1987], 37)

Dickason along with others, such as Merrill Unger, Mark Bubeck, and Karl Payne, reject the juxtaposition of oppression versus possession in terms of Christian experience with the demonic. Instead, they argue for varying levels of control and attack, making demonic attack less like a state of being and more like a point on a spectrum. For a discussion of mild to severe forms of demonization, see Merrill Unger, *What Demons Can Do to Saints* (Chicago: Moody, 1991), 111–40. While agreeing with various level of demonization, Bubeck argues that Christians encounter demons differently than the unsaved. Mark Bubeck, *The Adversary: The Christian versus Demonic Activity* (Chicago: Moody, 1975), 90. Karl Payne argues for a three-fold model regarding spiritual warfare that includes oppression, possession, and demonization. However, his book, *Spiritual Warfare*, indicates that all of life for a Christian is spiritual warfare. Karl Payne, *Spiritual Warfare: Christians, Demonization, and Deliverance* (Washington DC: WND Books, 2011), 9.

## Angelological Taxonomy

Many different sources can be used to develop a proper taxonomy for angelic beings.<sup>53</sup> Scholars throughout church history have developed definitions, descriptions, and other associated hierarchies regarding angels. Many of these authors' views overlap with the content of this project and have proved valuable.

Because of Heiser's work with original languages and the full range of topics he addresses in both *The Unseen Realm* and *Angels*, I chose to use Heiser's biblical angelological taxonomy as the foundation of my data collection and analysis, allowing me to create an instrument that identifies angelic beings based on biblical parameters.<sup>54</sup> Additional authors who proved useful in the development of this taxonomy were Fred Dickason, Graham Cole, Stephen Noll, Edward Langton, and various contributors to the *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*.

The Old and New Testaments use many terms to describe angelic beings. Heiser notes that not every term will yield the same kind of information regarding a spiritual being. For example, Heiser writes that "the label 'spirit being' tells us only about the nature of a particular being (it is not embodied), not what that being does in God's service or its

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<sup>53</sup> See Clinton E. Arnold, *3 Crucial Questions about Spiritual Warfare* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997); Dickason, *Angels: Elect and Evil*; Edward Langton, *Supernatural the Doctrine of Spirits, Angels, and Demons, From the Middle Ages until the Present Time* (London: Rider & Co., 1934); Langton, *Essentials of Demonology*; Langton, *The Doctrine of Angels*; Edward F. Murphy, *The Handbook for Spiritual Warfare* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1996); and Noll, *Angels of Light, Powers of Darkness*.

<sup>54</sup> Heiser wrote *Angels: What the Bible Really Says About God's Heavenly Host* as an expansion of his previous work, *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible*. Both works identify weaknesses in the academic engagement of spiritual beings. In *The Unseen Realm*, Heiser argues that the Bible is best understood through the eyes of an ancient reader; however, this interpretive shift requires the current reader to shed "the filters of our traditions and presumptions." Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, 13. His first volume focuses on the etymology, syntax, and overall message regarding spiritual beings in the biblical text. In his second volume, Heiser engages the topic of angels more directly by examining angelic descriptions in the Old Testament, Second Temple Judaism, and the New Testament. Heiser is a scholar in the fields of biblical studies and the ancient Near East. He uses Hebrew, Greek, Ugaritic, and Aramaic primary sources, and his interaction with these sources provides an examination of the supernatural worldview of the Bible. Heiser also supplies textual precision regarding the nature, hierarchy, function, and description of angelic beings described in the Bible.

particular status in God’s heavenly bureaucracy.”<sup>55</sup> He explains that some terms describe the nature of a spiritual being, yielding information about the characteristics of the angelic being. Other terms describe angelic status, designating the spiritual being’s position in the heavenly hierarchical structure. Still, other terms describe the angelic being’s function or work, which helps to explain what the angelic being does under God’s supervision.<sup>56</sup>

### **Old Testament Terminology**

“**Spirit**” (*ruah*). Throughout the Old Testament it is evident that angels are spiritual beings.<sup>57</sup> Dickason notes, “Angels are primarily spirit in nature, yet they cannot be all places, or even many places, at once. An angel must move spatially from one location to another.”<sup>58</sup> They are disembodied figures who occasionally manifest in physical form for a specific purpose.<sup>59</sup> Several texts note the spiritual nature of angels. In 1 Kings 22:19–23, the prophet Micaiah explains his vision of God’s divine council<sup>60</sup> regarding King Ahab’s pending demise:

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<sup>55</sup> Michael S. Heiser, *Angels: What the Bible Really Says about God’s Heavenly Host* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018), 1.

<sup>56</sup> Heiser, *Angels*, 1.

<sup>57</sup> Gregg Allison and Andreas Kostenberger explore the topic of the Holy Spirit from biblical and systematic theological perspectives. The terms *ruah* in the Old Testament and *pneuma* in the New Testament are used for both the Holy Spirit and other immaterial beings. However, Allison and Kostenberger assert these terms and/or spiritual beings should never be conflated but recognized as altogether different based upon context. “The Holy Spirit must not be confused with angels. They are never to be worshipped, as is the Holy Spirit, nor are they necessary, as is the Holy Spirit. Still, at times God employs angels to announce and accomplish his will, provide aid for his people, and guard them against danger (e.g., Acts 12:6–11)—ministries that approximate the work of the Holy Spirit.” Gregg Allison and Andreas J. Köstenberger, *The Holy Spirit* (Nashville: B & H, 2020), 242.

<sup>58</sup> Dickason, *Angels: Elect and Evil*, 27.

<sup>59</sup> Edward Langton, *The Ministries of the Angelic Powers: According to the Old Testament and Later Jewish Literature* (London: James Clarke & Company, 1936), 46.

<sup>60</sup> Heiser defines the divine council as a “term . . . used by Hebrew and Semitic scholars to refer to the heavenly host, the pantheon of divine beings who administer the affairs of the cosmos. All ancient Mediterranean cultures had some conception of a divine council. The divine council of Israelite religion, known primarily through the psalms, was distinct in important ways.” Michael S. Heiser, “Divine Council,” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry & Writings*, ed. Tremper Longman III and Peter Enns (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2008), 112.

I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing beside him on his right hand and on his left; and the LORD said, “Who will entice Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead?” And one said one thing, and another said another. Then a spirit [*rûah*] came forward and stood before the LORD, saying, “I will entice him.” And the LORD said to him, “By what means?” And he said, “I will go out, and will be a lying spirit [*rûah*] in the mouth of all his prophets.” And he said, “You are to entice him, and you shall succeed; go out and do so.” Now therefore behold, the LORD has put a lying spirit [*rûah*] in the mouth of all these your prophets; the LORD has declared disaster for you (1 Kings 22:19–23).

Two significant observations from this passage are noteworthy. First, Micaiah describes the members of Yahweh’s divine council as spiritual beings (v. 21). Second, the “lying spirit” does not refer to a deceptive human inclination or emotional state, but rather to a specific spiritual being who would eventually deceive Ahab’s prophets, bringing about his demise. The throne room vision given in 1 Kings 22 might also yield clarity concerning Abimelech and Saul’s torment by a harmful spirit sent from God (Judg 9:22–23; 1 Sam 16:14–16). Concerning the term “spirit,” Heiser notes, “A potential ambiguity . . . is produced by the fact that the Hebrew word *rûah* can also mean ‘wind.’”<sup>61</sup> Noll asserts, “Despite their [angels] mobility and their ability to appear and disappear, angels are *not* called spirits in the Old Testament, nor are they said to possess God’s spirit.”<sup>62</sup> Even so, while not every instance of the term *ruah* necessarily refers to spiritual beings, the syntactical connection between *ruah* and *mal’akim* (angel) indicates a shared meaning, depending on the context:

Bless the LORD, O my soul! O LORD my God, you are very great! You are clothed with splendor and majesty, covering yourself with light as with a garment, stretching out the heavens like a tent. He lays the beams of his chambers on the waters; he makes the clouds his chariot; he rides on the wings of the wind [*rûah*]; he makes his messengers [*mal’akim*] winds [*rûhôt*], his ministers a flaming fire. (Ps 104:1–4)

**“Heavenly Ones” (*samayim*).** The Hebrew term *samayim* is used throughout the Old Testament to describe the expanse between heaven, earth, and in some cases, the visible sky (Gen 1:8; Deut 4:32, 33:26).<sup>63</sup> Manfred Hutter and Alfred de Jonge note that

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<sup>61</sup> Heiser, *Angels*, 5.

<sup>62</sup> Noll, *Angels of Light, Powers of Darkness*, 87.

<sup>63</sup> Heiser, *Angels*, 7.



the normative usage of the term *samayim* describes the physical world; however, ancient Near Eastern peoples also used it when discussing divine beings. Ancient Near Eastern texts outside of biblical Scripture also pair heaven and earth together. Certain gods bear epithets such as lord or king of heaven and earth, judge, light, or creator of heaven and earth. Additionally, these texts refer to some ancient deities as “gods of heaven and earth.”<sup>64</sup>

While almost all four hundred instances of this term describe the physical world, several specific passages use *samayim* to describe members of God’s divine council. Cole, describing God’s divine council, notes, “In Scripture, God the King has his court. Heaven is that created sphere where his throne is found and that constitutes his dwelling place. Heaven is the seat of his sovereignty in the created realm.”<sup>65</sup> Angels are God’s attendants in heaven. The correlation between the terms “heavens” (*samayim*) and “holy ones” (*edōsim*) in Psalm 89:5–7 is an example of this usage:

Let the heavens (*šamayim*) praise your wonders, O Lord, your faithfulness in the assembly of the holy ones (*qedōšim*)! For who in the skies can be compared to the Lord? Who among the heavenly beings is like the Lord, a God greatly to be feared in the council of the holy ones, and awesome above all who are around him?

**“Stars” (*kokebim*).** The logical connection between the term “star” and “heavenly one” is clear. When the term is used symbolically of angels, it signifies their heavenly residence or nature.<sup>66</sup> Heiser notes, “Since the members of God’s heavenly host are referred to as ‘heavenly ones,’ it should come as no surprise that they are also called ‘stars’ (*kokebim*). Indeed, the very designation ‘host’ draws on descriptions of celestial

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<sup>64</sup> Mandred Hutter, “Heaven,” in *Dictionary of Deities & Demons in the Bible*, ed. Karel van Der Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter W. Van Der Horst (Grand Rapids: Brill, 1999), 390.

<sup>65</sup> Cole, *Against the Darkness*, 39.

<sup>66</sup> Dickason, *Angels: Elect and Evil*, 61.

bodies in the Old Testament.”<sup>67</sup> Fabrizio Lelli notes the widely accepted symbolic connection between astral bodies and spiritual beings:

The identification of personified stars with angels of the heavenly hosts is well accepted within a totally monotheistic religious system: the stars stand in God’s presence, to the right and the left of His throne (1 Kgs 22:19; 2 Chr 18:18); they serve Him (Ps 103:21; Neh 9:6). . . . At the head of the heavenly hosts stands a “Prince of the army” (Josh 5:14–15; Dan 8:11), probably the highest star and the farthest from the earth, even if the actual leader is God, to whom the starry army belongs. From this conception derives the syntagma “Lord/God of hosts” (*Yhwh ’ēlōhē šēbā’ ōt*) occurring in numerous biblical passages.<sup>68</sup>

When Yahweh answers Job’s complaints from the whirlwind, he asks Job, “[Where were you] when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?” (Job 38:7). Yahweh describes the singing ministry of the “stars” and uses the term in parallel with “sons of God” (Gen 6:2; Job 2:1). The term *kokebim*, in specific passages, suggests that these supernatural beings are spiritual rather than terrestrial.

**“Holy Ones” (*qedosim*).** The term *qedosim* describes both human beings (Ps 16:3; Dan 8:24) and spiritual beings. Dickason asserts this term reflects angels’ holy character and service to God.<sup>69</sup> However, as previously mentioned, Psalm 89 and Job 15:15 indicate a different use. Psalm 89 uses celestial language to describe the council of supernatural beings surrounding Yahweh’s presence, highlighting the reality that no other being, whether spiritual or physical, is entirely like Yahweh. Eliphaz’s remarks to Job’s plight seem to describe not only human beings but also invisible beings. In verse 8, Eliphaz asks Job if he has exclusive access to God’s divine council (Job 15:8). He then asserts that Job’s self-confidence in his holiness is misplaced. After all, even the holy ones cannot be trusted: “Why does your heart carry you away, and why do your eyes flash, that you turn your spirit against God and bring such words out of your mouth? What is man, that he

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<sup>67</sup> Heiser, *Angels*, 8–9.

<sup>68</sup> Fabrizio Lelli, “Stars,” in Van Der Toorn, Becking, and Van Der Horst, *Dictionary of Deities & Demons*, 813.

<sup>69</sup> Dickason, *Angels: Elect and Evil*, 61.

can be pure? Or he who is born of a woman, that he can be righteous? Behold, God puts no trust in his holy ones, and the heavens are not pure in his sight” (Job 15:12–15).

**“Gods” or “Divine Beings” (*elohim*).** The term *elohim* in the ancient Near Eastern cultural and religious context operated within a semantic spectrum. The term regularly referred to immaterial spiritual beings associated with various levels in a particular divine hierarchy. According to Heiser, “Every member of the spiritual world can be thought of as *elohim* since the term tells us where an entity belongs in terms of nature.”<sup>70</sup> Noll, in agreement with Heiser, notes,

The Hebrew word *mal’āk* is a functional term that means “messenger.” It can apply to human or spiritual emissaries. On the spiritual side, the larger category to which “angel” belongs is that of *’lōhîm*, “divine beings,” a term that can include God himself, angels and gods of the nations. Granting the overlap in terminology, is there not a fundamental distinction between real gods and false gods, or between good angels and evil ones. The problem is that the gods of this world can dress up as angels of light. Biblical religion, although its claims for God are exclusive, is still a religion acknowledging, however hesitantly, ties with other religions (Josh 24:2; Acts 14:16-17).<sup>71</sup>

The biblical authors were not polytheists, but used *elohim* in some cases to describe evil spirits, demons, angels, and even disembodied human spirits such as Samuel (1 Sam 28:13).

While biblical writers use the term *elohim* to describe various spiritual beings, a clear distinction remained between Israel’s God and lesser gods:

We know this presumption about *’elōhîm* is mistaken by virtue of how the biblical authors used the word *’elōhîm*. Briefly, one will find *’elōhîm* in the Hebrew Bible employed to describe spiritual beings that are clearly lesser than the God of Israel. While *’elōhîm* is used thousands of times for the singular God of Israel, it is used for spiritual beings judged by the God of the Bible (Ps 82:1, 6), gods and goddesses of surrounding nations (Judg 11:24; 1 Kgs 11:33), territorial spirits (Hebrew: *shedim*, often translated “demons”; Deut 32:17), and the spirits of deceased people (1 Sam 28:13).<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Heiser, *Angels*, 12.

<sup>71</sup> Noll, *Angels of Light, Powers of Darkness*, 31.

<sup>72</sup> Heiser, *Angels*, 12.

Psalm 82:1 presents a clear example of the plural use of *elohim*, Asaph saying that “God has taken his place in the divine council; in the midst of the gods (*’elōhîm*) he holds judgment . . . I said, ‘You are gods, sons of the Most High, all of you’” (Ps 82:1, 6). Heiser concludes, “The plurality of the second *’elōhîm* in Psalm 82:1 is made obvious by Psalm 82:6. God tells the other *’elōhîm*, ‘you are gods (*’elōhîm*), all of you.’ Both pronouns (“you”) in the statement are grammatically plural. These *’elōhîm* are “sons” (plural) of the Most High, who must be the God of the Bible, as there is none higher.”<sup>73</sup>

**“Angel” (*mal’ak*; plural: *mal’akim*).** The term *malak* is translated most often as “messenger” in the Old Testament and is used to reference human messengers as well as human messengers who speak for Yahweh (Gen 32:3, 7; Deut 2:26; Neh 6:3; 2 Sam 11:19; Hag 1:13; 2 Chron 36:15; Mal 2:7). The term describes less the being’s nature and more his or her function. The term refers primarily to the individual “being sent” with a message to share.<sup>74</sup>

**“Minister” (*srt*).** The term *srt* is similar to *malak*, which describes a particular function of a spiritual being. “Bless the Lord, all his hosts, his ministers (*srt*), who do his will!” (Ps 103:21). Ministers accomplish the will of God. In Psalm 104:4, the psalmist writes, “[God] makes his messengers winds, his ministers a flaming fire.” This term most often refers to human ministers.

**“Watcher” (*’ir*; plural: *’irin*).** The Aramaic term *ir* appears only three times, and the Old Testament book of Daniel holds every occurrence.<sup>75</sup> The watcher’s function, described in Daniel, is observance. The watcher oversees the activity of human beings and speaks on God’s behalf. Some scholars disagree regarding the appropriate translation of the

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<sup>73</sup> Heiser, *Angels*, 11.

<sup>74</sup> Heiser, *Angels*, 17.

<sup>75</sup> Heiser, *Angels*, 19.

term *ʿir*. Mitchell Dahood asserts that the root derives from a term that means “to protect,”<sup>76</sup> while Robert Murray has argued for the concept of “wakefulness.”<sup>77</sup> John Collins argues that Zechariah 4:10, concerning the seven eyes of Yahweh, refers to angelic beings who are to observe humanity at God’s command.<sup>78</sup> Amar Annus argues for the Akkadian connection between the “watcher” identified in Daniel to the *apkallu*, or supernatural beings described in the Babylonian story, which gives a Near Eastern context for the Genesis 6:1–4 account. Amar Annus writes,

Figurines of *apkallus* were buried in boxes as foundation deposits in Mesopotamian buildings in order to avert evil from the house. The term *maššarē*, “watchers,” refers to these sets of figurines in Akkadian incantations according to ritual texts. This appellation matches the Aramaic term *ʿyryn*, “the wakeful ones,” for both good angels and the Watchers.<sup>79</sup>

Heiser’s conclusion that the translation of “watcher” from the term *ʿir* is the most consistent rendering with the cultural and religious context and is most compelling.

**“Host” (*sabaʿ*; plural: *sebaʿot*), “Mighty Ones” (*gibborim*).** The term *šabaʿ* is not without controversy. Broadly, it refers to large crowds of people, slave labor, conscription into military service, or a standing army. Psalm 103:21 refers to ministers as “his hosts.” Because these spiritual beings are also referred to as “stars,” there is an obvious connection with “hosts” and “heaven” (Jer 33:22; Neh 9:6; Dan 4:35). While several translations of the phrase “Lord of hosts” exist, Heiser, in agreement with T. N. D. Mettinger, asserts that a proper rendering of this phrase would highlight the “almighty” nature of the Lord. Heiser concludes,

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<sup>76</sup> Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms 1: 1–50*, The Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1965), 55.

<sup>77</sup> Robert Murray, “The Origin of Aramaic *ʿir*, Angel,” *Orientalia* 53, no. 2 (1984): 306.

<sup>78</sup> John J. Collins, “Watcher,” in Van Der Toorn, Becking, Van Der Horst, *Dictionary of Deities & Demons*, 893–95.

<sup>79</sup> Amar Annus, “On the Origin of Watchers: A Comparative Study of the Antediluvian Wisdom in Mesopotamian and Jewish Traditions,” *Journal for the Study of Pseudepigrapha* 19, no. 4 (2010): 283.

Angels are referred to as *gibborîm* in one passage, Psalm 103:20 (“Bless the Lord, O you his angels, you mighty ones [*gibborîm*] who do his word”). The wider context isn’t overtly military. That acknowledgement does not eliminate the possibility that the psalmist was influenced by the divine warrior motif when he chose the term. It is true that *gibborîm* frequently describes warriors (e.g., Isa 21:17; 2 Kgs 24:16; Ps 33:16), but this is not always the case. The term is occasionally employed to describe community leaders or upstanding citizens (Ruth 2:1; Ezra 7:28). Had Psalm 103:20 described the heavenly *gibborîm* as “those who defeat God’s enemies,” a warfare context would be clearer. But the lack of an explicit context here does not undo a warrior perspective. Readers would have quite naturally read the term as a reference to members of Yahweh’s heavenly army.<sup>80</sup>

While the imagery of divine council in the Bible has only recently resurfaced in appreciation, key passages in the Bible indicate God’s throne is an assembly of divine spiritual beings.<sup>81</sup> In Psalms 89 and 29, Ethan and David, respectively, declare, “Who among the heavenly beings [*bene ‘elim*] is like the Lord?” (Ps 89:6)” and “Ascribe, to the Lord, O heavenly beings [*‘elohim*] . . . glory and strength” (Ps 29:1). Additional descriptions of the divine council are found in 1 Kings 22 with the judgment of Ahab and in the prologue of Job when the “sons of God” gather to present themselves to the Lord. In Psalm 82, Asaph describes God’s judgment of the council because of their wickedness.

**“Mediator” (*melis*).** The notion of a mediator should be understood in relation to the biblical understanding of a divine council—not as a salvific mediation, flawlessly performed by Jesus Christ. Job 33:23 provides an example of the usage of “mediator” in terms of a spiritual being. Elihu states that Job needs mediation, saying, “If there be for him an angel, a mediator, one of the thousand, to declare to man what is right for him” (Job 19:23). Heiser notes that “mediation can be understood as ‘turning’ to someone for an explanation of God’s activity.”<sup>82</sup> One can best understand this interpretation in light of God’s divine council and angelic beings functioning as messengers of God’s plans to humanity.

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<sup>80</sup> Heiser, *Angels*, 22–23.

<sup>81</sup> Noll, *Angels of Light, Powers of Darkness*, 35.

<sup>82</sup> Heiser, *Angels*, 24.

“**Cherubim**” (*kerubim*); “**Seraphim**” (*serapim*). These two terms refer to particular angelic beings who act as guardians of God’s presence.<sup>83</sup> For those wishing to enter God’s presence without permission, *cherubim* and *seraphim* would be terrifying.<sup>84</sup> Each being is described as having multiple sets of wings, faces, hands, and feet (Exod 25:20; 37:9; Isa 6:2). For those invited into God’s presence, these beings would serve as a reminder of God’s ultimate protection and security. Both *cherubim* and *seraphim*, according to Heiser, should be understood as being distinct from angels (*mal’ak*) because angels are never described as having wings.<sup>85</sup>

### **New Testament Functionality**

The term “angel” (*angelos*) is the most consistently employed term referring to spiritual messengers devoted to God’s kingdom rule. Angels are dedicated to God’s purposes, which include both blessing and caring for human beings devoted to God as well as exercising cataclysmic judgment toward human beings who stand in opposition to God’s purposes.<sup>86</sup> Karl Barth’s understanding of angels highlights their specialized

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<sup>83</sup> Cole, *Against the Darkness*, 33.

<sup>84</sup> *Seraphim* and *Cherubim* are both immaterial beings who serve God differently than *mal’ak*. They are God’s heavenly creatures; however, they do not convey messages to humanity like angels (*mal’ak*). Rather, they act as throne guardians. They were represented by golden statues in the tabernacle and wooden statues in Solomon’s temple (Exod 25:18–22; 33:7–9; 1 Kgs 6:27). Noll writes, “Isaiah 6, I think, deals with a different class of angels. The seraphim are in the same family as the cherubim, not the sons of God and the heavenly host.” Noll, *Angels of Light, Powers of Darkness*, 180.

<sup>85</sup> According to Heiser, angels are never described in the Old Testament as winged creatures. He asserts,

We have also seen that whenever angels encounter humans in their messaging role, they appear in human form. In the Old Testament their appearance makes them indistinguishable from men. It is only when they do something unearthly that their transcendent nature becomes apparent. The only visible exceptions to this pattern are found in the New Testament, where members of the heavenly host appear to people along with luminous glory (Luke 2:9, 13) or dazzlingly white clothing (Matt 28:3). Angels are never described as having inhuman features (wings, multiple faces) like cherubim and seraphim are. The reverse is actually the case. Cherubim and seraphim may share human traits, but angels do not have creaturely attributes. The conclusion can be drawn, then, that angels—those divine beings sent to earth to interact with people—look like people and do not have wings. (Heiser, *Angels*, 164)

<sup>86</sup> Noll, *Angels of Light, Powers of Darkness*, 72–74.

function; namely, angels serve in a mediatorial function with regard to God’s revelation.<sup>87</sup> Heiser asserts New Testament angelology should include the identification of three functional angelic descriptors: ministry on behalf of believers, judgment of unbelievers, and service in heaven. However, Dickason acknowledges five distinct descriptors of angels: ministers of worship, ministers of service, agents of God’s government, protectors of God’s people, and executor of God’s judgement.<sup>88</sup> In relation to Jesus, Dickason sees angelic activities involved predicting and announcing his birth, protecting him, and strengthening him during his temptation. After Jesus’ resurrection, angels announced his victory over death, are subject to him, intrigued by his redemption, and they minister to God. At Jesus’ final return, angels accompany him, gather the elect, and worship him.<sup>89</sup>

**Role.** The most popular designation in the New Testament referring to these beings is “angel” (*angelos*), which appears 175 times in the New Testament. Four of these instances refer to fallen spiritual beings (Matt 25:41; 2 Pet 2:4; Jude 6; Rev 12:9).<sup>90</sup> With regard to spiritual beings, the New Testament refers more often to these beings in relation to their specific function rather than their particular nature. It describes these beings as

“spirits” (Heb 1:14; Rev 1:4; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6), “heavenly ones” (*epouranioi*; 1 Cor 15:48), “glorious ones” (*doksai*; 2 Pet 2:10; Jude 8); “lights” (*phōtōn*; Jas 1:17); “holy ones” (*hagiais*; Jude 14); and (possibly) “stars.” New Testament writers seldom qualify the term “angel” with “holy” (Mark 8:38 [cf. Luke 9:26]; Acts

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<sup>87</sup> Mark Lindsay, “The Heavenly Witness to God: Karl Barth’s Doctrine of Angels,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 70 (2017): 1–18. The praise of God is expected of all creation. Barth notes, “The angels [praise God] (and unfortunately we have almost completely forgotten that we are surrounded by the angels as crown witnesses to the divine glory) . . . They [praise God] along with us or without us. They do it also against us to shame us and instruct us.” Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 2, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of God* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1957), 648.

<sup>88</sup> Dickason, *Angels: Elect and Evil*, 90–93.

<sup>89</sup> Dickason, *Angels: Elect and Evil*, 93–95.

<sup>90</sup> Heiser, *Angels*, 120.



10:22; Rev 14:10). However, angels are associated with heaven (Matt 22:30; 24:36; Mark 12:25; 13:32; Luke 2:13, 15; Heb 12:22; Rev 10:1; 14:17; 18:1; 20:1).<sup>91</sup>

The New Testament only references two angels by name—Gabriel (Luke 1:19, 26) and Michael (Jude 9, Rev 12:7). The New Testament references archangels (*archangelos*) in only two instances. The scripture provides limited detail about their function, except that they will announce the return of Jesus at the culmination of his kingdom.

Heiser argues that an Old Testament supernatural worldview profoundly informed the apostle Paul’s understanding of spiritual beings. He writes,

[Paul] understood and presumed the Deuteronomy 32 worldview: “rulers” (*archontōn* or *archōn*) “principalities” (*archē*) “powers”/“authorities” (*exousia*) “powers” (*dynamis*) “dominions”/“lords” (*kyrios*) “thrones” (*thronos*) “world rulers” (*kosmokratōr*). These lemmas have something in common—they were used both in the New Testament and other Greek literature to denote geographical domain authority. At times, these terms are used of humans, but several instances demonstrate that Paul had spiritual beings in mind.<sup>92</sup>

Spiritual beings unaffiliated with God’s purposes, but who actively work against God’s people and his plans, are qualified with adjectives (i.e., evil spirits). Heiser explains,

“Demon” is actually a transliteration of the Greek *daimōn* (or the related *daimonion*), which in classical Greek literature describes any supernatural being without regard to its disposition (good or evil). A *daimōn* can be a god or goddess, a lesser supernatural being, or even the disembodied spirit of a human. Consequently, *daimōn* is semantically akin to Hebrew *’elōhîm*. Gospel writers use *daimōn* in combination with descriptive phrases like “evil/unclean spirits,” and so *daimōn/daimonion* in the New Testament nearly always point to a disembodied entity hostile to God. These supernatural fallen spirits are also cast as fallen or wandering “stars” (Matt 24:29 [cf. Isa 34:4]; Mark 13:25; Jude 13).<sup>93</sup>

**Ministry.** While the Bible describes angels as serving God in both heaven and earth, the majority of instances focus on angelic service on earth. Three-quarters of the approximate 180 references to angels in the New Testament focus on terrestrial angelic

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<sup>91</sup> Heiser, *Angels*, 119–20.

<sup>92</sup> Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, 329–30.

<sup>93</sup> Heiser, *Angels*, 118.

work.<sup>94</sup> Scripture identifies angels as ministering spirits who are sent by God to care for those who are heirs of salvation (Heb 1:14). Throughout the New Testament, angels perform a variety of functions to inform, serve, and provide for God's people. An angel appears to Zechariah and Mary to announce the birth of two significant babies (Luke 1:26–38; Luke 1:8–23). An angel, along with a multitude of additional angels, appears to a small band of shepherds, announcing the arrival of God's promised Messiah (Luke 2:8–15). Joseph receives instruction from an angel through a divinely inspired dream (Matt 1:20–24; 2:13, 19). After Jesus spends forty days being tempted by Satan in the wilderness, angels provide for Jesus' physical needs (Matt 4:11; Mark 1:13, Luke 22:43). An angel releases Peter from prison and escorts him to safety (Acts 5:19). An angel visits Paul to encourage him, along with the rest of the members, aboard a ship lost at sea (Acts 27:23). As demonstrated, the service of angels is multifaceted concerning earthly care of human beings. Angels interpret visions and dreams for people, advocate for individuals, and on certain occasions, rescue believers from dangerous situations.

**Judgment of unbelievers.** The Bible also describes angels as agents of God's judgment toward those who refuse to submit to God's purposes and kingdom. This enactment of judgment, as typically described, is eschatological. For example, Jesus describes the judgment of God's angels:

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*. (Mark 8:38)

For the Son of Man is going to come with his *angels* in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done. (Matt 16:27)

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the *angels* with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. (Matt 25:31–32)

The book of Revelation is replete with instances of angelic judgment at God's command. John describes angels as blowing trumpets, bringing hail, raining down fire,

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<sup>94</sup> Heiser, *Angels*, 132.

and throwing burning mountains into the sea. Furthermore, he describes them as stars falling from heaven, darkness, and related to bloodshed (Rev 8:7, 8, 10, 12, 13–21). God sends devastating plagues to humanity via the hands of angels (Rev 15:1, 16:1–4). John portrays angels legislating judgment as drought, hunger, and spiritual blindness (Rev 16:8–16). As stated, most instances of angelic judgment are eschatological; however, one exception is God’s judgment of Herod: “On an appointed day Herod put on his royal robes, took his seat upon the throne, and delivered an oration to them. And the people were shouting, ‘The voice of a god, and not of a man!’ Immediately an angel of the Lord struck him down, because he did not give God the glory, and he was eaten by worms and breathed his last” (Acts 12:21–23).

**Heavenly service.** A distinct role that angels serve is worshiping and serving God in heaven. I already noted that angels interact with human beings to evoke worship among God’s people. In Revelation, John describes an epic scene of angelic worship: “Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, ‘Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!’” (Rev 5:11–12).

This description of a large assembly in the New Testament is an obvious allusion to the divine council scene regularly mentioned in the Old Testament. G. K. Beale compares the divine council sequence in Daniel 7 with Revelation 5, noting the congruence:

Not only are the descriptions of the two angels verbally alike, but they also have the same kind of role: the Danielic angel is the spokesman for the heavenly council and proclaims a decree of judgment followed by restoration with respect to Nebuchadnezzar; the angel in Revelation 5 is also the spokesman for the heavenly council and proclaims a divine decree of judgment and redemption with respect to the cosmos. The implication of both proclamations in their contexts is that no created

being, only God, possesses the worthiness and authority to be sovereign over history and to be able to execute his cosmic plan.<sup>95</sup>

The divine council, in the book of Revelation, does not operate as an approving council. Instead, the divine council is a community introduced to God's people and a community with whom God's people are welcomed into fellowship (Rev 3:5; Rev 12:8–9).<sup>96</sup> According to Heiser, the most dramatic passage displaying the divine council's relationship to humanity is Hebrews 2:10–15:

For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to Glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering. For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers, saying, "I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the assembly (*ekklesia*) I will sing your praise." And again, "I will put my trust in him." And again, "Behold, I and the children God has given me." Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. (Heb 2:10–15)

The Greek term *ekklesia* appears fifty-two times in the Old Testament Septuagint. The term can refer to a human assembly or congregation, but it can also refer to spiritual beings. An example of the term *ekklesia* describing the divine council appears in Psalm 89: "Let the heavens praise your wonders, O LORD, your faithfulness in the assembly of the holy ones! For who in the skies can be compared to the LORD? Who among the heavenly beings is like the LORD, a God greatly to be feared in the council (*ekklesia*) of the holy ones, and awesome above all who are around him?" (vv. 5–7, LXX).

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, theologizing about the concept of angels and demons is no small task. Angels exist to serve God's will and support his people. Conversely, demons oppose God's will and continuously attack his people. Many theologians have studied this topic, forming various streams of thought concerning angelology. The terms and functions explored in this chapter serve as a basis for data gathering that I explain in the following chapter.

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<sup>95</sup> G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, The New International Greek Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1999), 338.

<sup>96</sup> Heiser, *Angels*, 139.

## CHAPTER 3

### BIBLICAL INSTRUMENT FOR IDENTIFYING SPIRITUAL BEINGS

Scripture records numerous accounts concerning spiritual beings. These accounts include various terms associated with spiritual entities, with some terms more easily identified than other terms. These stories reveal specific information about spiritual beings and provide context for understanding them. While commentators occasionally use these stories to give a broader understanding of the unseen spiritual world, most often they neglect them or only explore them perfunctorily. Spiritual beings are rarely discussed in detail; instead, they are relegated to secondary characters who provide an obligatory service by conveying pertinent information to the main actors in the drama—humans and God.

While the biblical narratives supply readers with a multiplicity of instances, few provide thorough information regarding the spiritual beings' origins, roles, personalities, and specific behaviors. If these descriptions are read individually, they do not give the reader a comprehensive understanding about spiritual beings; however, if these instances are examined in conjunction with one another and analyzed, they provide a paradigm to compare and contrast spiritual beings outside of Scripture to determine a specific spiritual being's identity, allegiance, and purpose.

The purpose of this data analysis research was to develop a biblical instrument for examining representations of spiritual beings (BIISB)—in particular, the figures Gabriel and Jibril from biblical and select Islamic texts. The data extrapolated through this research method provides inference concerning specific character traits, behavioral qualities, and informational themes consistent with angelic beings in the Old and New

Testaments. The inferred qualifications were then used to assess texts, in order specifically to discuss Gabriel from both traditions.

In this chapter, I explain the nature of grounded theory analysis as it pertains to the development of a qualitative data BIISB. Additionally, I explain the principles established by data analysis for identifying spiritual beings.

Grounded theory is a general methodology based on data analysis through systematic guidelines. The fundamental premise rests on the researcher performing thorough analyses of empirical data. In this dissertation, the data analyzed is textual rather than ethnographic or anthropologic. I constructed the instrument using data gathered from 1,084 instances recorded in Scripture, accurate coding, and data extrapolation, thereby giving me a credible tool for the biblical assessment of spiritual beings outside Scripture.

I am aware of no previous research project that has performed this task. Other scholars have examined the concept of angels within their distinct religious traditions,<sup>1</sup> and still others have attempted to compare various angels from different religious texts.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Several authors have examined the historical and religious nature of angels. Stephen Burge, in his monograph on angels in Islam, assesses the classic Islamic perspective on angels concerning themes, function, hierarchy, and the religious cross-pollination of angelic description. Stephen Burge, *Angels in Islam: Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūfī's al-Ḥabā'ik fī akhbār al-malā'ik* (London: Routledge, 2011). Stephen Noll also provides an academic treatment of angels concerning the Christian tradition. He examines historical developments regarding the protestant understanding of angels. Stephen F. Noll, *Angels of Light, Powers of Darkness: Thinking Biblically about Angels, Satan & Principalities* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1998). David Albert Jones examines the development of the contemporary understanding of angels in his introduction to the topic. David Albert Jones, *Angels: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

<sup>2</sup> A few authors have written about the religious background of angelic beings. Edward Langton's monograph from the early twentieth century examines the historical development of belief in angelic beings, both good and evil, from the ancient Near East. Additionally, he has written on the ecclesiastical development of angelology from the Middle Ages to the twentieth century. Edward Langton, *Essentials of Demonology: A Study of Jewish and Christian Doctrine, Its Origin and Development* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2014); *Supernatural the Doctrine of Spirits, Angels, and Demons, From the Middle Ages until the Present Time* (London: Rider & Co., 1934). Mortimer Adler's work on angels discusses the contemporary development of angels in relation to philosophy. Mortimer J. Adler, *The Angels and Us* (New York: Touchstone, 1993), 99–144. Ranger Cline's monograph examines the historical development of angels from the Roman period to the subsequent Christian period. Ranger Cline, *Ancient Angels: Conceptualizing Angeloi in the Roman Empire* (Boston: Brill, 2011). A recent addition to the study of angels is Valery Rees' cultural history of angels. Rees explores a variety of themes, terms, and descriptors of angels

This project provides a qualitative data analysis instrument for assessing spiritual beings based on biblical texts. Furthermore, this project assesses the representations of one particular angel, Gabriel, as recorded in the Bible and select Islamic sources.

In this chapter, I describe the methodology and procedures utilized in the development of this study. The study provides an examination of the identity of angelic beings based on a comprehensive collection and exploration of angelic accounts found in Scripture. The evidence obtained will enable the reader to accurately discern representations of angelic figures found in other religious texts based on biblical examples of angelic personality, message, behavior, and status.

The individual accounts explored highlight the complexity of spiritual beings. Furthermore, these instances display distinctly angelic qualities and qualities that are not angelic. A few examples of angelic descriptors include being near God, acting on behalf of God regarding specific messages conveyed to his people, providing nourishment or encouragement, delivering individuals from physical harm, and enacting judgment on those who oppose God.

## **Research and Design Overview**

### **The Emergence of Grounded Theory Analysis**

The history and development of qualitative data analysis intertwine with the overall development of social scientific theory beginning in the early twentieth century. During this period, significant tensions developed regarding the reliability of qualitative data analysis as opposed to quantitative data analysis. While some anthropological research projects necessitated quantitative data analysis, some scholars argued for the examination

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throughout history. While her book is written from an agnostic position regarding the reality of these beings, her book does provide a helpful overview of human traditions associated with angels. Valery Rees, *From Gabriel to Lucifer: A Cultural History of Angels* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2013).

of empirical studies that eventually laid the groundwork for constructing theories focused on qualitative data analysis.<sup>3</sup>

Early sociologists working at the University of Chicago who began building this foundation include George Hebert, John Dewey, Dorothy Swayne Thomas, W. I. Thomas, and Florian Znaniecki. These scholars helped shape the core principles related to qualitative data analysis and their implementation in the field of anthropology and ethnographic research. One notable student greatly affected by the writings of these scholars was Anselm Strauss. Strauss eventually developed the foundations for grounded theory analysis.

By the 1940s, sociological research shifted from life history collection and case studies to the ethnographic method of participant observation. While many researchers focused on the processes of data collection, whether through interviews or participant observation, the process by which the data was analyzed remained ambiguous.

Grounded theory emerged as an answer to the questions about legitimate methods of analysis. Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss provided a collaborative research project outlining the methods of data analysis in *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*.<sup>4</sup> In this comprehensive study, Glaser and Strauss examine the topic of death and dying in hospital contexts, including the attitudes of doctors and nurses relating to death and the lack of communication by hospital staff to the dying concerning terminal diagnosis. Their research developed systematic methodological strategies that researchers from other fields could use in analysis.

In *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists*, Strauss asserts that analysis is incredibly complex, which makes the process of interpretation challenging to researchers wishing to bring to light the results of their study. Strauss indicates that evolving

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<sup>3</sup> Kathy Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory* (Washington, DC: Sage, 2014), 5.

<sup>4</sup> Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing, 1967).



interpretation should continually guide both complex interpretations and data collection instead of remaining static. This approach enables the researcher to annotate emergent themes and ideas accurately. Strauss also explains that a researcher must choose a topic that is adequately dense to ensure that the research analysis will properly uncover linked concepts, thereby giving the research a credible conclusion. Additionally, Strauss argues that a methodology for qualitative data analysis should necessarily provide a microscopic examination of the data (i.e., words, phrases, etc.) to demonstrate the complexity of the data collected.<sup>5</sup>

Strauss asserts that grounded theory, like all scientific inquiry, must be grounded in data: “Scientific theories require first of all that they be conceived, then elaborated, then checked out. Everyone agrees on that. What they do not always agree on are the exact terms with which to refer to those three aspects of inquiry. The terms which we prefer are induction, deduction, and verification.”<sup>6</sup>

Induction refers to the researcher’s intuition regarding a particular topic, which the researcher may convert into a hypothesis before data collection and analysis. *Deduction* refers to the process of drawing implications from a hypothesis to verify the accuracy of the hypothesis. The term *verification* refers to the process of determining whether the hypothesis is accurate, partially accurate, or inaccurate based on the analysis.

Many challenged Strauss’ conclusions regarding the validity of qualitative data analysis. Kathy Charmaz summarizes the objections of social science positivists<sup>7</sup>:

Mid-century positivistic conceptions of scientific method and knowledge stressed objectivity, generality, replication of research, and falsification of competing hypotheses and theories. Social researchers who adopted the positivistic paradigm aimed to discover causal explanations and to make predictions about an external,

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<sup>5</sup> Anselm Strauss, *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 10.

<sup>6</sup> Strauss, *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists*, 11.

<sup>7</sup> According to Charmaz, positivists believe in a singular method for systematic observation, replicable experiments, clear definitions, logically deduced hypotheses, and verifiable evidence. In essence, positivists hold strongly to the scientific method that leans into a modernistic objective view of the world.

knowable world . . . [Positivists] rejected other possible ways of knowing, such as through interpreting meanings or intuitive realizations. Thus, qualitative research that analyzed and interpreted research participants' meanings sparked disputes about its scientific value.<sup>8</sup>

Quantitative researchers saw qualitative data research as impressionistic, local, arbitrary, and even anecdotal. Quantitative researchers seldom develop new theories and instead rely on quantitative paradigms that test logically deduced hypotheses rather than qualitative theories that include coding, memo writing, and sampling for theory development.

### **Developments in Grounded Theory**

Grounded theory has not remained static during the past fifty years. Since Glaser and Strauss' original research in 1967, other researchers have adapted and reshaped grounded theory. Strauss and Glaser eventually held opposing views on the theory. Glaser maintained that grounded theory was a method for discovery that strongly emphasized the emergence of theory from the data collected.

Juliet Corbin and Anselm Strauss' collaboration<sup>9</sup> moved the theory toward a method of verification, which Glaser viewed as being a contradiction to the overall method. While Glaser and Strauss initially disagreed with positivist analysis, critics eventually accused both researchers of aligning with positivism. Glaser and Strauss applied a new approach, called constructivist grounded theory analysis, to grounded theory. This formulation of grounded theory adopted inductive comparisons of data collected, focused on emergent theories, and held to an open-ended research conclusion, denying the tendency of positivists to hypothesize to prove their theory correct through data collection and analysis. Charmaz notes, "Constructivist grounded theory highlights the flexibility of the method and resists mechanical applications of it."<sup>10</sup> Charmaz, a

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<sup>8</sup> Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, 6.

<sup>9</sup> Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory* (Washington, DC: Sage Publications, 1998).

<sup>10</sup> Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, 13.

proponent of constructivist grounded theory, asserts that constructivist grounded theory “shreds notions of a neutral observer and value-free expert. Not only does that mean that researchers must examine rather than erase how their privileges and preconceptions may shape the analysis, but it also means that their values shape the very facts that they can identify.”<sup>11</sup> Charmaz’s assessment is helpful because it identifies the researcher’s bias regarding data collection and ensures that the researcher properly examines his or her preconceptions, denying the possibility that an individual does not affect the outcome of the research or the theories that emerge.

This principle regarding researcher bias is essential in the overall development of this research project. My collection of angelic references and subsequent analysis and coding are not without bias and preconceptions. However, I examined each account thoroughly, and the coding I applied should not necessarily reflect my interpretations regarding the spiritual entity examined. Instead, the labels reflect what was revealed in the text. This approach yielded contradictory results in some instances. However, the approach also helped shape the emergence of predominant themes, which describe spiritual beings who serve God as angels versus spiritual beings who would not share that allegiance to God as non-angels.

### **An Overview of Grounded Theory Analysis**

**Research question.** The first step in any research project is to identify a research problem or research question. This step involves literary review, critical thinking, decision-making, sorting, and clarification. The research question should be complex enough to warrant extensive data collection and analysis, but also sufficiently narrow to limit data collection and analysis to a manageable volume. For this chapter, the research question is quite simple: “What are the identifying characteristics of angels described in the Bible?” While this question might seem obvious to some readers, the related data

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<sup>11</sup> Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, 13.

encompass numerous accounts related to spiritual beings who display a variety of characteristics.

**Data collection.** The second step in the development of grounded theory analysis is data collection. Social scientists use a variety of means for this collection. Concerning grounded theory, most researchers employ various forms of field observation, including interviews, video recordings, audio recordings of meetings, documents, journals, and field notes. Field observation and recordings are outside the limits of this project because the data collected is textual. I have delimited the data collection to biblical texts describing spiritual beings, but this source proved to be a fertile environment for data collection.

**Coding.** The application of codes to the data—the third step—is an essential procedure in the development of grounded theory analysis. Charmaz highlights the importance of coding in the research process, stating, “Coding links collecting data with developing an emergent theory. It gives you an analytic skeleton for your grounded theory.”<sup>12</sup> Coding enables the data to be organized, categorized, and synthesized. Through initial or focused coding and the subsequent step of theoretical coding, the researcher should be able to identify emerging themes and categories, which will assist in the development of theories emerging from the analysis. I will subsequently provide more explanation regarding the coding process for this research project.

**Theory building and sampling.** The final stage of grounded theory analysis is the development of theories that emerge from the coding processes. This step is the goal of the analysis. Strauss asserts, “The goal of grounded theory is to generate a theory that accounts for a pattern of behavior that is relevant and problematic for those involved. The

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<sup>12</sup> Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, 19.

generation of theory occurs around a *core* category (and sometimes more).”<sup>13</sup> After developing several categories, the researcher attempts to “theoretically saturate”<sup>14</sup> or to extrapolate theoretical principles from the categories that seem to have the most textual evidence or explanatory value. After developing theoretical principles derived from the data collection and coding process, the researcher must engage in theoretical sampling. Corbin and Strauss indicate that this step is cumulative: “Each event sampled builds from and adds to previous data collection and analysis. . . . A certain degree of consistency is important to theoretical sampling in the sense that comparisons are made systematically on each category, ensuring that each is fully developed.”<sup>15</sup>

This project’s data set is comprised of all the accounts in the Bible related to spiritual beings, and the coding process highlights the various characteristics associated with those spiritual beings, culminating in the development of salient theoretical principles about the personality, behavior, appearance, and message of spiritual beings. The final stage of analysis is the theoretical sampling of the biblical passages related to Gabriel, and the Islamic sources selected that describe Gabriel, both of which I excluded during the original data collection and coding process.

### **Grounded Theory and the Coding Process**

Coding is a critical link between data collection and the extrapolation of theory explaining the importance of the data. Coding acts as the skeletal structure of the data collection and analysis phases of grounded theory analysis. Charmaz notes, “Through coding, you *define* what is happening in the data and begin to grapple with what it means. The codes take form together as elements of a nascent theory that explains these data and

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<sup>13</sup> Strauss, *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists*, 34.

<sup>14</sup> Strauss, *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists*, 35.

<sup>15</sup> Corbin and Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research*, 203.

directs further data-gathering.”<sup>16</sup> Strauss and Corbin explain five foundational aspects of grounded theory coding procedure: “(1) build rather than test a theory, (2) provide researchers with analytic tools for handling masses of raw data, (3) help analyst to consider alternative meanings of phenomena, (4) be systematic and creative simultaneously, (5) [and] identify, develop, and relate concepts that are the building blocks of theory.”<sup>17</sup> I subsequently provide an overview of various forms of coding that grounded theory analysts use.

**The coding process.** Initial coding or open coding is the practice of data analysis that identifies concepts and properties by careful observation of data.<sup>18</sup> Initially, I performed this coding under the premise that a researcher could examine data without preconceived categories in mind; however, both Glaser and Charmaz assert that analysis independent of personal bias is not possible.<sup>19</sup> Researchers approach the coding process with a worldview and with prior knowledge, which affects the observation process. A credible approach to initial coding must acknowledge the researcher’s prior understanding and beliefs before observing the data. A researcher cannot eliminate his or her bias, but his or her findings are more transparent when the analyst acknowledges personal bias in the explanation of the emergent theory. Initial codes may focus on specific words, phrases, or concepts that repeat in the data. Charmaz explains it is important to remember that “initial codes are provisional, comparative, and grounded in the data. They are provisional because you aim to remain open to other analytic possibilities and create codes that best fit the data you have. You progressively follow up on codes that indicate that they fit the

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<sup>16</sup> Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, 113.

<sup>17</sup> Strauss and Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research*, 13.

<sup>18</sup> Strauss and Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research*, 101.

<sup>19</sup> Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, 117.

data. Then you gather data to explore and fill out these codes.”<sup>20</sup> Initial codes are labels that highlight specific markers within the data enabling further comparison and categorical development.

The second phase of coding used in the analytic process of grounded theory is selective or focused coding. Charmaz explains, “In focused coding you use these codes to sift, sort, synthesize, and analyze large amounts of data. Focused coding requires decisions about which initial codes make the most analytic sense to categorize your data incisively and completely. It also can involve coding your initial codes.”<sup>21</sup> Focused coding differs from initial coding because it does not merely identify concepts or characteristics, but it further develops these codes by integrating and refining them in particular categories. The researcher examines the collected codes and determines which codes are most consistent or aberrant within the data. The analyst may then determine one central code category or multiple code categories, depending on the density or complexity of the data collected.

The last phase in the coding process is theoretical coding. This stage in the analysis process enables the researcher to conceptualize how the codes and categories relate to one another and substantiate specific hypotheses or generate notable theories from the data. A potential pitfall in the theoretical coding process is the influence of a researcher’s prior understanding or beliefs on the data analyzed. This stage of coding aims to extrapolate new modes of thinking about the data and the interrelationships of the codes and categories. Charmaz asserts, “Theoretical codes are meant to be integrative; they lend form to the focused codes you have collected. These codes may help you tell an analytic story that has coherence. Hence, theoretical codes not only conceptualize how your substantive codes are related, but also may move your analytic story in a theoretical direction.”<sup>22</sup> Theoretical coding is critical to the research process because the researcher

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<sup>20</sup> Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, 117.

<sup>21</sup> Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, 138.

<sup>22</sup> Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, 150.

draws out the implications of the coding process and writes the concluding explanation of the grounded theory or theories.

**Axial coding.** An additional phase of coding that may precede the steps already described is axial coding. The term *axis* refers to the central category used to connect the codes as well as the development of additional subcategories that support the central concept or category. Strauss explains the axial coding process regarding three particular dimensions:

The analyst begins to build up a dense texture of relationships around the ‘axis’ of the category, mainly by explicitly or implicitly dimensionalizing it (this task is visible to others, requires little skill, seems routine). Second, the analyst hypothesizes about and increasingly can specify varieties of conditions and consequences, interactions, strategies, and consequences (the coding paradigm) that are associated with the appearance of the phenomenon referenced by the category. Third, the latter becomes increasingly related to other categories.<sup>23</sup>

While axial coding can be helpful in the identification of particular categories, recent social scientists have deemed it less effective in allowing the theories to emerge from the data.<sup>24</sup> Axial coding provides a framework that researchers can apply to their data analysis. Researchers who rely on guidelines or procedures when processing data may find axial coding helpful. Still, for this research project, I have chosen to abstain from the axial coding process, and instead pursue initial, focused, and theoretical coding.

### **Procedural Overview**

This qualitative study was a multi-phase content analysis of specific accounts spanning the entire canon of Christian Scripture. In the preliminary work, I mined the entire Bible for specific references regarding spiritual beings. I identified terms in the Old and New Testaments that referred to spiritual beings, narrowing the volume of texts for analysis.

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<sup>23</sup> Strauss, *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists*, 64.

<sup>24</sup> Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, 147–50.



In phase 1, I developed a comprehensive list of terminology associated with spiritual beings for analysis and identified select texts that contained words from the aforementioned terminology.

In phase 2, I coded the individual accounts.

In phase 3, I finalized a code list, separated the codes into thematic categories, and extrapolated salient principles for use in identifying angelic beings from data analysis.

In phase 4, I performed exegesis on accounts related to Gabriel in biblical texts and selected Islamic texts; analyzed these Gabriel accounts, applying the principles that resulted in qualitative data analysis for comparison; and analyzed the similarities and disparities between the two traditions accounts of Gabriel. Phase 4 concluded when I wrote the research report.

I conducted a qualitative analysis of the coding phases using the software Atlas.ti—which belongs to the genre of Computer-Aided Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) programs—to catalog and notate specific codes related to the data. From this analysis, I developed an instrument for identifying angelic beings based on biblical principles. I then tested the method against biblical and select Islamic texts that refer specifically to Gabriel.

### **Initial and Selective Coding**

I analyzed thirty-seven specific terms from the Greek and Hebrew texts of the Bible, examining each word independently to identify its particular usage within the textual context. The terms selected occurred 2,867 times in the Bible, and I accessed 1,084 occurrences with initial coding, selective coding, and theoretical sampling. Table 1 lists the terms examined in this project.

Table 1. Terms analyzed in the coding process

Term	Number of Occurrences	Coded Occurrences
Angel   <i>mal'ak</i>	213	196
Angel   <i>angelos</i>	175	174
Archangel   <i>archangelos</i>	2	2
Azazel   <i>azazel</i>	3	3
Cherubim   <i>kerubim</i>	91	91
Cherubim   <i>cheroubin</i>	1	1
Demons   <i>daimonia</i>	13	13
Demons   <i>sed</i>	2	2
Destruction   <i>qeteb</i>	4	4
Devil   <i>diabolos</i>	37	34
dragon   <i>drakon</i>	12	12
Dragon   <i>tannin</i>	14	14
Elemental spirits   <i>stoicheion</i>	5	5
Goat demons   <i>seirim</i>	4	4
Holy Ones   <i>qedosim</i>	13	8
Hosts   <i>sebaot</i>	484	282
Household gods   <i>terapim</i>	15	7
Leviathan   <i>liwayatan</i>	5	5
Michael   <i>Micahel</i>	2	2
Michael   <i>Mikael</i>	13	13
Mighty One   <i>gibbor</i>	159	3
Nephilim   <i>nepilim</i>	2	2
Pestilence   <i>deber</i>	3	3
Satan   <i>satan</i>	27	20
Satan   <i>Satanas</i>	36	33
Seraphim   <i>serapim</i>	31	8
Serpent   <i>ophis</i>	14	8
Serpent   <i>nehas</i>	31	17
Spirit   <i>pneuma</i>	379	44
Spirit   <i>ruah</i>	378	32
Star   <i>kokab</i>	37	10
The Sons of God   <i>bene ha elohim</i>	21	10
Watcher   <i>'ir</i>	3	3
Mediator   <i>melis</i>	4	1
Holy ones   <i>qedosim</i>	116	6
Heavenly Ones   <i>samayim</i>	421	10
Minister   <i>srt</i>	97	2
Totals	2,867	1,084

Of the 1,084 occurrences, multiple codes were associated with each term. After analysis, I divided these codes into 5 categories, as shown in table 2. I listed 34 codes as descriptors of angelic appearance and 70 codes as descriptors of angelic behavior. I listed 9 codes as descriptors of angelic message concerning content. I listed 13 codes as descriptors of angelic personality and 18 codes as descriptors of angelic status. The texts

record that spiritual beings who do not serve God are non-angelic spiritual beings. I also gathered, coded, and analyzed these occurrences to provide a comparison of angelic and non-angelic spiritual beings.

Table 2. Initial coding, occurrences, and selective coding for all spiritual beings

Initial Coding	Occurrences	Selective Coding
Animal Form	32	Appearance
Bright Clothing	4	
Bronze	5	
Cloud	6	
Dark	0	
Darkness	2	
Dragon	8	
Embodied	2	
Face	11	
Feet	1	
Fiery	15	
Fire	16	
Giant	4	
Goat	2	
Gold	9	
Hand	16	
Head	2	
Human Form	5	
Image/Statue	51	
Impersonation	0	
Invisible	8	
A - Light	9	
Lightning	7	
Lion	3	
Monster	1	
Night	1	
Sea Monster	3	
Staff	3	
Sword/Weaponry	8	
Visible Appearance	35	
Water	10	
Wilderness Habitation	18	
Winds	16	
Wings	25	

Table 2 continued

Initial Coding	Occurrences	Selective Coding
Accusatory	5	Behavior
Adversary	7	
Anthropomorphic	40	
Authority	12	
Beneath the Throne	12	
Blindness	2	
Captive	1	
Causation of Internal/External Visions	2	
Celibate	2	
Christian Adversary	8	
Cleansing	1	
Combative	22	
Confusion	0	
Deafness	1	
Death	1	
Demonic Illness	14	
Demons Removed	21	
Desire	3	
Devour	1	
Earthquake	2	
Exploited	1	
Facilitate Divine Judgment	83	
Flying	15	
Guardian Angel	6	
Guidance	6	
Harmful Planning	26	
Human Sacrifice	1	
Idolatry	17	
Infestation	0	
Intercession	1	
Leading Worship	24	
Mediator	3	
Mental Domination	4	
Mental/Emotional Agitation	15	
Merciful	1	
Miracles/Wonders	5	
Mountain	3	
Murder	1	
Muteness	5	
No Consumption of Food	1	
Nonsomnambulism	6	
Observing	13	
Opposition	1	
Paralysis	1	
Pestilence	2	
Physical Manipulation	20	
Physical Representation	42	
Physical Touch	4	

Table 2 continued

Initial Coding	Occurrences	Selective Coding
Poison	7	Behavior (continued)
Power	26	
Preservation	7	
Prophetic	26	
Protection	31	
Provision	21	
Sacrifice	16	
Sea Habitation	1	
Seizures/Epileptic	4	
Sexual Activity	4	
Sinful	12	
Sinful Patterns	5	
Sinless	1	
Sitting	3	
Somnambulism	8	
Spatially Limited	28	
Spiritual Oppression	57	
Standing	24	
Thunder	2	
To Flee	1	
Transport to Heaven	2	
Trumpet Announcement	12	
Verbal Speech	115	
Violence	47	
Walked	5	
Worship	29	
Wrath	1	
Blasphemous	0	Message
Divine Directive	40	
Divine Promise	15	
Dream/Vision	19	
Fallacious	24	
Messianic Prophecy	5	
Positive Message	13	
Slander	4	
Temptation	16	
Warning/Preserving Life	4	

Table 2 continued

Initial Coding	Occurrences	Selective Coding	
Anger	4	Personality	
Clairvoyance	1		
Cunning	1		
Deception	32		
Emotional	4		
Fearsome	13		
Intelligent	12		
Joy	2		
Knowledge	12		
Language	2		
Limited Knowledge	4		
Masculine Being	1		
Wisdom	1		
Appointed/Commissioned by God	383		Status
Appointed/Commissioned by Satan	4		
Cherubim	66		
Chosen/Elect	1		
Cursed	4		
Divine Herald	53		
Evil Origin	9		
Good Origin	277		
Heavenly Spirits	50		
Holy	4		
Judged by God	55		
Kingdom	1		
Seraphim	2		
Subject to Christian Authority	12		
Submission to Jesus	31		
Submissive to God	53		
Throne	2		
Unclean	21		
Total Initial Codes: 151	Total Occurrences: 2,554	Total Selective Codes: 5	

## Theoretical Coding and Principle Development

After extensive analysis of the codes and their co-occurrence within the codebook, I divided the codes into the five major categories using selective coding. These categories are appearance, behavior, message, personality, and status. These five categories clarified the biblical assessment for identifying angelic beings. After examining the frequency of codes used to identify spiritual beings, I outlined the dominant character traits most often attributed to angels and non-angels in the Bible.

### Theoretical Coding for Angelic Spiritual Beings

**Angelic appearance.** While angels are invisible spiritual creatures, they may manifest with physical anthropomorphic appearance. Biblical reporters often identify them visually by their bright clothing, fire, or lightning, and they occasionally describe them as winged creatures associated with the power of the wind.<sup>25</sup> When interacting with human beings, angels induce mental and emotional agitation because of their fearsome appearance or persona.

**Angelic behavior.** Angels can verbally speak when manifested in physical form. In heaven, they lead the worship of God. On earth, they act as emissaries for God, heralding his message to human beings regarding his divine judgment, the promise of restoration, or the message of the Messiah. The only record of angels seated is at the tomb of Jesus. Other references describe angels walking, standing, or flying. Angels are spatially limited, despite being spiritual beings. They observe human activity and also appear in moments of personal human turmoil.

**Angelic message.** God directs angelic interaction with human beings to share his divine decrees. His angels convey messages verbally and through dreams and visions.

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<sup>25</sup> The Hebrew term *mal'ak* (angel) the Greek term *angelos* (angel) are not depicted in the Old or New Testaments as possessing wings. However, other figures normally considered angelic, such as *kerubim* and *serapim*, are described as having wings (Exod 25:20; Isa 6:2).

They offer messages that warn human beings of God's judgment, announce his sacred promises, and declare messianic prophecy. Angels also share messages that lead human beings astray to fulfill God's divine judgment.

**Angelic personality.** Angels are intelligent, spiritual beings who have extensive knowledge of human events and history. However, their knowledge is limited. They are described as fearsome beings who express themselves with varying emotions such as joy and even anger.

**Angelic status.** Angels are heavenly spirits appointed by God for specific tasks. God created them, and they serve as his divine heralds, observers, and instruments of judgment. They serve God as military operators and are described as creatures who carry weaponry. They submit to God through Jesus Christ. Angels protect followers of Jesus and are subservient to the church in authority.

### **Theoretical Coding for Non-Angelic Spiritual Beings**

**Non-angelic appearance.** Non-angelic spiritual beings do not physically manifest in the same way as angelic beings. Often, biblical reporters describe them as having animal-like form and appearing in isolated locations. They are visibly associated with darkness and water.<sup>26</sup> Images and statues are also often associated with non-angelic spiritual beings. Reptilian descriptors, such as serpents and dragons, are related to these entities as well.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Passages that associate non-angels with darkness and water include Job 7:12; Pss 74:13, 91:6, 104:26; Isa 27:1; Mark 5:13; Acts 26:18. Additionally, Langton notes the connection between the demonic and water in the writings of Josephus. Jewish exorcists expelled demons by drawing the spirit out of the victim's nostrils. In some cases, the exorcist would bottle the evil spirit in a clay jar containing water and subsequently smash the jar eliminating the demonic attachment. See Langton, *Essentials of Demonology*, 21–32.

<sup>27</sup> The association of non-angels with reptilian descriptors is found in both the Old and New Testaments. Langton notes the serpentine characteristic of some demonic entities. Langton, *Essentials of Demonology*, 38–39. Similarly, Heiser connects the concept of a sea monster or leviathan to the demonic. See Michael S. Heiser, *Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible* (Bellingham,



**Non-angelic behavior.** Non-angelic beings spiritually oppress humans by planning harm to and enacting violence on them. Non-angelic spiritual beings may use human language and have limited power over human beings through physical manipulation, illness, and temptation. These beings are spatially limited, and God can punish them and remove them from a specific location.

**Non-angelic message.** Non-angelic spiritual beings tempt human beings to disobey God. They intentionally deceive humans through verbal communication, dreams, and visions. These beings also slander God and followers of Jesus.

**Non-angelic personality.** Non-angelic beings are intelligent and strategic in deceiving humans. They are fearsome creatures who demonstrate a keen intelligence, shown through apparent clairvoyant communication with human beings. These spiritual beings are emotional and often display rage or anger toward God and humans.

**Non-angelic status.** Biblical reporters describe non-angelic spiritual beings as unclean or impure. God created them, but their plans are evil. They are submissive to God through Jesus, and God will judge them. Non-angelic spiritual beings are also subject to Christian authority.

## **Principle Development**

After initial coding and selective coding, I extrapolated the principles based on the frequency of codes in the texts, as shown in table 3. The BIISB includes fourteen principles for identifying angelic beings and thirteen principles for identifying non-angelic beings. I used these principles to apply the BIISB to the case studies examined in this project (i.e., Gabriel and Jibril).

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WA: Lexham Press, 2015), 152–54. While most scholars associate leviathan with evil, not all agree that leviathan represents a particular entity whether spiritual or physical. John Day argues for a metaphorical understanding of leviathan. See John Day, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea: Echoes of a Canaanite Myth in the Old Testament* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 62–87.

While the principles used to identify spiritual beings ascertained in this study are not novel to biblical studies on angels, the systematic method of qualitative data analysis by which these principles emerged grants scientific credibility to their application and the subsequent conclusions made by me. This instrument enables me to stand firmly on scientific research, as opposed to resting on intuition or interpretive bias while comparing and contrasting Gabriel/Jibril in biblical and Islamic sources.

The development of a qualitative data analysis instrument for identifying spiritual beings (BIISB) established fourteen principles for identifying angelic beings and thirteen principles for identifying non-angelic beings. The data collection was comprehensive, and the aforementioned theories related to grounded theory analysis guided my subsequent examination. The application of this tool is discussed in the following chapters related to Gabriel found in biblical sources, and Jibril found in select Islamic sources.

Table 3. Principles for identifying angels and non-angels

<b>Principles for Identifying Angels</b>	<b>Principles for Identifying Non-Angels</b>
1. Angels are invisible spiritual creatures.	1. Non-angels are spiritual beings who can manifest as physical creatures.
2. Angels manifest as anthropomorphic beings.	2. Non-angels appear in deserted locations.
3. Angels are associated with light, fire, and purity.	3. Non-angels are visibly associated with darkness and water.
4. Angels are warriors.	4. Non-angels are spiritually oppressive toward human beings.
5. Angels speak human languages verbally.	5. Non-angels are physically violent toward human beings.
6. Angels are loyal to God and his rule.	6. Non-angels exert power over human beings through physical manipulation, illness, and temptation.
7. Angels are subservient to Jesus.	7. Non-angels are spatially limited.
8. Angels disseminate God's plans for judgment and deliverance.	8. Non-angels deceive human beings through verbal communication, dreams, and visions.
9. Angels stand, walk, and fly.	9. Non-angels undermine God's plan and slander Jesus and his followers.
10. Angels observe human behavior.	10. Non-angels are intelligent beings.
11. Angels cause human beings to fear when visibly present.	11. Non-angels are emotional beings, displaying rage toward God and human beings.
12. Angels convey God's messages through speech, visions, and dreams.	12. Biblical reporters describe non-angels as unclean or impure.
13. Angels protect and provide for human beings at God's direction.	13. Non-angels obey God and are under the authority of Jesus and his followers.
14. Angels perform tasks of judgment upon humanity at God's direction.	

CHAPTER 4  
BIBLICAL TEACHING ON GABRIEL

**Introduction**

The angel Gabriel plays a significant role in the development of the biblical storyline. His five epiphanies, both in the book of Daniel and in the messianic birth narratives, signal monumental revelations regarding God’s overarching plan to bring restoration to the people of Israel. This chapter provides an overview of these texts and a critical examination of the biblical data regarding Gabriel, with a particular focus on his appearance, behavior, message, personality, and status.

**Exegetical Analysis of Gabriel in Daniel 8–9**

**Gabriel’s First Epiphany  
in Daniel 8:15–27**

When I, Daniel, had seen the vision, I sought to understand it. And behold, there stood before me one having the appearance of a man. And I heard a man’s voice between the banks of the Ulai, and it called, “Gabriel, make this man understand the vision.” So he came near where I stood. And when he came, I was frightened and fell on my face. But he said to me, “Understand, O son of man, that the vision is for the time of the end.” And when he had spoken to me, I fell into a deep sleep with my face to the ground. But he touched me and made me stand up. He said, “Behold, I will make known to you what shall be at the latter end of the indignation, for it refers to the appointed time of the end. As for the ram that you saw with the two horns, these are the kings of Media and Persia. And the goat is the king of Greece. And the great horn between his eyes is the first king. As for the horn that was broken, in place of which four others arose, four kingdoms shall arise from his nation, but not with his power. And at the latter end of their kingdom, when the transgressors have reached their limit, a king of bold face, one who understands riddles, shall arise. His power shall be great—but not by his own power; and he shall cause fearful destruction and shall succeed in what he does, and destroy mighty men and the people who are the saints. By his cunning he shall make deceit prosper under his hand, and in his own mind he shall become great. Without warning he shall destroy many. And he shall even rise up against the Prince of princes, and he shall be broken—but by no human hand. The vision of the evenings and the mornings that has been told is true, but seal up the vision, for it refers to many days from now.” And I, Daniel, was overcome and lay sick for some days. Then I rose and went about the king’s business, but I was appalled by the vision and did not understand it. (Dan 8:15–27)

The Book of Daniel was written partly in Hebrew and partly in Aramaic.<sup>1</sup> The book's historical setting is the period of the Babylonian empire and the first few years of the Persian empire.<sup>2</sup> Chapter 8 describes Daniel's vision with typical Jewish prophetic symbolism<sup>3</sup> and the angel Gabriel's appearance, behavior, message, and status. Additionally, an auditory element is present in the vision, a disembodied voice speaking to Daniel from the middle of the river Ulai.<sup>4</sup> After Daniel receives the vision and the disembodied voice speaks, a being with a human-like appearance approaches the prophet to explain the vision. The purpose of this examination of chapter 8 is not to interpret the theological implications of the vision itself, but rather to examine the messenger identified as Gabriel sent by God.

The heavenly dialogue introducing the angel's interpretation of the vision is similar to an example found in Zechariah 1:7–17. In Zechariah's vision, human-like figures and a supernatural messenger explain a vision to Zechariah. Daniel hears a voice from the river proclaim, "Gabriel, make this man understand the vision" (Dan 8:16). This statement is the first attribution of a name to a spiritual being or angel in the Bible.<sup>5</sup> John Collins explains the significance of the name: "In the context, the name involves a play

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<sup>1</sup> For a critical examination of Aramaic usage in the book of Daniel, see John A. Cook, *Aramaic Ezra and Daniel: A Handbook on the Aramaic Text* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2019).

<sup>2</sup> John Goldingay provides a succinct argument concerning the historical setting of the book of Daniel. See John Goldingay, *Daniel*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 30 (Dallas: Word, 1989), xxv.

<sup>3</sup> Hermeneutic principles regarding biblical prophecy are complex. These principles include examination of historical-cultural context, lexical-syntactical analysis, theological analysis, literary analysis, and typology. See Henry A. Virkler and Karelyne Gerber Ayayo, *Hermeneutics: Principles and Processes of Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 167–91.

<sup>4</sup> In the context of this vision, it is important to compare the voices found in additional texts. In both Ezek 1:28 and Isa 40:3 a voice speaks to the prophet. Some rabbinic scholars argue this passage includes both Michael and Gabriel. Michael is the disembodied voice instructing Gabriel to explain the vision to Daniel. See John J. Collins, Frank Moore Cross, and Adela Yarbro Collins, *Daniel*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 337.

<sup>5</sup> It is notable that the first named angelic being in the Bible is Gabriel. James Montgomery highlights this fact in his examination of the Daniel eight narrative. See James A. Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, The International Critical Commentary, vol. 22 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1927), 345.

on the word for man (*geber*) in v 15. The name is usually understood as ‘man of God,’ but Collins asserts a more precise meaning of ‘God is my hero/warrior.’<sup>6</sup> Collins explains Gabriel’s literary biography:

Gabriel and Michael are the only angels mentioned by name in the Hebrew Bible. Both are attested in the Enochic book<sup>7</sup> of the Watchers 9:1, in the oldest extant list of four archangels (with Sariel and Raphael), and also in the list of seven archangels in *1 Enoch* 20. In the last passages, Gabriel is in charge of paradise. In *1 En* 10:9, Gabriel is instructed to ‘proceed against the bastards and the fornicators.’ He is also a warrior in Daniel 10. He acts as revealer here and in 9:21 and has a similar role in infancy narratives in Luke 1:19, 26. He is sometimes given precedence over Michael in magical texts.<sup>8</sup>

While some scholars assert a high probability that the unnamed spiritual being in Daniel 10 is also Gabriel because of the similarities in the encounter, Michael Heiser contends that this unnamed figure should be identified with the “prince of the host.”<sup>9</sup> In Daniel 10, the prophet sees another being with human-like appearance, but he describes his visage more clearly:

On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I was standing on the bank of the great river (that is, the Tigris) I lifted up my eyes and looked, and behold, a man clothed in linen, with a belt of fine gold from Uphaz around his waist. His body was like beryl, his face like the appearance of lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and the sound of his words like the sound of a multitude. Then I heard the sound of his words, and as I heard the sound of his words, I fell on my face in deep sleep with my face to the ground. (Dan 10:4–6)

And behold, a hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees. And he said to me, “O Daniel, man greatly loved, understand the words that I speak to you, and stand upright, for now I have been sent to you.” And when he had spoken this word to me, I stood up trembling. Then he said to me, “Fear not, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand and humbled yourself before your

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<sup>6</sup> Collins, *Daniel*, 336.

<sup>7</sup> Disagreement exists about the dating of Enoch and Daniel. Some scholars argue that Daniel was written prior to Enoch; however, other scholars assert that the inclusion of the name Gabriel in Daniel’s record presupposes awareness by the writer and even the audience to the work of *1 Enoch*, which describes Gabriel and his role in more detail. See Goldingay, *Daniel*, 214–15.

<sup>8</sup> Goldingay, *Daniel*, 336–37.

<sup>9</sup> Michael Heiser argues that the unknown figure in Dan 10 should be understood as the “prince of the host.” According to Heiser, the figure should not be interpreted as Gabriel or Michael. This interpretation leads Heiser to conclude that the figure might be the visible embodiment of Yahweh. See Michael S. Heiser, *Angels: What the Bible Really Says about God’s Heavenly Host* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018), 68–73.

God, your words have been heard, and I have come because of your words. The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days, but Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I was left there with the kings of Persia, and came to make you understand what is to happen to your people in the latter days. For the vision is for days yet to come.” When he had spoken to me according to these words, I turned my face toward the ground and was mute. And behold, one in the likeness of the children of man touched my lips. Then I opened my mouth and spoke. I said to him who stood before me, “O my lord, by reason of the vision pains have come upon me, and I retain no strength. How can my lord’s servant talk with my lord? For now no strength remains in me, and no breath is left in me.” Again one having the appearance of a man touched me and strengthened me. And he said, “O man greatly loved, fear not, peace be with you; be strong and of good courage.” And as he spoke to me, I was strengthened and said, “Let my lord speak, for you have strengthened me.” Then he said, “Do you know why I have come to you? But now I will return to fight against the prince of Persia; and when I go out, behold, the prince of Greece will come. But I will tell you what is inscribed in the book of truth: there is none who contends by my side against these except Michael, your prince. (Dan 10:9–21)

Heiser suggests several reasons for rejecting Gabriel’s association with the epiphany recorded in Daniel 10:

It is important to note several things about this exchange. First, this “man” is *not* identified as Gabriel. Second, the speaking “man” was opposed by the “prince” of Persia (v. 13) and Greece. Third, the “man” is not only distinct from Gabriel; he is also not Michael, since he refers to Michael in the third person (vv. 13, 20). Michael assisted this unidentified figure in his spiritual warfare against the prince of Persia. Fourth, the unidentified figure later touches Daniel (v. 18) to strengthen him, informing him in the first person, “I will return to fight against the prince of Persia,” adding that he expects the “prince of Greece” will also be part of the battle (v. 20).<sup>10</sup>

Heiser argues that this figure should be understood as the “prince of the host” (Dan 8:11) mentioned in an earlier vision. Gillian Bampfylde agrees with Heiser’s assessment:

Who then is this man? The author does not identify him with Gabriel, which he could easily have done (cf. 8:16; 9:21). Daniel has already met Gabriel (8:16) and would have recognized him if there were a renewed acquaintanceship. The man whom he sees in ch. 10 is to be identified with the one who had spoken to Gabriel and sent him to Daniel . . . The man is not Michael. Indeed, he appears to have a higher status than Michael, the patron of Israel according to 10:21, “there is none who contends by my side against these except Michael, your prince.” This man seems not to be in charge of any particular nation, but supports those who are on “his side.” . . . He is therefore to be identified with “the Prince of the host” (8:11). This Prince of the host is not Michael, for although Michael is the patron of Israel and an archangel, he is *not* chief of the archangels in intertestamental literature, e.g. 1 Enoch 9:1–10:16; 20:5; 24:6; 54:6; 60:4–5; 68:2; 71:9. In the Book of Daniel there is no possibility that Michael might be the chief Prince. He is known as “one of the chief princes” (Dan. 10:13), whereas the Prince of the host (8:11) is called “the Prince of princes” (8:25).

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<sup>10</sup> Heiser, *Angels*, 70.

The man described in 10:5–6 is certainly one of the highest angels,—a “Prince” and a heavenly military commander. Neither is he to be identified with Gabriel, for he addresses Gabriel himself.<sup>11</sup>

Collins connects the Gabriel encounter in Daniel 8 with the later epiphany found in chapter 10. The description of Gabriel is less elaborate in chapter 8. The reader may understand more about the appearance of Gabriel by examining the surrounding context because it helps one more fully understand why Daniel collapsed in panic. The prophet’s response to the spiritual being in chapter 10 is the same as his response to Gabriel. It is possible either that this figure is also Gabriel or that it, at the very least, shares a similar appearance, causing the mental agitation and fear.

In 8:17, Daniel recounts, “So he came near where I stood. And when he came, I was frightened and fell on my face.” Johann Lange notes, “The expression ‘behold, there stood,’ etc., indicates the startling and extraordinary [presence] of the apparition, which argued something terrible and superhuman.”<sup>12</sup> Additionally, Goldingay notes, “Falling on the face is a traditional courtly way of expressing a recognition of the king’s majesty, the most extreme possible form of personal obeisance (2 Sam 9:6; 14:4; 25:23). It is naturally also an expression of similar recognition of God’s majesty, especially in a cultic context (Lev 9:24; 1 Kgs 18:39; 2 Chr 7:3).”<sup>13</sup> The prophet’s response to Gabriel’s appearance is standard when compared to other supernatural visitations.<sup>14</sup> Daniel’s self-description of being panic-stricken or swooning in fear has a cognate connection with the concept of the “terrors of God” that can be related to Job 6:4, which reads, “For the arrows of the Almighty are in me; my spirit drinks their poison; the terrors of God are arrayed against me.”

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<sup>11</sup> Gillian Bampfyld, “The Prince of the Host in the Book of Daniel and the Dead Sea Scrolls,” *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Period* 14 (1983): 129–34.

<sup>12</sup> Johann Peter Lange and Philip Schaff, *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures, Critical, Doctrinal and Homiletical* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 181.

<sup>13</sup> Goldingay, *Daniel*, 214.

<sup>14</sup> Note the similarities in other accounts: Dan 10:9; Josh 5:14; Ezek 1:28; 3:23; Rev 1:17; 1 En 14:14, 24; 4 Ezra 10:29–30.



The message and interpretation that Gabriel gives to Daniel is very important to note. His message outlines two critical elements. First, this vision does not pertain to Daniel and his time; rather, it focuses on the eschatological climax of history. Second, Gabriel's message reveals future information conveyed through prophecy. The restoration of the kingdom of God to Israel and the arrival of God's judgment form the centerpiece in messianic prophecy and fulfillment.

### **Gabriel's Second Epiphany in Daniel 9:20–27**

While I was speaking and praying, confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my plea before the LORD my God for the holy hill of my God, while I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the first, came to me in swift flight at the time of the evening sacrifice. He made me understand, speaking with me and saying, "O Daniel, I have now come out to give you insight and understanding. At the beginning of your pleas for mercy a word went out, and I have come to tell it to you, for you are greatly loved. Therefore consider the word and understand the vision. "Seventy weeks are decreed about your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place. Know therefore and understand that from the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of an anointed one, a prince, there shall be seven weeks. Then for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again with squares and moat, but in a troubled time. And after the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing. And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. Its end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war. Desolations are decreed. And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator. (Dan 9:20–27)

In Daniel's second encounter, some notable differences are present. First, Daniel's earnest prayer precipitates Gabriel's arrival. A prayer offered to God regarding Daniel's personal sins and Israel's collective sins dominates the setting of this angelic visitation and revelation. This prayer can be compared to others in Ezra 9:6–15, Nehemiah 1:5–11, and 9:5–38.

Second, the narrative records Gabriel as flying to Daniel's location. This detail differs significantly from other passages that describe Gabriel's behavior. In the other four accounts that give Gabriel's name, he merely stands delivering a message from God. However, in this instance, Gabriel flies quickly to Daniel. Montgomery notes, "According

to verse 23 the angel ‘came forth at the beginning’ of the prayer, and as it takes time even for an angel to ‘fly fast,’ verse 21, to earth, the prayer was dramatically introduced to fill up the interim.”<sup>15</sup> Whether or not Gabriel has wings is not obvious based on this text. Only cherubim and seraphim are described as having wings or multiple faces (Isa 6:2; Rev 4:6–8), but these spiritual beings are distinct from other types of angels. Heiser explains the difference:

The terms *mal’ākîm* (“angel”), *kerubîm* (“cherubim”), and *śerāpîm* (“seraphim”) are not interchangeable. They are, in effect, job descriptions performed by different spirit beings. In biblical literature, cherubim and seraphim are never sent to people to deliver messages. That task belongs to angels. Cherubim and seraphim are heavenly throne guardians, a role that at times brings them into contact with humans, but they are not sent to earth to instruct people. Conversely, angels are found in the divine presence as well. Old and New Testament writers place them there. Rather, the terminology distinguishes roles. . . . Angels do not have creaturely attributes . . . those divine beings sent to earth to interact with people—look like people and do not have wings.<sup>16</sup>

Whether Gabriel has wings or does not have wings is inconclusive. However, Lange affirms the mode of his transport: “The following verse clearly alludes to the rapidity of the angel’s coming. This rapid approach does not indicate that he *ran* swiftly, but denotes hasty flying, with lightning speed.”<sup>17</sup>

Third, Daniel does not respond with trepidation at the sight of Gabriel’s arrival. Daniel’s response is noteworthy, because in many other instances describing spiritual beings, their arrival creates emotional agitation and fear among humans. Daniel’s reason for being unafraid is unclear; however, the reason could be two-fold. Perhaps the author chose to describe Gabriel without mentioning his reaction to the angel’s appearance, or perhaps Daniel’s lack of fear was a result of familiarity.

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<sup>15</sup> Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, 370.

<sup>16</sup> Heiser, *Angels*, 164.

<sup>17</sup> Johann Peter Lange and Philip Schaff, eds., *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures, Critical, Doctrinal and Homiletical with Special Reference to Ministers and Students* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1864), 198.

The accounts in Daniel that describe Gabriel's appearance, behavior, message, and status offer much detail. Daniel describes Gabriel as a "man," which is consistent with an anthropomorphic manifestation. Additionally, Gabriel's description as a man points to his given name. While the text does not describe his attire in detail, chapter 10's thorough description of the unnamed spiritual being may give some insight regarding Gabriel's physical appearance. It describes Gabriel as standing, walking, approaching, flying, and even touching Daniel to wake him. All these descriptors highlight the physicality of the angel. Additionally, these descriptions acknowledge Gabriel's corporeality revealing angelic spatial limitations. Travel from the heavenly places to earth takes time and is not immediate. Gabriel's message, while different from the following accounts in the birth narratives, highlights his skill in foretelling the future and demonstrates his ability to herald God's good news of Israel's restoration. Furthermore, Gabriel's encounters elicit limited clarity regarding his role as messenger, but his importance can be extrapolated from additional texts in the next section.

### **Exegetical Analysis of Gabriel in the Messianic Birth Narratives**

While key differences are present between the accounts published by Matthew and Luke in their Gospels concerning the method of Gabriel's dissemination of God's revelation, essential agreement exists regarding the identity of the angel who provides the information. In Matthew's record, an angel comes to Joseph in a dream-vision, announcing to him the origin of Mary's pregnancy. In Luke's record, Gabriel reveals himself by physically manifesting to Zechariah and Mary. Mikeal Parsons asserts that every angelic visitation recorded in the birth narratives should be understood as a dream-vision experience. According to Parsons, Zechariah's experience fits more within the framework of a dream-vision than an actual epiphany as it uses the word "appeared." He notes that the word "appeared" is used elsewhere (Luke 24:34; Acts 2:3; 7:2, 30, 35; 9:17; 13:31;

16:9; 26:16) to describe a visionary experience or nocturnal revelation.<sup>18</sup> Parsons also maintains that Mary’s encounter with Gabriel was a dream or vision, although no textual evidence seems to support his claim. Gabriel simply greets Mary, and Luke does not indicate the angel’s arrival with the word “appeared.”<sup>19</sup>

In contrast to Parson’s remarks about a physical angelic manifestation, Darrell Bock notes, “If only an internal psychological event were intended, it would be easy to depict God speaking to Zechariah in a vision or in a voice without an angel present. . . . But the biblical perspective about the reality of angels is clear. In the view of the entire NT, such beings do exist” (Luke 2:9; Matt 1:20; Acts 5:19; 1 Cor. 4:9; Heb 1:4; 1 Pet 3:22; Jude 6; Rev 5:2).<sup>20</sup> Heiser explains further:

While *visual* appearances in human form are more common (Matt 2:19; Acts 10:3; 11:13), the New Testament also describes episodes where angels are best understood as corporeal. . . . Angels appear and speak (Matt 28:5; Luke 1:11–21, 30–38), instances that presume actual sound waves being created. If a merely auditory experience was meant, one would expect the communication be described as a dream-vision (Acts 10:3).<sup>21</sup>

### **Gabriel’s Epiphany in Matthew 1:18–25**

Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel” (which means, God with us). When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus. (Matt 1:18–25)

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<sup>18</sup> Mikeal C. Parsons, *Luke*, Paideia (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2015), 35.

<sup>19</sup> Parsons, *Luke*, 38.

<sup>20</sup> Darrell L. Bock, *Luke*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 80–81.

<sup>21</sup> Michael S. Heiser, *Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015), 187.

While Gabriel's role seems obvious in this account, some commentators neglect to mention the significance or presence of an angel.<sup>22</sup> Matthew does not describe the angel's appearance, nor does he give his name in this passage. However, in Luke's account, the text later reveals that the "angel of the Lord" who predicts Elizabeth's pregnancy is Gabriel. Because of the congruence between these two stories, I have chosen to relate the Matthew account to the Gabriel epiphanies.

In Matthew's story, the entire emphasis is on the angel's message.<sup>23</sup> Dreams were a common way that God chose to send revelatory messages to his people.<sup>24</sup> Grant Osborne notes that dreams are clearly a method by which God, in his sovereignty, acts on human beings to reveal his will and guide them according to his will.<sup>25</sup> The message of the angel is prophetic and informative. He tells Joseph that the Holy Spirit has conceived the child in Mary's womb. This is a messianic prophecy that safeguards the messianic promise.

"Look" or "behold" (*idou*) is Matthew's favorite word to provide emphasis. The term occurs 62 times in Matthew's Gospel and appears only 200 additional times in the New Testament. Gabriel addresses Joseph as the son of David, highlighting his royal heritage and signaling the importance of Jesus being born as the son of Joseph. This detail is of paramount importance as it relates to the prophecy given to King David: "When

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<sup>22</sup> This neglect of some commentator's mention of an angelic being may stem from the interpreter's reluctance to acknowledge supernatural events or the significance of spiritual beings. See Donald Alfred Hagner, *Matthew*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 33a (Dallas: Word, 1993); Ben Witherington, *Matthew*, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2006). Charles Talbert omits any mention of an angelic visitation completely. Charles H. Talbert, *Matthew*, Paideia (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010).

<sup>23</sup> Ulrich Luz makes notes that Gabriel's message to Mary is the focus of the encounter. Gabriel's appearance and behavior might not have been mentioned in order to highlight the importance of the message. See Ulrich Luz et al., *Matthew*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989), 95.

<sup>24</sup> Other examples of revelation through dreams include Gen 28:12; 37:5-9; Num 12:6; Judg 7:13; Dan 2:3; 4:5; 7:1).

<sup>25</sup> Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary Series: New Testament, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2010), 76-77.

your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever” (2 Sam 7:12–13).

The angel encourages Joseph by commanding him to not be afraid. It is unlikely that this command refers to the angel’s appearance in the dream; rather, the angel seeks to encourage Joseph to be courageous in taking Mary to be his wife despite the rumors surrounding her pregnancy.<sup>26</sup>

The angel tells Joseph that he will be Jesus’ earthly father by giving him the designated name for the child. According to Osborne,

The name was officially given on the eighth day after birth, when the male child was circumcised (Luke 2:21–38). By naming him, Joseph was making the baby Jesus his child. The Greek here is Semitic, and the future tense “you are to call” gives it imperatival force; thus, as the TNIV reads, “you are to give him the name Jesus.”<sup>27</sup>

Joseph’s obedience in naming Jesus means that he officially accepted him as his own child (cf. “I have called you by name, you are mine” [Isa 43:1]). This naming gave Jesus the status of a descendant of King David.<sup>28</sup> The angel defines the messianic hope in his message by telling Joseph to name the child Jesus, which literally means “Yahweh saves.” Osborne writes,

In the Jewish world names were not just marks of identification but were symbols containing the hopes and prayers of the partner for their children. “Jesus” means that through him God promises that salvation will come to his people, though the Jewish

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<sup>26</sup> Leon Morris argues that Gabriel’s command, “fear not,” is often misunderstood. In other angelic epiphanies, the angel’s presence caused trepidation from the human observer. An example of this experience is found in the story of the shepherds outside Bethlehem who were visited by the heavenly host (Luke 2:8–15). Morris argues that the angel’s command to Joseph is focused upon his reluctance to take Mary as his wife. See Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1992), 29.

<sup>27</sup> Osborne, *Matthew*, 77.

<sup>28</sup> Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 29.

people mistakenly interpreted it in terms of the other meaning “save,” that God would “deliver” his people by destroying their enemies.<sup>29</sup>

The angel’s description of the messianic mission was intentional. Had the angel said that Jesus would save his people without further description, then the Jewish people would have naturally assumed this meant that Jesus was to be a military leader who would expel the Romans from Israel. The purpose of the Messiah was not to eliminate the Roman occupation or to free the people from aristocratic control. Instead, the angel’s message specifically highlights the messianic purpose in terms of alienation from God and hope for spiritual restoration by the forgiveness of sins.<sup>30</sup> As previously stated, the angel does not identify himself as Gabriel in Matthew’s account; however, the close connection between the narratives and the similar language used to describe the messianic mission indicate a high probability that the angel is Gabriel.

### **Gabriel’s Epiphanies in Luke 1:5–23; 1:26–38**

The unity of these two accounts is important to note, as well as the integral role Gabriel plays in the unfolding drama Joel Green explains,

At a primary level these two stories are one, for they demonstrate how God will accomplish his salvific aim. In this regard, the heavenly and prophetic voices have a signal role, giving expression to the divine purpose in the progress of the narrative and inviting reflection and response. The parallel accounts of promise—fulfillment—response tell one story, the story of God’s intervention in human history to bring deliverance.<sup>31</sup>

Luke’s account provides a formulaic announcement in both epiphanies.<sup>32</sup> In both narratives an angel appears, the human being spoken to grows fearful or distressed,

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<sup>29</sup> Osborne, *Matthew*, 77.

<sup>30</sup> Craig Evans notes the confusion Jesus’ unexpected arrival would have caused. The Jews awaited a king to purge the land and expel foreign invaders, but Gabriel’s announcement indicates a different kind of freedom. See Craig A. Evans, *Matthew*, New Cambridge Bible Commentary (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 43.

<sup>31</sup> Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1997), 51.

<sup>32</sup> Jae Wang Chung provides composition-critical analysis in an examination of the annunciation narratives in Luke 1:5–56. This project contributes to the establishment of a hermeneutical frameworks for

the angel delivers a message about the destiny of the child to be born, the human being responds to this message with belief or unbelief, and the angel provides assurances that his predictions will come true.<sup>33</sup>

### **Gabriel's annunciation to Zechariah.**

In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, of the division of Abijah. And he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord. But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were advanced in years. Now while he was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty, according to the custom of the priesthood, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense. And the whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of incense. And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And Zechariah was troubled when he saw him, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great before the Lord. And he must not drink wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared." And Zechariah said to the angel, "How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years." And the angel answered him, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. And behold, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time." And the people were waiting for Zechariah, and they were wondering at his delay in the temple. And when he came out, he was unable to speak to them, and they realized that he had seen a vision in the temple. And he kept making signs to them and remained mute. And when his time of service was ended, he went to his home. (Luke 1:5–23)

The timing of this particular account is important to the overall message of Luke's Gospel. François Bovon addresses the timing and usage of this type of revelation:

To make this epiphany on the threshold of the new age comprehensible, Luke employs a common Jewish topos, the proclamation of an extraordinary birth to a childless couple, the model for which is the theophany to Abraham. The proclamation of such births was, in the Hebrew Bible, always an expression of initiative on the part

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understanding Luke's Gospel. See Jae Wang Chung, "The Annunciation Narratives in Luke 1:5–56: An Inquiry into Luke's Literary Techniques" (PhD diss., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1996).

<sup>33</sup> Bock's comparison of Zechariah and Mary's encounter with Gabriel highlights the different responses humans have toward God's revelation. Zechariah demonstrates human unbelief and Mary showcases authentic faith in the face of inordinate cultural and marital challenges. See Bock, *Luke*, 73.



of the saving God; in each case the saving event happened for the good not only of individuals but of the whole nation.<sup>34</sup>

Zechariah is of the priestly tribe, but he is not the high priest, which means he was called on to serve two weeks out of the year in Jerusalem.<sup>35</sup> He spent the remainder of the year at his family home in the Judean hills. Twenty-four priestly classes existed within the Jewish priesthood. Zechariah was a member of the division of Abijah, which was ranked eighth and was not generally one of great notoriety.<sup>36</sup> Bovon notes, “The priests of a given division officiate twice yearly in the temple for one week.”<sup>37</sup> Zechariah was participating in a biannual temple ministry as one of approximately 18,000 other priests who served at the temple in Jerusalem.<sup>38</sup> This event was the highlight of his career as a priest. Bock notes, “Only once in his life would a priest receive the special honor of offering incense in the Holy Place as part of the preparation for the sacrificial offering.”<sup>39</sup> When Zechariah entered the Holy Place to offer incense, he saw an angel<sup>40</sup> standing to the right of the altar. It is important to note that the angel is standing, which is an angelic being’s normative posture when giving a revelation. Gabriel stands next to the altar as

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<sup>34</sup> François Bovon, *Luke 2: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 1:1–9:50*, Hermeneia, ed Helmut Koester, trans. James E. Crouch (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013), 34.

<sup>35</sup> The description of the temple liturgy was written by a Jewish writer or least someone keen regarding Jewish customs; however, it is not written by a liturgical expert. The details of the rituals performed are eclipsed by the narrative account which is front stage. See Bovon, *Luke 2*, 34.

<sup>36</sup> Bovon supplies essential background information concerning Zechariah and the division of Abijah. For more information see Bovon, *Luke 2*, 33.

<sup>37</sup> Bovon, *Luke 2*, 33.

<sup>38</sup> Bock, *Luke*, 79.

<sup>39</sup> Bock, *Luke*, 79.

<sup>40</sup> In the opening scene, the angel that Luke recounts is described as “the angel of the Lord.” It is not until v. 19 that his full name is given. Green explains the importance of this phrase in the Old Testament: There the phrase occurs some sixty times, denoting an angel who comes to the aid of God’s people (e.g., Exod 14:19; Judg 2:1) and who communicates divine revelation, including announcements of birth (Gen 16:11; Judg 13:3–5). This ‘angel of the Lord’ is often presented in such a way as to be indistinguishable from the Lord himself (e.g., Gen 16:13; Exod 3:2–4; Judg 6:11–13). Consequently, the appearance of the ‘angel of the Lord’ takes on the character of an epiphany. His speech will be divine speech, and it is through this emissary that God’s purpose, which we have seen *behind* Luke’s narrative, will be brought to the *fore*.” (Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 72).

God's envoy, ready to deliver a message to Zechariah. The placement of Gabriel on the right side of the altar is important because it designates the tone of the message he is about to convey. The right side indicates favor; however, Zechariah responds with distress and fear.<sup>41</sup> Bock explains,

“The priest's response is real terror. . . . The description is not a mere literary touch, for when humans contact the 'unseen world' they often respond with fear at the unknown. This response reveals that Zechariah is taken aback by the angel's appearance. He does not expect it, nor does he view it as a common occurrence. Rather it places him in deep anxiety.”<sup>42</sup>

After Gabriel cautions Zechariah not to fear him, he explains that God is answering Zechariah's prayer, which seems to be related to a personal prayer about the barrenness of his wife, Elizabeth. Gabriel reveals to Zechariah that he will not only have a child, but also that the child will be male. He then gives Zechariah the name designated by God for this child. He is to call him John, which means, “Yahweh is merciful.”<sup>43</sup> Gabriel then explains to Zechariah that his child will be great before the Lord. The child must abstain from wine and strong drink. Gabriel's instructions are an allusion to Leviticus 10:9, which is more similar to the vow of priesthood than to the vow of Nazarites (Num 6:3). Zechariah's child will serve God with an authority similar to the prophet Elijah, and he will lead Israel back to God's plan for restoration and hope.

However, Zechariah misses the grandeur of Gabriel's proclamation because he cannot comprehend how his barren wife will become pregnant. He asks Gabriel, “How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years” (Luke 1:18).

Bovon notes,

From the angel's perspective, the situation looks completely different. Offended, he justifies his mission, which he has carried out in correct and dignified fashion.

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<sup>41</sup> Parsons, *Luke*, 35. Additionally, fear related to the appearance of supernatural beings is found throughout the Scripture. For examples see Luke 1:65; 2:9; 5:26; 7:16; 8:37; 21:26. For more with regard to the current motif, see Luke 1:29.; 5:8–10; 9:34; Judg 6:22.; 13:6, 22; 2 Sam 6:9; Isa 6:5; Dan 8:16; 10:10; Tob 12:16; Matt 28:2; Mark 16:5; Acts 2:43; 5:5, 11; 19:17; Rev 1:17.

<sup>42</sup> Bock, *Luke*, 81–82.

<sup>43</sup> Bovon explains the importance of John's name. In Jewish culture, names carried theological significance. For more information see Bovon, *Luke* 2, 35.

Gabriel—he now introduces himself—finds such unbelief truly unbelievable. The muteness has more than one significance; it is both a punishment and a sign that reverses Zechariah’s unbelief.<sup>44</sup>

Gabriel’s response displays an aspect of his personality. He is offended at Zechariah’s lack of faith and understanding. He responds, saying, “I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news” (Luke 1:19). Gabriel’s self-identification is similar to Raphael’s in Tobit 12:15, after he becomes frustrated with Tobit’s lack of faith: “I am Raphael, one of the seven angels who stand in the glorious presence of the Lord, ready to serve him” (Tobit 12:15).

God’s punishment for Zechariah’s unbelief included muteness and deafness, according to Luke 1:62, which reports, “They made signs to his father, inquiring what he wanted him to be called.” An essential element regarding the veracity of Gabriel’s message is that all his predictions come true. Elizabeth becomes pregnant and Zechariah is unable to speak until the eighth day after John’s birth.

From Gabriel’s annunciation to Zechariah one learns little concerning Gabriel’s appearance and behavior; however, this text clearly highlights significant details regarding Gabriel’s personality, message, and status. It is obvious that Gabriel is a spiritual being who is able to manifest physically. Luke describes him as standing, presumably on two legs, to the right of the altar of incense in the Holy Place. Luke’s lack of explanatory detail may indicate Gabriel’s anthropomorphic appearance noting nothing extraordinary. No other details regarding his facial features and attire are included. Gabriel does nothing but stand and speak to Zechariah. He does not reach out and touch him or walk to him. He is motionless. In the narrative one learns that Gabriel has a personality that seems similar to a human personality. Gabriel’s choice of words evokes emotion from Zechariah regarding God’s attentiveness to Zechariah’s prayer as well as the incredible impact and joy that Zechariah’s son will bring to the people of Israel. Additionally, Gabriel displays anger, or at the very least, frustration, over Zechariah’s lack of faith. He feels compelled to offer

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<sup>44</sup> Bovon, *Luke 2*, 38.

his resume as proof of the credibility of his message. In doing so, Gabriel alerts the reader to his status. He is not simply a messenger; he is a personal assistant to Yahweh in the heavenly places. While others in heaven kneel in subjugation or fall on their faces, Gabriel stands near God to do his bidding. This detail indicates a high-level position within the angelic hierarchy.

### **Gabriel's annunciation to Mary.**

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?" And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For nothing will be impossible with God." And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her. (Luke 1:26–38)

The angel announces his name earlier in this narrative than he does with Zechariah. The two annunciation stories are similar. In both accounts, Gabriel tells the human being to refrain from fear and reveals important information that will affect not only them individually, but also the world. In verse 26, Luke writes, "The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth." Disagreement exists about whether the term *apo* means sent "from" God or sent "by" God. While the word often specifies location, the term could be an alternative for *hupo*, indicating origin. According to Bock, the preposition's most natural meaning conveys the idea that God sent Gabriel from his presence in the heavenly realm to announce the birth of Jesus.<sup>45</sup> This statement identifies Gabriel's origin and authority as being from God.

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<sup>45</sup> Bock, *Luke*, 106.

Gabriel's appearance to Mary takes place in the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy. Luke mentions the geography surrounding Nazareth, possibly because his audience would have been unfamiliar with the small village approximately fifty to sixty miles north of Jerusalem.<sup>46</sup> These two accounts, while bearing similarities, are quite different. Gabriel's epiphany with Zechariah occurs at the temple, which was surrounded by thousands of Jewish worshippers. The announcement of Jesus' conception comes to a young girl seemingly alone in a rural village in northern Galilee. Bock notes, "[Gabriel] appears to [Mary] in an unspecified indoor setting."<sup>47</sup> The term *eiselthōn* indicates that his appearance occurred in the entry of a room or house. Of the fifty uses of this term in Luke's Gospel, most refer to someone entering a city or a house or to demons entering a human being.<sup>48</sup>

Bovon notes that Gabriel's greeting could be understood as a simple greeting, such as "good morning," or possibly, as an invitation for eschatological rejoicing.<sup>49</sup> Gabriel's greeting to Mary includes a "divinely appointed, salvation-historical address,"<sup>50</sup> similar to Gideon: "And the angel of the LORD appeared to him and said to him, 'The LORD is with you, O mighty man of valor'" (Judg 6:12). Gabriel calls Mary "favored by God" (Luke 1:28).

Gabriel explains to Mary that she has been chosen by God to bear his son and that he will be the long-awaited fulfillment of the prophesy regarding David's royal son (2 Sam 7:12–13). Gabriel's words derive a different response from Mary. Unlike Zechariah, who was perplexed at the logistics of his elderly barren wife becoming

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<sup>46</sup> Bock, *Luke*, 106.

<sup>47</sup> Bock, *Luke*, 109.

<sup>48</sup> Bock, *Luke*, 109.

<sup>49</sup> Bovon, *Luke 2*, 50.

<sup>50</sup> Bovon, *Luke 2*, 50.

pregnant, Luke records that Mary is more intensely curious than perplexed.<sup>51</sup> She is troubled, and she attempts to discern the reason for Gabriel speaking to her in this way. Gabriel acknowledges her curious concern by encouraging her to be unafraid because God's presence will be with her. He tells her to be calm because she has found "favor" with God. Bovon asserts that Gabriel's statement about God's presence with Mary alludes to divine protection for her calling to a significant task.<sup>52</sup> Bock highlights the concept of God's favor found throughout Scripture, stating that the phrase is

an expression of divine working, favor signifies God's gracious choice of someone through whom God does something special. . . . In the OT, the phrase often involves a request granted on the condition that someone had favor with God (so Gideon, Hannah, and David). However, here this favor is announced without any hint of a request. It is freely bestowed.<sup>53</sup>

Remarkably, Gabriel's speech to Mary is 18 percent shorter than his speech to Zechariah. Potentially, this brevity has more to do with Mary's faithful response than the importance of the message delivered. Gabriel announces, "Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end" (Luke 1:31–32). Several key aspects of Gabriel's message are noteworthy. First, Gabriel asserts that Mary will conceive without sexual intercourse, signifying something even more incredible than Elizabeth's pregnancy. Additionally, Mary's son will be called "Son of the Most High." I. Howard Marshall explains, "The child's greatness (cf. 1:15) is to be seen in the lofty title that will be assigned to him; the passive form (*κληθήσεται*) indicates, as often, divine action (Jeremias, *Theology*, I, 9–14). However, the title is more than a name; it indicates the true being of the person so called.

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<sup>51</sup> Bock, *Luke*, 110.

<sup>52</sup> Bovon, *Luke 2*, 50.

<sup>53</sup> Bock, *Luke*, 111.

The title is equivalent to the more common ‘Son of God.’”<sup>54</sup> Of course, the following phrase is connected to the Davidic promise given in 2 Samuel 7:12–13. Mary’s son will assume the long-awaited kingship, but his rule will be forever. This announcement is certainly an allusion to Daniel’s vision of the son of man:

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. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed. (Dan 7:13–14)

The impact of Gabriel’s revelation is stunning. His announcement creates a complex expectation of eschatological impact related to “Jesus’ mission to ‘reign over the house of Jacob forever.’ Luke’s language contains nationalistic, socio-political reverberations. When this is matched with similar material in the birth narrative . . . it behooves the reader to continue to listen to the narrative,”<sup>55</sup> as Green notes.

Gabriel closes his speech by highlighting the power of God to do the impossible. This statement, of course, relates to Mary’s virginal conception of a child, but it also recalls the angel’s previous words about God’s abiding presence in her life, encouraging her to remain steadfast through the challenges of a scandalous pregnancy. Finally, Gabriel gives Mary confirmation about his prediction by telling her of Elizabeth’s pregnancy. The reference to Elizabeth’s pregnancy assures Mary of God’s ability to do the impossible and grants her trust in God’s preservation for the months ahead.

From Gabriel’s annunciation to Mary one learns even less concerning Gabriel’s appearance, behavior, personality, and status. However, his message is central to this epiphany. Luke gives no details regarding Gabriel’s appearance but says that it strikes some measure of fear in Mary’s heart. Gabriel tells her, “Do not be afraid,” which means that her visible response to his sudden arrival must have given a reason for this command. Other than the statement that Gabriel “entered” a doorway, no other record of movement,

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<sup>54</sup> I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Exeter, UK: Paternoster, 1978), 67.

<sup>55</sup> Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 88.

posture, or gesture are mentioned. In the account with Zechariah, Gabriel does not alert the priest to his identity until Zechariah questions his credibility. With Mary, Gabriel begins differently by offering his credentials. This may indicate that upon observing human behavior he has adapted his message to accommodate the human propensity for disbelief and questioning.

## BIISB Analysis

Table 4. BIISB application to Gabriel

<b>Principles for Identifying Angels</b>	<b>Biblical Gabriel</b>
Angels are invisible spiritual creatures.	Matthew describes Gabriel as a spiritual being when he reveals a message to Joseph in a dream (Matt 1:20–21).
Angels manifest as anthropomorphic beings.	Gabriel manifests in physical form with the appearance of a man in Daniel 8–9. He also reveals himself in the form of a man in Luke’s accounts with Zechariah and Mary (Dan 8:15; Luke 1:11, 28).
Angels are associated with light, fire, and purity.	Gabriel is not directly related to light, fire, and purity; however, if Daniel 10 is taken into account with regard to his appearance, these descriptors would be accurate (Dan 10:5–6).
Angels are warriors.	Gabriel’s description in Daniel indicates his warrior role in relation to Michael. Additionally, Zechariah’s fear of Gabriel may indicate his warrior appearance (Dan 10:13, 21; 12:1; Luke 1:12).
Angels speak human languages verbally.	Gabriel speaks to Daniel, Zechariah, and Mary with verbal human language. He also communicates to Joseph in a dream through human language (Dan 8:17–26; 9:22–27; Luke 1:13–20; 28–37).
Angels are loyal to God and his rule.	God sends Gabriel from the heavenly places to deliver two messages to Daniel. In the Gospel accounts, Gabriel demonstrates his loyalty to God and even mentions his special status as one who stands next to God to do his bidding (Dan 9:21; Luke 1:19).
Angels are subservient to Jesus.	Gabriel indicates his subservience to Jesus in his announcement to Mary regarding Jesus’ birth (Luke 1:31–33).
Angels disseminate God’s plans for judgment and deliverance.	Gabriel’s messages all focus on God’s plans regarding past or future judgment and the promise of God’s coming deliverance (Dan 8:17–26, 9:22–27; Luke 1:13–20, 28–37).
Angels stand, walk, and fly.	Biblical reporters describe Gabriel as doing all three activities (Dan 8:17; 9:21; Luke 1:11).



Table 4 continued

<b>Principles for Identifying Angels</b>	<b>Biblical Gabriel</b>
Angels observe human behavior.	Gabriel's observation of human activity is limited. He does observe those with whom he is communicating, and he wakes Daniel after he faints (Dan 8:18).
Angels cause human beings to fear when visibly present.	Gabriel's presence evokes fear on two occasions. Both Zechariah and Daniel are filled with fear upon his arrival. Mary is troubled by his greeting, but does not necessarily become afraid. Daniel's second encounter does not mention fear (Dan 8:17; Luke 1:12).
Angels convey God's messages through speech, visions, and dreams.	Gabriel communicates God's messages through verbal speech and a dream (Dan 8:17-26; 9:22-27; Luke 1:13-20; 28-37; Matt 1:20-21).
Angels protect and provide for human beings at God's direction.	Gabriel does not perform any acts of protection in these texts.
Angels perform tasks of judgment on humanity at God's direction.	Gabriel does not perform any acts of judgment in these texts.
<b>Non-Angel Principles</b>	<b>Biblical Gabriel</b>
Non-angels are spiritual beings who can manifest as physical creatures.	Biblical reporters record that Gabriel is a spiritual being who manifests with a human appearance.
Non-angels appear in deserted locations.	Gabriel does not appear in wilderness settings; he appears near rivers in Babylon, inside the temple, and in a residence in Nazareth.
Non-angels are visibly associated with darkness and water.	Gabriel is not associated with these descriptions.
Non-angels are spiritually oppressive toward human beings.	Gabriel is not associated with these descriptions.
Non-angels are physically violent toward human beings.	Gabriel is not associated with these descriptions.
Non-angels exert power over human beings through physical manipulation, illness, and temptation.	Gabriel is not associated with these descriptions.
Non-angels are spatially limited.	Gabriel is spatially limited in that he travels from the heavenly places to Babylon by flight.
Non-angels deceive human beings through verbal communication, dreams, and visions.	Gabriel is not associated with these descriptions.
Non-angels undermine God's plan and slander Jesus and his followers.	Gabriel is not associated with these descriptions.
Non-angels are intelligent beings.	Gabriel is an intelligent being who communicates God's messages and predicts the future.
Non-angels are emotional beings displaying rage toward God and human beings.	Gabriel is not associated with these descriptions.
Non-angels are described as unclean or impure.	Gabriel is not associated with these descriptions.
Non-angels obey God and are under the authority of Jesus and his followers.	Gabriel is subservient to Jesus, but his subservience to followers of Jesus is inconclusive.

CHAPTER 5  
ISLAMIC TEACHING ON JIBRIL

**Introduction**

Limited research has been done in English on Islamic angelology; however, some monographs have been published regarding particular Muslim beliefs about angels and their origins. Syed Akif's translation of Abul Ala Mawdudi's *Islamic Civilization* explores five doctrinal categories undergirding Islam: belief in one God, angels, the prophets, holy scriptures, and judgment day. Mawdudi asserts the concept of angels exists in every religion but that polytheistic religions have inappropriately elevated angels so they are deified and worshipped. As a result, he argues that many people have been led astray and worshipped gods who are not the one true God. Mawdudi explains,

A general concept of angels has existed in all religions and all human communities in one form or another. Based upon this general concept, various religions have developed different belief structures. . . . On the whole, the belief that the angels are in some way co-sharers of God's Divinity has been quite prevalent amongst both leaders and followers of various faiths. Accordingly, they have been represented as idols, temples have been raised for them, their images have been worshipped, supplications have been made to them, they have been considered providers of human needs, redressers of grievances, and intercessors. In this way, much *shirk* (polytheism) has been created and continues to exist in the world.<sup>1</sup>

Because of these ambiguities or misunderstandings relating to angelic origins and nature, various Islamic experts have supplied succinct summaries of Islamic angelology. John Esposito summarizes Islamic angelology noting their origin, function, and activity: "Angels serve as a link between God and human beings. Created out of Light, immortal and sexless, they function as guardians, recorders, and messengers from

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<sup>1</sup> Sayyid Abul A'la Mawdudi, *Islamic Civilization*, trans. and ed. Syed Akif (Markfield, UK: Kube Publishing, 2015), 125.

God. They are transmitters of God’s message, communicating divine revelation to the prophets.”<sup>2</sup>

Mawdudi notes that angels are not the offspring of God or even his helpers. Angels are only “agents who carry out specific orders (*mudabbirat al-amr*) with regard to affairs that have been entrusted to them by Allah.”<sup>3</sup> According to Mawdudi, angels also exist to facilitate communications from Allah to human beings. Lastly, Mawdudi asserts,

[Angels are] workers through whom God ensures the complete organizational operation of the cosmos. . . . In other words, the role of the angels in God’s kingdom is akin to members of the state services (civil and military) in temporal states. It is through them that God unleashes His wrath upon some and showers His blessings upon others, seize the souls (i.e. causes people to die) and gives life to others, causes rain to come down at places and ensures a drought at others.<sup>4</sup>

Mawdudi interpreted Q21:26–28 as a reference to angelic messengers. The Qur’anic text reads:

They say: “The Most Compassionate Lord has taken to Himself a son.” Glory be to Him! Those whom they so designate are only His honored servants. They do not outstrip Him in speech and only act as He commands. He knows whatever is before them and whatsoever is remote from them and they do not intercede except for him, intercession on whose behalf pleases Him, and they stand constantly in awe of Him. (Q21:26–28)

Two of the most in-depth studies of Islamic angelology in English are monographs written by Stephen Burge and Stephen Vicchio. Burge’s *Angels in Islam: Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī’s al-Ḥabā’ik fī akhbār al-malā’ik* primarily focuses upon the *hadith* collection of *Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī’s al-Ḥabā’ik*, but in the introductory chapter Burge explores classical sources for Islamic angelology and its modern developments. According to Burge, Islamic angelology emerged from the “great many references to angels in the Qur’an, particularly in relation to their roles in eschatology and revelation, and, as such, the Qur’an provides a solid basis from which the Islamic tradition

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<sup>2</sup> John L. Esposito, *Islam: The Straight Path* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 29.

<sup>3</sup> Mawdudi, *Islamic Civilization*, 126.

<sup>4</sup> Mawdudi, *Islamic Civilization*, 130.

developed.”<sup>5</sup> He explains that while *hadith* traditions seem to augment specific beliefs about the function or role of angels, they do not stray far from the doctrinal authority grounded in the Qur’an:

As the Qur’an is the principal source of authority in Islamic thought, ideas about angels can be seen either to be a development of a Qur’anic theme, or “pegged” onto a particular verse. These approaches to exegesis highlight the nature of the interdependent relations between scripture and exegesis (*Deutungsbedürftigkeit*): exegesis is dependent on scripture, but scripture needs to be explained by exegetical tradition.<sup>6</sup>

Vicchio’s *Malai’ka: Angels in Islam* is a topical study exploring the nature of angels in Islamic tradition, specific angelic beings in Islam, angels in relation to death, angels in Islamic art, and jinn and demonic spirits in Islam. Summarizing the nature and function of angels in Islam, Vicchio writes, “The angels . . . are entities that possess intelligence and comprehension, and are honorable servants of Allah. They are totally subservient to Allah, and they never exhibit insubordination to Him. The *Mala’ika* have been assigned important and greatly varied responsibilities from Allah.”<sup>7</sup>

Studies on Islamic angels from a Christian perspective have historically been polemically aimed at the Qur’an. An example of this, Burge notes, is Arthur Jeffery’s *Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur’an*, which attempts to locate the origins of Islam in reference to Jewish and Christian contexts.<sup>8</sup> Burge writes, “Similar source-critical methods were also used in the study of various Qur’anic narratives, originally as part of a broader polemic against Islam. These polemical works often attributed ‘sources’ to the Qur’an without much analysis.”<sup>9</sup> He cites Steven Wasserstrom’s writing on the relationship

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<sup>5</sup> Stephen Burge, *Angels in Islam: Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī’s al-Ḥabā’ik fī akhbār al-malā’ik* (New York: Routledge Publishers, 2012), 5.

<sup>6</sup> Burge, *Angels in Islam*, 5–6.

<sup>7</sup> Stephen Vicchio, *Mala’ika: Angels in Islam* (Minneapolis: Wisdom Editions, 2020), 291.

<sup>8</sup> Burge, *Angels in Islam*, 9.

<sup>9</sup> Burge, *Angels in Islam*, 9.

between Islamic tradition and Jewish Pseudepigrapha as a recent example.<sup>10</sup> Examinations of secondary literature have tended to emphasize narratives describing angels in the Qur'an and exegetical literature. Additional studies have concentrated on the relationship between Islam and pre-Islamic paganism, the most notable according to Burge are studies by Joseph Chelhod,<sup>11</sup> Jacques Waardenburg<sup>12</sup> and Alford T. Welch.<sup>13</sup> According to Amira El-Zein, pre-Islamic peoples believed in a type of supernatural telephone in which *jinn* would receive and embellish messages from the divine:

It was imagined the jinni would convey the 'stolen' data from the sky to the seer, as follows; "he would empty the secret heard from the heaven into the ear of the soothsayer the way you empty a bottle of its contents." The jinn, it was thought, had many different ways of getting the 'heavenly' information. Sometimes "they would climb to the heavens, one on top of another, until the one on top could hear the deity. He would then transmit what he heard to the one under him, and so on, until it reached the first jinni who would then cast it into the ear of the seer."<sup>14</sup>

In *The Bible and the Qur'an*, John Kaltner and Younus Mirza examine the shared figures from Christianity, Islam, and Judaism. The focus of each examination is the major similarities and differences between the figures. The comparison of Gabriel and Jibril covers two pages and does not provide an adequate comparison of the two figures from either tradition, and the work concludes with a question which is the primary focus of this project: "Are there similarities between how Gabriel/Jibril is presented in the Qur'an

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<sup>10</sup> Burge, *Angels in Islam*, 9–10.

<sup>11</sup> Joseph Chelhod, *Les Structures Du Sacré Chez Les Arabes*, new ed., Islam D'hier Et D'aujourd'hui 13 (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 1986).

<sup>12</sup> Jacques Waardenburg, *Islam: Historical, Social, and Political Perspectives*, Religion and Reason (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2002), 34–44.

<sup>13</sup> Alford T. Welch, Pierre Cachia, and W. Montgomery Watt, *Islam, Past Influence and Present Challenge* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1979).

<sup>14</sup> Amira El-Zein, *Islam, Arabs, and the Intelligent World of the Jinn* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2009), 56.

and the roles he plays in the Bible?”<sup>15</sup> Other projects focus on Islamic theology,<sup>16</sup> the Jewish and Christian historical and theological contexts,<sup>17</sup> Sufi expressions of angelic appearances,<sup>18</sup> *jinn* possession,<sup>19</sup> and revelation given in dreams and visions.<sup>20</sup>

The development of Islamic angelology differs from Christian angelology because it is more comprehensive and the writings are more numerous relating to the interaction of angelic beings with Allah and with human beings. Burge notes,

The developed Jewish, Zoroastrian and Islamic angelologies all show a high degree of interaction between the divine and human spheres. Christianity, particularly in the late-Antique period and beyond, developed in a slightly different way. Whilst Christian angelology is not always expanded quite as readily as in Judaism and Islam, the growth in the cult of saints does bear some similarity to the intermediation

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<sup>15</sup> John Kaltner and Younus Y Mirza, *The Bible and the Qur'an: Biblical Figures in the Islamic Tradition* (London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2018), 49.

<sup>16</sup> *The Muslim Creed* provides an academic treatment and assessment of contemporary Islamic theology. Hussain provides a succinct treatment on angels. Amjad M. Hussain, *The Muslim Creed: A Contemporary Theological Study* (Cambridge, UK: Islamic Texts Society), 2016. Colby and Gulevich's work gives an introductory treatment of Islamic belief and practice. Included in this study is a brief overview on angels. See Frederick Stephen Colby and Tanya Gulevich, *Understanding Islam and Muslim Traditions: An Introduction to the Religious Practices, Celebrations, Festivals, Observances, Beliefs, Folklore, Customs, and Calendar System of the World's Muslim Communities* (Detroit: Omnigraphics, 2014). The tales of the mi'rāj describe Muhammad's journey into heaven, and his encounter with prophets and even angels. Gruber and Colby's project includes essays examining the various stories related to Muhammad's supernatural encounters. Christiane J. Gruber and Frederick Stephen Colby, *The Prophet's Ascension: Cross-Cultural Encounters with the Islamic Mi'rāj Tales* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010).

<sup>17</sup> Gabriel Reynolds examines the literary and historical context of the period in which the Qur'an originated. The following two works do not necessarily focus upon the existence or influence of angelic beings; however, Reynolds' research provides a background to the historical context in which Jibril was believed to have appeared. Gabriel Said Reynolds, *The Qur'an and Its Biblical Subtext* (London: Routledge, 2010); *New Perspectives on the Qur'an: The Qur'an in Its Historical Context 2* (New York: Routledge, 2011).

<sup>18</sup> Muhammad Hisham Kabbani explains the mystical Sufi understanding of angels. Muhammad Hisham Kabbani, *Angels Unveiled: A Sufi Perspective* (Fenton, MI: Institute for Spiritual and Cultural Advancement, 2009).

<sup>19</sup> Christian Suhr researched the issue of *jinn* possession and psychosis in a Danish mosque and psychiatric hospital. Suhr's project examines various case studies and films from an ethnographic methodology. Christian Suhr, *Descending with Angels: Islamic Exorcism and Psychiatry: A Film Monograph* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2019).

<sup>20</sup> Elizabeth Sirriyeh exposes the Islamic supernatural worldview and examines the nature of revelation disseminated by dreams, visions, and, in some cases, angels. Elizabeth Sirriyeh, *Dreams & Visions in the World of Islam: A History of Muslim Dreaming and Foreknowing* (London: I. B. Tauris & Company, 2015).

between humans and God, particularly in the association of saints with different aspects of life.<sup>21</sup>

While the foundation for Islamic belief in angels rests in the Qur'an, the extrapolation and development of a robust theology about angels exists in commentaries about the Qur'an and the sayings of Muhammad. Vicchio notes the similarities between the Hebrew, Ugaritic, and Arabic words for angel. The terms *malak* and *Mala'ika* have earlier Semitic cognates related to "king" (*malak*) and "angel" (*malak* and *malakim*). He writes,

In Arabic, the singular *malak* is usually written without the Hamza. In the Islamic Holy Book, Al-Qur'an, the word appears in both the singular and the plural. It also appears twice as the dual form, or *malakayn*, at Surah 2:96 and 7:19. In those two instances, the word is employed to designate two angels, specifically *Jibril* and *Mika'il*. The plural form, or the word *mala'ika*, occurs many times in the Qur'an, but the singular occurs only about a dozen times in the Holy Book. . . . The words "angel" and "angels" occur about ninety times in the Qur'an. Of these, it is in the plural form in over eighty cases.<sup>22</sup>

This chapter will not be a comprehensive examination of Islamic angelology<sup>23</sup>; instead, it will focus on Jibril as described in two *surahs* in the Qur'an,<sup>24</sup> selected *hadith*, and *The Life of Muhammad* by Ibn Ishaq. The purpose of this chapter is to uncover the traditional Sunnī descriptions of Jibril in order to accurately compare the Christian and Islamic depictions of this spiritual being.

### **Jibril in the Qur'an**

The Qur'an is a collection of revelations that Muslims believe were dictated to Muhammad through visions and aural transmissions. It also contains reports of events he witnessed. Muslims believe that Allah's intermediary, the angel Jibril, transmitted these revelations to Muhammad between AD 610 to AD 632. Western scholarship in Islamic

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<sup>21</sup> Burge, *Angels in Islam*, 5.

<sup>22</sup> Vicchio, *Mala'ika: Angels in Islam*, 12-13.

<sup>23</sup> For a critical and comprehensive examination of Islamic teaching on angels, see Burge, *Angels in Islam*, 31–108. Also see Vicchio, *Mala'ika: Angels in Islam*, 7–34.

<sup>24</sup> See Q2.97–98; 66.4. The former *surah* does not contain descriptive information about Jibril, but only mentions him as the mediator of revelation.

studies has debated the legitimacy of Muhammad’s biography since the nineteenth century because of the late dating of the historical accounts, and modern scholars continue to discuss these challenges.<sup>25</sup> Fred Donner highlights the problem: “Qur’anic studies, as a field of academic research, appears today to be in a state of disarray. Those of us who study Islam’s origins have to admit collectively that we simply do not know some very basic things about the Qur’an—things so basic that the knowledge of them is usually taken for granted by scholars dealing with other texts.”<sup>26</sup> Major challenges are presented to historians who wish to explore the intellectual development of the first two centuries of Islam. Andrew Rippen notes, “While the historian desires to employ the earliest possible sources in order to come ever closer to a better sense of the facts, the paucity of such sources and the questionable authenticity of those which do exist render the exercise fraught with substantial pitfalls.”<sup>27</sup> Nicolai Sinai writes, “For a comprehensive narrative of Muhammad’s life and career, including specific dates and a substantial number of names, we are dependent on Islamic literary sources that postdate the events they narrate by at least a century.”<sup>28</sup> While scholars continue to debate the historical accuracy of the Jibril accounts, this project will not examine the historical-critical arguments supporting or opposing the authenticity of Jibril.<sup>29</sup> Instead, Jibril’s stated authenticity, as presented in

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<sup>25</sup> Nicolai Sinai provides an introductory summary of the historical issues related to early Islam and Muhammad’s biography. See Nicolai Sinai, *The Qur’an: A Historical-Critical Introduction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 40–45. Harald Motzki’s edited work on the biography of Muhammad provides a historical examination of the biographical source material and the current discussion regarding Muhammad. See Harald Motzki, ed., *The Biography of Muhammad: The Issue of the Sources* (Boston: Brill, 2000), 3–17, 157–309.

<sup>26</sup> Fred Donner, “The Qur’an in Recent Scholarship: Challenges and desiderata,” in *The Qur’an in Its Historical Context*, ed. Gabriel Said Reynolds (New York: Routledge, 2008), 29.

<sup>27</sup> Andrew Rippen, *The Qur’an and Its Interpretive Tradition* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2001), 310.

<sup>28</sup> Sinai, *The Qur’an*, 41. For more information regarding the historicity of the standard account of authorship of the Qur’an, see Sinai, *The Qur’an*, 40–45.

<sup>29</sup> Andrew Rippen’s conclusion, “Muhammad in the Qur’an: Reading Scripture in the 21st Century,” summarizes the issues surrounding the historical accuracy of the life and career narratives of



Islamic texts and tradition, will be assumed. To compare the biblical Gabriel and the Islamic Jibril fairly, I have chosen to examine both figures with the underlying presupposition of their existence. According to a *hadith* attributed to Aishah, Muhammad's wife, Muhammad described the transmission of revelation in this way:

The angel sometimes comes to me with a voice which resembles the sound of a ringing bell,<sup>30</sup> and when this state passes away from me, I grasp what the angel has said, and this type of Divine Revelation is the hardest on me; and sometimes the angel comes to me in the shape of a man and talks to me, and I understand and grasp what he says.<sup>31</sup>

Traditionally understood, Q53.1–18 describes a vision of Jibril; however, the account does not name Jibril:<sup>32</sup>

By the star when it falls! Your companion has not gone astray, nor has he erred, nor does he speak on a whim. It is nothing but an inspiration inspired. One harsh in power has taught him—one full of strength! He stood poised, while He was the highest horizon, then he drew near and came down. He was two bow-lengths tall, or nearly. And so He inspired His servant (with) what He inspired. (Q53.1–18)

Q81 records another vision, similar to Q53. This passage echoes the themes presented in Q53, but its information about the persona within the vision is less descriptive:

I swear by the slinking (stars), the runners, the hiders, by the night when it departs, by the dawn when it breathes! Surely it is indeed the word of an honorable messenger—one full of power, secure with the Holder of the throne, one (to be) obeyed, (and) furthermore trustworthy. Your companion is not possessed. Certainly he did see Him on the clear horizon. He is not grudging of the unseen. It is not the word of an accursed satan. So where will you go? It is nothing but a reminder to the worlds—to whoever of you pleases to go straight. But you will not (so) please unless God pleases, the Lord of the worlds. (Q81.15–28)

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Muhammad. Andrew Rippen, "Muhammad in the Qur'an: Reading Scripture in the 21st Century," in Motzki, *The Biography of Muhammad*, 298–309.

<sup>30</sup> Dede Korkut argues Muhammad suffered from visual seizure phenomena instead of actually encountering the angel Jibril. He writes, "Visual seizure phenomena can form visual hallucinations like a humanoid figure (i.e., the angel Gabriel)." Additionally, Korkut asserts Muhammad may have experienced auditory seizures as well resulting in a ringing sensation: "Auditory seizures start in the superior temporal lobe and are often characterized by apparent sounds such as ringing (a bell) or buzzing (a bee). Sometimes a coherent musical experience may be heard, such as a song or piece of a symphony." Dede Korkut, *Life Alert: The Medical Case of Muhammad* (Enumclaw, WA: WinePress Publishing, 2001), 28–29.

<sup>31</sup> Muhammad ibn Ismail Bukhari, *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, trans. Muhammad Muhsin Khan (Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: Darussalam, 1997), 4:279.

<sup>32</sup> While this is the traditionally belief, some Muslims believe this vision describes Allah and not Jibril.

Interpretations regarding this *surah* are not definitive among scholars. Some suggest that the language of the “honorable messenger” does not refer to Jibril, but rather to Muhammad. This phrase is used to describe human communicators of God’s revelation and is not typical of spiritual beings or Jibril.<sup>33</sup> Arthur Droge notes, “The biographical tradition, however, would eventually harmonize the ‘vision-texts’ of Q53 and Q81, and understand them both as appearances of Gabriel, the mediator of revelation to Muhammad.”<sup>34</sup>

These two visions do not include words transmitted to Muhammad; they only depict visions. Muslims believe that the content of the Qur’an was given to Muhammad by Jibril through dictation. The Qur’an provides almost no information about the function and process of Qur’anic inspiration.<sup>35</sup> Ibn Abbas believes that Q96 contains the first words of revelation:<sup>36</sup> “Recite in the name of your Lord who creates, creates the human from a clot. Recite, for the Lord is the Most Generous, who teaches by the pen, teaches the human what he does not know” (Q96.1–5). The *surah* does not indicate who the speaker is or to whom he is speaking. Only through later traditions about the life of Muhammad and *hadith* is context given for this first revelation.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> See Q69.40 to examine the phrase “honorable messenger” used to describe Muhammad and Q44.17 for the phrase’s usage to describe Moses.

<sup>34</sup> Arthur J. Droge, *The Qur’an: A New Annotated Translation* (Bristol, CT: Equinox, 2013), xvii.

<sup>35</sup> Droge discusses the verb *nazzala*, which means “brought down,” in relation to Jibril’s dissemination of Allah’s message to Muhammad. But how Jibril functioned as messenger is ambiguous from the texts found in the Qur’an. Droge explains that the verb tense used indicates a one-time event in which Jibril gave the Qur’an to Muhammad; however, the *hadith* describe a regular pattern of meetings between Muhammad and Jibril. See Droge, *The Qur’an*, xxi–xxvi.

<sup>36</sup> Ibn Abbas writes, “(Read) He says: Read, O Muhammad, the Qur’an; this is the first revelation that Gabriel brought down: (In the name of thy Lord) by the command of your Lord (Who createth) the created beings.” Ibn Abbas, “Tanwîr al-Miqbâs min Tafsîr Ibn ‘Abbas,” accessed February 15, 2021, <https://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=73&tSoraNo=96&tAyahNo=1&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=2>.

<sup>37</sup> Ibn Ishaq’s biographical indicates that the words of Q96 were the first recorded statements Jibril gave to Muhammad. See Abdul Malik, *The Life of Muhammad: A Translation of Ibn Ishaq’s Sīrat Rasūl Allah*, ed. Ibn Ishām, trans. Alfred Guillaume (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 106.

## Q2.97–98

The two *surahs* that name Jibril specifically are Q2 and Q66. Q2 is the longest *surah* in the Qur'an. It includes versions of Adam's fall into sin, Moses' interaction with Pharaoh, Israel's rebellion against God, and Abraham's call and subsequent construction of God's house, which Muslims would later understand as the Ka'ba in Mecca. The second half of the *surah* contains instructions regarding various issues, including food regulations, retaliation, wills, fasting, violence, pilgrimage, marriage, divorce, usury, alms, and prayer. It mentions Jibril in verses 97–98: "Say: "Whoever is an enemy to Gabriel—surely he has brought it down on your heart by the permission of God, confirming what was before it, and as a guidance and good news to the believers. Whoever is an enemy of God, and His angels, and His messengers, and Gabriel and Michael—surely God is an enemy to the disbelievers."

Sayyid Qutb<sup>38</sup> asserts that neither the Jews nor the Muslims possessed any reason to hate or disparage Gabriel: "It is a ludicrous argument brought about by blind hatred. They [The Jews] had no reason to be hostile towards Gabriel who, not being human himself, could not take sides for or against them. He was a messenger whom they disliked although he had no personal preference or choice in delivering that message. He only did as he was bid."<sup>39</sup> Biblical texts do not support Qutb's assumption that the Jews disliked Gabriel; however, Qutb seems to be highlighting the reason for the Jews' rejection of the Qur'anic message. According to Baidawi, concerning Q2.97–98, the Jewish hatred toward Gabriel arose because of his messages to Daniel in Babylon: "One day 'Umar went to the synagogue of the Jews and asked them about Gabriel. They answer: 'He is our enemy who has given to Muhammad information regarding our revealed knowledge which

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Muhammad ibn Ismā'īl Bukhārī's description of Muhammad's first encounter with Jibril also includes the text of Q96. See Bukhārī, *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, 6:401–2.

<sup>38</sup> Sayyid Qutb was an Egyptian Muslim intellectual who was influential in the development of fundamentalist ideologies in the twentieth century. See James Toth, *Sayyid Qutb: The Life and Legacy of a Radical Islamic Intellectual* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>39</sup> Sayyid Qutb, *In the Shade of the Qur'an* (London, UK: MWH Publishers, 1979), 1:109.

is kept secret. He makes use of every baseness and persecution.”<sup>40</sup> ‘Umar then asked them about the relationship between Michael and Gabriel. They stated these two angels stood on opposite sides of Allah, and between them exists a strong enmity. ‘Umar responded, “If this is the case with them, as you say, then they are not enemies. You are indeed as disbelieving as the asses.”<sup>41</sup>

Abdul Ala Mawdudi asserts, “The Jews not only reviled Muhammad (Allah’s peace be upon him) and the believers, but also spoke abusively of Gabriel, the chosen Divine Messenger. They said. ‘He is our enemy: He is not an angel of blessings but of affliction.’”<sup>42</sup> Qutb confirms Mawdudi’s understanding of the Jews’ hatred of Muhammad and his message:

Another astonishing trait of the Israelites is revealed. The spite and envy they feel towards other recipients of God’s grace are not only beyond belief but have now landed them in a serious paradox. Because they knew that the Angel Gabriel conveyed God’s revelations to Muhammad, and in view of the hatred and the grudge they harbored against Muhammad, they circulated the absurd tale that Gabriel was also an enemy of theirs because he was the Angel of death and destruction. This, they alleged, gave them a valid reason to reject Muhammad and the revelations he was receiving. Had it been the Angel Michael who had conveyed the revelations, they claimed, they would have accepted it, because he was the angel of rain, fertility and prosperity.<sup>43</sup>

Zamakhshari observes a difference in the manner Christians and Jews accepted the message of Muhammad: “God portrays the Jews as being unyielding and as acknowledging the truth only grudgingly, while the Christians are (portrayed as) of gentle disposition, easily guided, and having an inclination towards Islam.”<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Helmut Gätje, *The Qur’ân and Its Exegesis: Selected Texts with Classical and Modern Muslim Interpretations* (Oxford: OneWorld Publications, 1996), 47.

<sup>41</sup> Gätje, *The Qur’ân and Its Exegesis*, 47.

<sup>42</sup> Abdul Ala Mawdudi, “English Tafsir,” 2019, accessed November 28, 2020, <https://www.englishtafsir.com/Quran/2/index.html#sdfootnote100sym>.

<sup>43</sup> Qutb, *In the Shade of the Qur’an*, 1:109.

<sup>44</sup> Gätje, *The Qur’ân and Its Exegesis*, 134.

Verse 97 states, “Surely he has brought it down.” Ibn Kathir interprets this phrase to mean that Jibril received revelation from Allah in heaven and subsequently delivered the Qur’an to Muhammad:

Say (O Muhammad ): “Whoever is an enemy to Jibril (Gabriel) (let him die in his fury), for indeed he has brought it (this Qur’an) down to your heart by Allah’s permission, confirming what came before it (i.e., the Tawrah and the Injil) and guidance and glad tidings for the believers). (98. “Whoever is an enemy to Allah, His Angels, His Messengers, Jibril and Mika’il, then verily, Allah is an enemy to the disbelievers.”).<sup>45</sup>

However, other verses attribute this same action to the “spirit”:

Say: “The holy spirit has brought it down from your Lord in truth, to make firm those who believe, and as a guidance and good news for those who submit.” (Q16.102)

The trustworthy spirit has brought it down on your heart, so that you may be one of the warners, in a clear Arabic language. (Q26.193)

Exalter of ranks, Holder of the throne, He casts the spirit of His command on whomever He pleases of His servants, to warn of the day of Meeting. (Q40:15)

Historically, Islamic philosophers agree on the distinction between the Holy Spirit and Jibril. Ibn Kathir, Ibn Abi Hatim, Ibn Abbas, and Arabi Ibn Abbas believed that contradictions such as Q78:38 indicate Jibril is a separate being from the Holy Spirit:<sup>46</sup> “The Day that the Spirit and the angels will stand forth in ranks, and none shall speak except any who is permitted by Allah, Most Gracious, and He will say what is right” (Q78:38).

Regardless of the implicit connections Q2 has with Q16, Q26, and Q40, concerning the action performed by the spirit or by Jibril, Q2 makes it clear that Jibril delivered something to Muhammad that affected Muhammad’s heart. Qutb explains, “We note in this verse the point that the Qur’an was lodged in Muhammad’s ‘heart,’ a term used frequently in the Qur’an to indicate a non-physical part of the human personality that receives and understands. It does not refer to the physical human organ known by

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<sup>45</sup> Isma’il Ibn Kathir, “Qur’an Tafsir Ibn Kathir—Disbelievers Wish They Could Live Longer,” 2019, accessed November 28, 2020, [http://www.qtafsir.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=343#1](http://www.qtafsir.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=343#1).

<sup>46</sup> Vicchio, *Mala’ika: Angels in Islam*, 44.

that name. The heart, according to the Qur'an, is the centre of human perception."<sup>47</sup> As in other ancient literature, Muhammad's heart is synonymous with his mind.<sup>48</sup> While the specific detail regarding what Jibril brought down is not clear from the text, interpreters who are familiar with Jewish and Christian texts assume that the role Jibril must be serving is that of an agent of revelation. Mawdudi explains that rejection of Muhammad or his message was a rejection of Allah and all previous revelation:

As Gabriel revealed the Qur'an to Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him) by Allah's Command, so by abusing Gabriel they actually abused Allah." He continues, "That is, 'You abuse Gabriel for no other reason than that he has brought down the Qur'an, whereas the Qur'an confirms the teachings of the Torah; so, in a way, you abuse the Torah as well.'" Mawdudi explains that to reject Allah or his messenger is sheer folly, "In the preceding verses, the Jews have been warned of the consequences of their attitude towards the Qur'an and the mission of the Holy Prophet. In this part of the verse, they have been admonished to consider the matter from another point of view. As the Qur'an shows the way to right guidance and brings good tidings to the believers, it is sheer folly to oppose it and reject it. Thus nay harm none but themselves by depriving themselves of the true success which follows its acceptance."<sup>49</sup>

The text connects Jibril's revelation with prior revelation given through angels.

Q2.97 indicates the Qur'anic revelation given to Muhammad was confirmation of previous revelation. Droge asserts,

It must therefore be a reference to the descent of a *book*—that is, not inspiration in general, but the very Qur'an itself—which validates the *books* which had been "sent down" before: namely, the "Torah" of Moses and "Gospel" of Jesus.<sup>50</sup> This sudden exclamation about Jibril is unusual with regard to the rest of the Qur'an. The inclusion of this name is remarkable because of its isolation and lack of repetition. Recognizing the strangeness of Jibril's arrival in the text and lack of explanation, Droge asserts that this encounter 'stands as an unresolved tension with hundreds of other passages in which both revelation and inspiration are characterized as unmediated.'<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Qutb, *In the Shade of the Qur'an*, 1:103.

<sup>48</sup> Droge, *The Qur'an*, xix.

<sup>49</sup> Mawdudi, "English Tafsir."

<sup>50</sup> Droge, *The Qur'an*, xix. For further reading regarding the Qur'an's inclusion of other Scriptures see Q3.3; 5.48; 35.31; 46.30.

<sup>51</sup> Droge, *The Qur'an*, xix.

#### Q66.4

The beginning of this *surah* addresses a conflict between Muhammad and his wives; however, the exact circumstance is unclear. The *surah* concludes by highlighting women from the past, who were both believing and disbelieving, and calling Muhammad's wives to obey the word of Allah.<sup>52</sup>

If both of you turn to God (in repentance), both your hearts are (well) inclined, but if both of you support each other against him, surely God—He is his Protector, and Gabriel (too), and the righteous among the believers, and beyond that the angels are (his) supporters. It may be that, if he divorces you, his Lord will give him in exchange better wives than you—women who have submitted, believing, obedient, repentant, worshipping, fasting—(both) previous married and virgins. (Q66.4–5)

What is notable from this *surah* is that Jibril's role is not described as that of mediator of revelation; instead, his role is to serve as a protector or guardian. Muhammad's conflict with his wives has left him isolated and seemingly vulnerable to verbal attack. He announces to his wives that if they should unite in their attack against him, then Jibril will deliver him. He needs no human assistance because Allah, Jibril, the angels, and believing followers will be his protectors. Mawdudi paraphrases verse 4, highlighting the divine and human support given to Muhammad: "That is, 'You would only harm yourselves if you upheld and supported each other against the Messenger of Allah (upon whom be Allah's peace), for none could succeed against him whose Protector was Allah and who had Gabriel and the angels and all the righteous Believers on his side.'"<sup>53</sup> Qutb explains that the event must have had a profound effect on Muhammad for him to make the statement that Allah is fully protecting him from his enemies. Qutb writes, "Gabriel, the believers and all angels stand ready to give him their full support. The Prophet is thus reassured and comforted after this serious breach of confidence."<sup>54</sup> Interestingly, Jibril is not included among the angels in this text; he seems to be in a different class from all other angels.

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<sup>52</sup> Droge, *The Qur'an*, 392.

<sup>53</sup> Mawdudi, "English Tafsir."

<sup>54</sup> Qutb, *In the Shade of the Qur'an*, 17:110.

Q2 and Q66 provide two details regarding Jibril. First, Jibril, according to the Qur'an, delivered revelation to Muhammad through inspiration. Second, Jibril serves as a protector for Muhammad against those who would harm or slander him. Limited information explicitly describes Jibril from the Qur'an, making it necessary to examine additional sources that expound on Jibril's appearance, behavior, message, personality, and status.

### **Jibril in Select *Hadith* and *The Life of Muhammad***

The terms *Hadith* or *Sunna* refer to the massive collection of literature that includes thousands of individual narratives recording sayings of Muhammad or describing his deeds.<sup>55</sup> According to John Burton, "Together with the Holy Qur'an, the *Sunna* forms the base which supports the structures of Islamic political, legal and doctrinal thinking."<sup>56</sup> *Hadith* also serve as a companion guide and commentary on many of the sayings found in the Qur'an.<sup>57</sup> Each *hadith* contains a description of provenance, listing the names of the people responsible for maintaining the authenticity of the narrative. Muslims call this chain of succession guaranteeing authenticity, the *isnad*, or the support on which the document rests.<sup>58</sup>

The two *hadith* collections explored for this project are those of Muhammad bin Isma'il al-Bukari (194–256/810–70) and Muslim bin Hajjaj (203–61/817–74). These collections are highly regarded among Muslims. Burton highlights the wide acceptance and celebration of these collections:

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<sup>55</sup> The terms *Hadith* or *Sunna*, when capitalized, refer to the overall collection of literature that record the sayings of Muhammad. Individual accounts are also referred to as *hadith* or *sunna*, but in lowercase.

<sup>56</sup> John Burton, *An Introduction to the Hadith* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994), ix.

<sup>57</sup> For helpful guidelines regarding *hadith* research, see Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ al-Shahrazūrī, *An Introduction to the Science of the Hadith: Kitāb Ma'rifat anwā' 'ilm al-hadith*, trans. Eerik Dickinson (Reading, UK: Garnet Publishing, 2006), 175–82.

<sup>58</sup> Burton, *An Introduction to the Hadith*, ix.



Apart from the Book of God, no more lavish praise has been heaped on any writing in Arabic than that which for 1,000 years has accompanied mention of the twin pinnacles of the *musannaf* type of work. They tend to be spoken of as ‘second only to the Holy Qur’an’ in terms of authority, as the repositories of the record of the sayings and doings of the Prophet.<sup>59</sup>

Muhammad ibn Isma‘il ibn Ibrahim ibn al-Mughira al-Bukhari was one of the most revered scholars of his day. He was born into a wealthy family who owned land in Bukhara. Before converting to Islam, his family practiced Zoroastrianism. Bukhari relocated to the city of Neyshabur where he mentored several young scholars. Most notable of these students were Muslim bin Al-Hajjaj and Abu ‘Isa-al Tirmidhi. Eventually, Bukhari left Neyshabur because of an argument with Muhammad ibn Yahya al-Duhli over the uncreated nature of the Qur’an. Bukhari returned to Bukhara where he served briefly under the city governor. He was later expelled because of his refusal to privately tutor the governor’s children. Bukhari died in exile in the city of Khartank.<sup>60</sup> Bukhari’s collection contains approximately 7,275 *hadith* and spans ninety-seven volumes. Bukhari is not as conscientious about avoiding repeated *hadith*, resulting in the increased number of individual accounts included. Bukhari had a stricter view toward *isnad* authenticity. According to Bukhari, individuals named consecutively in any *isnad* must have met.<sup>61</sup>

Abul Hussain Muslim ibn Al-Hajjaj was born in Persia. Little is known about his early life; however, he traveled throughout the Middle East consulting with various scholars and collecting *hadith* in Mecca, Medina, Iraq, Egypt, Syria, Khurasan, and Rey. Muslim knew and revered Bukhari, and both Muslim and Bukhari taught the influential scholar Imam al-Tirmidhi. Muslim was a devoted adherent to Islam and severely chastised schools and teachers whom he considered innovative or errant. Muslim’s analysis of over 300,000 *hadith* resulted in one of the most significant *hadith* collections in Islam.

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<sup>59</sup> Burton, *An Introduction to the Hadith*, 123.

<sup>60</sup> Jonathan A. C. Brown, “Bukhari, Muhammad ibn Isma‘il ibn Ibrahim ibn al-Mughira al-,” *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World*, accessed November 28, 2020, <http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t236/e1139>.

<sup>61</sup> Burton, *An Introduction to the Hadith*, 125.

Muhammad Abderrazzaq notes, “Imam Muslim’s *Sahih* has had a lasting influence on Sunni Islam, and it has left an indelible mark as one of the most essential texts conveying the example (*sunnah*) of the Prophet Muhammad.”<sup>62</sup> Muslim bin Hajjaj’s collection avoids repetition except in cases where a slightly different version of the narrative clarifies particular legal or theological rulings. Muslim’s work spans fifty-four volumes. Each volume deals with various issues related to Islamic faith and practice. Muslim’s work contains approximately 4,000 *hadith*.

Both works are similar in length and expanse; however, the collectors organized them differently. In the introduction to Muslim’s collection, Burton explains that Muslim only included *hadith* that Islamic scholars unanimously accept as “sound.”<sup>63</sup>

For this project, I examined only the narratives in these two collections, specifically referencing Jibril. I explored numerous *hadith* and subsequently discuss these accounts in detail. Because many of the *hadith* are repeated in the two collections, I have divided the following section into categories, highlighting Jibril’s appearance, behavior, message, personality, and status.

### **Jibril’s Appearance**

Islamic texts describe Jibril most often as having the appearance of a man; however, they also describe him as powerful and unimaginably expansive in his true form. Vicchio notes,

In many depictions of the *Malak Jibril* in Islamic iconography, he is often shown wearing two green garments and a silk turban, while seated on a white horse, presumably *Buraq*. A number of Shiite and Sufi interpreters, like Ibn Al-Farid, for example, the thirteenth-century mystical Arab poet, sees the vision of the Lote Tree as a kind of mystical experience in which the prophet sees angel Jibril in his natural state while the prophet’s companions see an ordinary man. . . . These traditions

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<sup>62</sup> Mohammad A. Abderrazzaq, “Hajjaj, Muslim ibn al-,” *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World*, accessed November 29, 2020, <http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t236/e1030>.

<sup>63</sup> Burton, *An Introduction to the Hadith*, 123.

point to the fact that the *Mala'ika*, and particularly *Malak Jibril*, have the power to change their shapes, sometimes appearing in the form of a human.<sup>64</sup>

According to Muhammad, Jibril's human form was ordinary. He resembled Dihyah bin Khalifah, the political envoy who delivered a message from Muhammad to the Roman emperor Heraclius.<sup>65</sup> Muslim mentions several occasions in which Jibril was dressed in white garments.<sup>66</sup>

Bukhari records that Muhammad saw "Jibril (Gabriel) in his true form twice."<sup>67</sup> Jibril often communicated with Muhammad without taking any form or using audible speech.<sup>68</sup> Jibril's spiritual or immaterial form is described as visibly enormous: "Whoever claimed that (the Prophet) Muhammad saw his Lord, is committing a great fault, for he only saw Jibril (Gabriel) in his genuine shape in which he was created covering the whole horizon."<sup>69</sup> Muhammad, answering Aishah's question about Jibril's appearance, states, "I saw him descending from heaven, the greatness of his form filling the space between heaven and earth."<sup>70</sup> Muslim notes that multiple *hadith* record Jibril as having 600 wings.<sup>71</sup> The most distinct description given of Jibril describes him communicating with Muhammad while seated in a floating chair:

The Divine Revelation was delayed for a short period but suddenly, as I was walking, I heard a voice in the sky, and when I looked up towards the sky, to my surprise, I saw the angel who had come to me in the Ḥirā cave, and he was sitting on a chair in

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<sup>64</sup> Vicchio, *Mala'ika: Angels in Islam*, 56.

<sup>65</sup> Abul Hussain Muslim ibn Al-Hajjaj, *English Translation of Sahih Muslim*, trans. Nasiruddin Al-Khattab (Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: Darussalam, 2007), 1:273.

<sup>66</sup> Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, 6:160. Also see Bukhārī, *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, 5:235.

<sup>67</sup> Bukhari, *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, 6:323.

<sup>68</sup> Bukhari, *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, 8:247–48.

<sup>69</sup> Bukhari, *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, 4:286.

<sup>70</sup> Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, 1:282.

<sup>71</sup> Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, 1:281.

between the sky and the earth. I was so frightened by him that I fell on the ground and came to my family and said (to them), “Cover me (with a blanket)! Cover me!”<sup>72</sup>

### **Jibril Behavior**

The accounts of Jibril’s interaction with Muhammad are diverse. Unlike Christian or Jewish counterparts, Islamic tradition regarding Jibril reveal him teaching, praying, cleansing, and even revising revelation. Arguably, Muhammad’s earliest interaction with Jibril is in the cave in Hijra, where Jibril commands Muhammad to “recite:”

“The commencement (of the Divine Revelation) to Allah’s Messenger was in the form of true dreams in his sleep, for he never had a dream but it turned out to be true and clear as the bright daylight. Then the love of seclusion was bestowed upon him, so he used to go in seclusion in the cave of Ḥirā where he used to worship (Allah Alone) continuously for many nights before returning to his family to take the necessary provision (of food) for the stay. He would come back to (his wife) Khadija again to take his provision (of food) likewise, till one day he received the Guidance while he was in the cave of Ḥirā.” An angel came to him and asked him to read. Allah’s Messenger replied, “I do not know how to read.” The Prophet said, “Then the angel held me (forcefully) and pressed me so hard that I felt distressed (could not bear it any more). He then released me and again asked me to read, and I replied, “I do not know how to read.” Thereupon he held me again and pressed me a second time till I felt distressed (could not bear it any more). He then released me and asked me to read, but again I replied, “I do not know how to read.” Thereupon he held me for the third time and pressed me till I felt distressed (could not bear it any more), and then he released me and said, “Read in the Name of your Lord, Who has created (all that exists). Has created man from a clot (a piece of thick coagulated blood). Read! And your Lord is the Most Generous, Who has taught (the writing) by the pen. Has taught man that which he knew not” (V.96:1–5). Then Allah’s Messenger returned with that (the Revelation) and his (heart severely beating; and the) muscles between his neck and shoulders were trembling till he came upon Khadija (his wife) and said, “Cover me!” They covered him, till his fear was over, and after that he said to Khadija, “O Khadija! What is wrong with me? I was afraid that something bad might happen to me.” Then he told her all that had happened.<sup>73</sup>

This account is consistent in the two *hadith* collections examined. Muhammad’s early biographer, Ibn Ishaq, includes additional details stating that Muhammad was sleeping in the cave and was awakened by Jibril’s arrival. Also, Muhammad’s response to Jibril’s command is altered. In the *hadith*, Muhammad responds by saying that he is

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<sup>72</sup> Bukhari, *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, 4:287.

<sup>73</sup> Bukhari, *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, 6:401–2.

illiterate, but in Ibn Ishaq's version, Muhammad asks for details about what he should read. Additionally, Ibn Ishaq's version states that Jibril acted upon Muhammad with a suffocating kind of pressure. The violence was so severe that Muhammad believed he would die. Ibn Ishaq continues with the story, revealing a second encounter between Muhammad and Jibril just outside the cave. Muhammad is confused about what has occurred and is fearful that the Quraysh<sup>74</sup> will think either that he is a poet or that a demon has possessed him. Regardless, he impulsively rushes to the top of the mountain to commit suicide, hoping to rescue himself from that fate. On top of the mountain, Jibril comes to him again, but now, Ibn Ishaq specifically notes that Jibril's appearance is that of a man. The sight and words of Jibril distract Muhammad, and messengers sent by Khadija find him and take him from the mountain:

When it was the night on which God honored him with his mission and showed mercy on His servants thereby, Gabriel brought him the command of God. "He came to me," said the apostle of God, "while I was asleep, with a coverlet of brocade whereon was some writing, and said, "Read!" I said, "What shall I read?" He pressed me with it so tightly that I thought I was death; then he let me go and said, "Read!" I said, "What shall I read?" He pressed me with it again so that I thought it was death; then he let me go and said "Read!" I said, "What shall I read?" He pressed me with it the third time so that I thought it was death and said "Read!" I said, "What then shall I read?"—and this I said only to deliver myself from him, lest he should do the same to me again. He said: "Read in the name of the Lord who created, Who created man of blood coagulated. Read! Thy Lord is the most beneficent, Who taught by the pen, Taught that which they knew not unto men." So I read it, and he departed from me. And I awoke from my sleep, and it was as though these words were written on my heart. (T. Now none of God's creatures was more hateful to me than an (ecstatic) poet or a man possessed—Never shall Quraysh say this of me! I will go to the top of the mountain and throw myself down that I may kill myself and gain rest. So I went forth to do so and then) when I was midway on the mountain, I heard a voice from heaven saying, "O Muhammad! Thou art the apostle of God and I am Gabriel." I raised my head towards heaven to see (who was speaking), and lo, Gabriel in the form of a man with feet astride the horizon, saying, "O Muhammad! Thou art the apostle of God and I am Gabriel." I stood gazing at him, (T. and that turned me from my purpose) moving neither forward nor backward; then I began to turn my face away from him, but towards whatever region of the sky I looked, I saw him as before.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> The Quraysh were an Arab tribe that historically inhabited and controlled the city of Mecca. The tribe also oversaw the religious practices conducted at the Ka'aba prior to Muhammad's invasion in AD 629–30.

<sup>75</sup> Ibn Ishaq, *The Life of Muhammad*, 106.

Two other encounters recorded in *hadith* reveal physical violence or manipulation similar to the encounter in the cave. While the accounts differ slightly in the details, both convey a meeting in which Jibril opens Muhammad's chest from throat to pubic area, removes Muhammad's heart, and washes his viscera with *zamzam* water to purify him. The first story states that this encounter happened when Muhammad was a child before the events in the cave. After opening Muhammad's chest, Jibril removes a portion of coagulated blood and remarks that the tainted blood had enabled Satan's involvement in Muhammad's life. The *hadith* indicates that this encounter was not merely a vision; instead, the boys playing with Muhammad ran to tell his wet nurse what had happened. In addition, the account records a companion of Muhammad as saying he saw the scar on Muhammad's chest:

It was narrated from 'Anas bin Malik that Jibril, came to the Messenger of Allah (when he was a boy and living with Halima, the wet nurse) while he was playing with the other boys. He took hold of him and threw him to the ground, then he opened his chest and took out his heart, from which he took a clot of blood and said: "This was the *Shaitan's* share of you." Then he washed it in a vessel of gold that was filled with *Zamzam*. Then he put it back together and returned it to its place. The boys went running to his mother—meaning his wet nurse—and said: "Muhammad has been killed!" They went to him and his color had changed. Anas said: "I used to see the mark of that stitching on his chest."<sup>76</sup>

Muslims often remember a similar story referred to as Muhammad's night journey. This encounter occurs after the cave experience. Jibril comes to Muhammad and removes his heart again so that he can cleanse Muhammad internally. After restoring his chest, Jibril takes Muhammad's hand and transports him to heaven. Muhammad then goes through a series of encounters with Adam, Moses, Jesus, and Abraham. Upon his arrival in the seventh heaven, Muhammad speaks to Allah, and through a series of negotiations, receives permission to reduce daily prayer times from fifty to five:

The roof of my house was opened when I was in Makkah, and Jibril came down and split open my chest, then he washed it with *Zamzam* water. Then he brought a golden basin filled with wisdom and faith and emptied it into my chest. Then he sealed it and took my hand, and took me up to heaven. When we came to the lowest heaven, Jibril said to the keeper of the lowest heaven: "Open up." He said: "Who is this?" He

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<sup>76</sup> Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, 1:263.

said: "This is Jibril." He said: "Is there anyone with you?" He said: "Yes, Muhammad is with me." He said: "Has he been sent for?" He said: "Yes." So he opened it, and when we went up into the lowest heaven, there was a man with crowds of people to his right and crowds of people to his left. When he looked to his right he laughed and when he looked to his left he wept. He said: "Welcome to the righteous Prophet and the righteous son." I said: "O Jibril, who is this?" He said: "This is Adam, and these crowds of people to his right and his left are his progeny. The people on the right are the people of Paradise and the people on the left are the people of the Fire. When he looks to his right he laughs and when he looks to his left he weeps." Then Jibril took me up to the second heaven and said to its keeper: "Open up." And its keeper said to him what the keeper of the lowest heaven had said, and he opened up." . . . I was taken up until I reached a level where I could hear the scratching of the pens." Ibn Hazm and Anas bin Mâlik said: "The Messenger of Allah said: 'Allah enjoined upon my *Ummah* fifty prayers. I went back with that until I passed by Mûsâ, and Mûsâ said: "What did your Lord enjoin upon your *Ummah*?" I said: "He enjoined upon them fifty prayers." Mûsâ said to me: "Go back to your Lord, for your *Ummah* will not be able to do that." So I went back to my Lord and He waived half of it [for me]. Then I went back to Mûsâ, and told him. He said: "Go back to your Lord, for your *Ummah* will not be able to do that." So I went back to my Lord and He said: "They are five and they are fifty; My Word cannot change." So I went back to Mûsâ and he said: "Go back to your Lord." I said: "I feel too shy before my Lord." Then Jibril set off with me until we reached *As-Sidrat Al-Muntahâ*, (the Lote-Tree of the Utmost Boundary) which was covered with colors, I do not know what they are. Then I entered Paradise and saw that its domes were pearls and its earth was musk.<sup>77</sup>

The two encounters describe Jibril's physical violence toward Muhammad, but they indicate that the pain had the higher purpose of cleansing him from the influence of Satan and preparing him to travel through the seven hierarchies of heaven.

Jibril's method of communication to and through Muhammad is also important to examine. As noted, Muhammad was distressed because he thought he would be viewed as either a poet or a possessed person. Ibn 'Abbas gives additional detail about how Jibril communicated his revelation to Muhammad:

When Jibril brought the Revelation down to him (i.e. the Prophet), he would move his tongue and lips with it, which was visibly hard for him. Then Allah, the Most High revealed: "Move not your tongue concerning it to make haste therewith" meaning, in learning it. "It is for Us to collect it and to give you the ability to recite it. We will preserve it in your heart and enable you to recite it." And when We have recited it to you, then follow its recitation" meaning: We have sent it down, so listen to it. "Then it is for Us to make it clear," meaning: We will explain it on your tongue. So when Jibril came to him, he kept silent, and when he departed, he recited it as Allah promised he would.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, 1:264–67.

<sup>78</sup> Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, 1:559–60.

Jibril's communication with Muhammad was not always audible. Occasionally, Jibril met Muhammad while invisible and spoke directly to his mind. In the following *hadith*, Aishah recalls an evening when she followed Muhammad to Al-Baqi'. Aishah notes that Muhammad stood for a long time, and afterward he raised his hands three times. Upon returning home, Muhammad forced her to reveal that she had followed him. Muhammad said, "Jibril came to me when you saw (me). He called me but he concealed it from you, and I answered him but I concealed it from you."<sup>79</sup> Abu Dharr records a similar account that occurred one evening as he and Muhammad walked together. Abū asked Muhammad, with whom he was speaking:

"O Prophet of Allah, may Allah cause me to be your ransom! To whom were you speaking at the edge of the *Harrah*? I did not hear anyone responding to you." He said: "That was Jibril—peace be upon him—who appeared to me at the edge of the *Harrah* and said: 'Give your *Ummah* the glad tidings that whoever dies not associating anything with Allah will enter Paradise.'"<sup>80</sup>

Jibril serves as a mediator, teacher, and revisionist of Allah's revelation. As noted, Muslims believe that Jibril dictated and inaudibly communicated the Qur'an to Muhammad; however, according to Muhammad, Allah also directed Jibril to teach religion: "Jibril (Gabriel) came to teach you your religion."<sup>81</sup> Jibril taught Muhammad and his followers the precise way to obey the revelation through instruction and example:

It was narrated from Ibn Shihāb. . . . "Jibril, peace be upon him, came down and led the Messenger of Allah in prayer." . . . "I heard the Messenger of Allah say: 'Jibril came down and led me in prayer, and I prayed with him. Then I prayed with him, then I prayed with him, then I prayed with him, then I prayed with him.' And he counted five prayers on his fingers."<sup>82</sup>

Jibril reportedly met with Muhammad annually to recite and revise the Qur'anic revelation during Ramadan: "The Prophet was the most generous of all the people, and he

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<sup>79</sup> Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, 2:506.

<sup>80</sup> Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, 3:39.

<sup>81</sup> Bukhari, *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, 1:81.

<sup>82</sup> Bukhari, *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, 5:206.



used to become more generous in Ramadan when Jibril (Gabriel) met him. Jibril used to meet him every night during Ramadan to revise the Qur'an with him."<sup>83</sup>

Additionally, Jibril appears to have been involved with war strategy and troop deployment. At the battle of Hud, Muhammad said, "This is Jibril (Gabriel) holding the head of his horse and equipped with war weapons."<sup>84</sup> Jibril is also mentioned by 'Anas as leading a regiment into battle: "I am just now looking at the dust rising in the street of Banu Ghanm (in Al-Madina) because of the marching of Jibril's (Gabriel's) regiment when Allah's Messenger set out to Banu Quraiza (to attack them)."<sup>85</sup>

### **Jibril's Message**

The record of Jibril's conversations and teaching are just as diverse as the record of his behavior. While Islamic tradition advocates that the entirety of the Qur'an could be related to Jibril's overall message to Muhammad, this section will only examine select *hadith* that reveal the various components of Jibril's message to Muhammad. The spectrum of Jibril's message includes general encouragement about the Muslim community, rules on prayer and alcohol consumption, direction on military strategy, a command for compassion and kindness toward neighbors, prophecy, methodology of prayer, the theological significance and value of *jihad*, theological testing, condemnation of the Jews, and command for strict adherence to monotheism.

According to 'Abdullah bin 'Amr bin Al-'As, Allah commanded Jibril to visit Muhammad because Muhammad was distressed about the Islamic community's unfaithfulness. Muhammad laments, "O Allah! My *Ummah!* My *Ummah!* and wept."<sup>86</sup> Allah instructed Jibril to ascertain the reason for Muhammad's distress and to encourage

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<sup>83</sup> Bukhari, *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, 4:460.

<sup>84</sup> Bukhari, *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, 5:228.

<sup>85</sup> Bukhari, *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, 5:229.

<sup>86</sup> Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, 1:335.

him: “O Jibril! Go to Muhammad—although your Lord knows best—and ask him why he is weeping.” Therefore, Jibril went to him and asked him, and the Messenger of Allah told him what he said. Although He knows best, Allah said, “O Jibril, go to Muhammad and say: ‘I will make you pleased concerning your *Ummah* and not displeased.’”<sup>87</sup> Jibril came to Muhammad while he was praying for healing: “When the Messenger of Allah fell sick, Jibril would recite *Ruqyah* for him, saying: ‘In the Name of Allah, may He cure you, from every disease may He heal you, from the evil of the envier when he envies and from the evil of every evil eye.’”<sup>88</sup> While prayers for healing are consistent with Jewish and Christian human interaction with God, intercessory angelic prayer for healing is non-existent. Additionally, a prayer of protection against the evil eye is couched in an animistic worldview consistent with pre-Islamic Arabia.

The theme of divine encouragement appears in other places as Jibril offers Muhammad a prophetic vision regarding the future of his community and the promise of God’s love for individuals. Muhammad states, “If Allah loves a person, He calls Jibril (Gabriel) saying: ‘Allah loves so-and-so; O Jibril love him.’ Jibril would love him, and then Jibril would make an announcement among the residents of the heaven, ‘Allah loves so-and-so; therefore, you should love him also.’”<sup>89</sup>

According to Ibn ‘Abbas, while Jibril was speaking to Muhammad on one occasion, the angel encouraged him by revealing the uniqueness of his revelation:

While Jibril was sitting with the Prophet, he heard a creaking sound from above him. He raised his head and said: “This is a door in heaven that has been opened today, and it has never been opened before today.” An Angel came down from it and he said: “This is an Angel who has come down to earth, and he has never come down before today.” He greeted him and said: “Glad tidings of two lights that have not been given to any Prophet before you: The Opening of the Book and the closing

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<sup>87</sup> Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, 1: 335.

<sup>88</sup> Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, 6:38.

<sup>89</sup> Bukhari, *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, 8:47.

verses of *Sarat Al-Baqarah*. You will never recite one letter of them but you will be given (reward).”<sup>90</sup>

In another vision, Jibril contrasts the success of Muhammad’s religious movement with various prophets who came before him. Jibril also describes the character of faithful adherents to Muhammad’s message as well as the growing population of the community:

The people were displayed in front of me and I saw one Prophet passing by with a large group of his followers, and another Prophet passing by with only a small group of people, and another Prophet passing by with only ten (persons), and another Prophet passing by with only five (persons), and another Prophet passed by alone. And then I looked and saw a large multitude of people, so I asked Jibril (Gabriel), “Are these people my followers?” He said. “No, but look towards the horizon.” I looked and saw a very large multitude of people. Jibril said, “Those are your followers, and those seventy thousand (persons) in front of them are the ones who will neither have any reckoning of their accounts nor will receive any punishment.” I asked, “Why?” He said, “For they used not to treat themselves with branding (cauterization) nor with *Ruqya* (get oneself treated by the recitation of some Verses of the Qur’an) and they used not to see evil omen in things, and they used to put their trust (only) in their Lord (Allah).”<sup>91</sup>

Various teachings that inform Muslim practice characterize Jibril’s message. In one instance, Jibril recommends compassionate care for Muhammad’s neighbors: “so much so that [Muhammad] thought [Jibril] would order [Muhammad] to make them [his] heirs.”<sup>92</sup> Jibril is mentioned as having taught Muhammad’s followers while disguised as a human being. On this occasion, Jibril teaches by asking a series of questions aimed at eliciting specific answers from Muhammad to inform those gathered around. Jibril asks Muhammad to define faith, to which Muhammad responds, “Faith is to believe in Allah, His Angels, His Books, His Messengers, and the Meeting with Him, and to believe in the Resurrection.”<sup>93</sup> Muhammad’s answer highlights what Muslims would later codify as the six articles of faith in Islam. Jibril’s second question focuses on Islamic practice: “What

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<sup>90</sup> Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, 2:325.

<sup>91</sup> Bukhari, *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, 8:293–94.

<sup>92</sup> Bukhari, *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, 8:37.

<sup>93</sup> Bukhari, *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, 6:260.

is Islam?”<sup>94</sup> Muhammad responds by outlining the five pillars of Islamic practice: monotheistic worship, ritual prayer, almsgiving, and fasting. The only pillar not mentioned in this list is a pilgrimage to Mecca, indicating this *hadith* might have originated in Medina before Muhammad’s conquest of Mecca. Jibril then asks, “What is perfection?” to which Muhammad responds, “[Perfection] is to worship Allah as if you see Him, and if you do not achieve this state of devotion, then (you must consider that) Allah is looking at you.”<sup>95</sup> Jibril asks Muhammad one final question regarding indicators that precede final judgment. Muhammad states,

“When a lady slave gives birth to her mistress, that will be of its portents; when the bare-footed naked people become the chiefs of the people; that will be of its portents. The Hour is one of the five things which nobody knows except Allah.” (The Prophet; then recited), “Verily, Allah! With Him (Alone) is the knowledge of the Hour. He sends down the rain and knows that which is in the wombs. No person knows what he will earn tomorrow, and no person knows in what land he will die.”<sup>96</sup>

Jibril’s confirmation of Muhammad’s answer alludes to his earlier instruction to Muhammad. This vision of the future hour of judgment indicates a significant reversal such that slaves will give birth to slave owners and people of little political influence will become the governing authorities. According to Muhammad and confirmed by Jibril, only Allah knows the future, and there is no guarantee of one’s future standing with Allah.

In another *hadith*, Jibril comes to Muhammad just before his Night Journey and offers a choice between milk and wine. Muhammad “looked at both and took the milk. Jibril (Gabriel) said, ‘Thanks to Allah Who guided you to the Fitrah (i.e., Islam); if you had taken the wine, your followers would have gone astray.’”<sup>97</sup> This *hadith* implicitly teaches the importance of alcoholic abstinence for Muslims.

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<sup>94</sup> Bukhari, *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, 6:260.

<sup>95</sup> Bukhari, *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, 6:261.

<sup>96</sup> Bukhari, *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, 6:261.

<sup>97</sup> Bukhari, *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, 6:186.

Jibril occasionally meets with Muhammad in different ways to provide theological training. Jibril instructs Muhammad on the Qur'an each night during the annual Ramadan celebration. Additionally, Jibril would provide occasional periods of teaching throughout the year.<sup>98</sup> In a narrative by Az-Zuhrī, Zaid bin Ḥasan, one warrior at the battle Badr said, “You know that Jibril (Gabriel) came down and offered the *Ṣalāt* (prayer) and Allah’s Messenger came down and offered five prescribed *Ṣalāt* (prayers), and Jibril said (to the Prophet): I have been ordered to do so (i.e., offer these five *Ṣalāt* (prayers) at these fixed stated times of the day).”<sup>99</sup> This event is another example of Jibril’s method for training Muhammad and the Islamic community to fulfill Allah’s instructions for piety. Ibn ‘Abbas records another instance of Jibril’s training. He describes Jibril’s varied methods of disseminating revelation to Muhammad so that he can remember it: “Jibril—peace be upon him—recited to me with one mode of recitation, but I asked him to recite it in another way, and I kept asking him for more, and he gave me more, until there were seven modes of recitation.”<sup>100</sup>

Jibril’s interactions with Muhammad also include elements of war planning and the direction of strategy. At the battle of Uhud, Muhammad describes Jibril to his followers as the one “holding the head of his horse and equipped with war weapons.”<sup>101</sup> According to Rifa’a, a warrior who fought at the battle of Badr, Jibril questioned Muhammad about his perception of the men who fought for the Islamic community: “Jibril (Gabriel) came to the Prophet and said, ‘How do you look upon the warriors of (the battle of) Badr among yourselves?’ The Prophet said, ‘As the best of the Muslims,’ or said a similar statement. On that Jibril said, ‘And so are the angels who participated in

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<sup>98</sup> Bukhari, *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, 1:50.

<sup>99</sup> Bukhari, *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, 5:206.

<sup>100</sup> Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, 2:336.

<sup>101</sup> Bukhari, *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, 5:228.

(the battle of) Badr.”<sup>102</sup> In another account, Muhammad returned to the mosque for rest after a day of battle, but Jibril instructed him to return to the battlefield:

When the Prophet returned from (the battle) of *Al-Khandaq* (i.e., the Trench) and laid down his arms and took a bath, Jibril (Gabriel . . . came to him while he (i.e., Jibril ) was shaking the dust off his head, and said, “You have laid down the arms? By Allah, I have not laid them down. Go out to them (to attack them).” The Prophet said, “Where?” (Angel) Jibril pointed towards Bani Quraiza. So Allah’s Messenger went to them (i.e., Bani Quraiza) (and besieged them). They then surrendered to the Prophet’s judgment but he directed them to Sa’d to give his verdict concerning them.<sup>103</sup>

The importance of fighting for the Islamic community is noted in Q2:216:

“Fighting is prescribed for you, though it is hateful to you. You may happen to hate a thing though it is good for you, and you may happen to love a thing though it is bad for you. God knows and you do not know.”<sup>104</sup> According to this passage, the defense of the Islamic way of life is an essential element of being a faithful Muslim. If a Muslim is unwilling to participate in the necessary protection of the community, or if an individual capitulates to the surrounding religions and abandons the faith, then he or she will experience eternal torment: “They [the persecutors] will not stop fighting you until they turn you back from your religion, if they can. Whoever of you turns away from his religion and dies while he is a disbeliever, those—their deeds have come to nothing in this world and the Hereafter. Those are the companions of the Fire. There they will remain” (Q2:217).<sup>105</sup> According to Jibril, the only certainty for experiencing Allah’s mercy rests in a Muslim’s willingness to die in *jihad*:

“*Jihad* in the cause of Allah and faith in Allah are the best of deeds.” A man stood up and said: “O Messenger of Allah, do you think that if I am killed in the cause of Allah, my sins will be expiated?” The Messenger of Allah said: “Yes, if you are killed in the cause of Allah and you are patient and seek reward, facing (the enemy) and not turning away.” Then the Messenger of Allah said: “What did you say?” He said: “Do you think that if I am killed in the cause of Allah, my sins will be

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<sup>102</sup> Bukhari, *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, 5:199.

<sup>103</sup> Bukhari, *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, 5:271.

<sup>104</sup> Droge, *The Qur’an*, 23.

<sup>105</sup> Droge, *The Qur’an*, 23.

expiated?” The Messenger of Allah, said: “Yes, if you are killed in the cause of Allah and you are patient and seek reward, facing (the enemy) and not turning away, except debt, for Jibril, told me that.”<sup>106</sup>

### **Jibril’s Personality**

Specific examples of Jibril’s personality are limited; however, as noted in the previous sections, Jibril is an intelligent, spiritual being who can give specific religious instructions, military advice, and even encouragement on occasion. Muhammad’s first encounters with Jibril display an emotional severity in the violence inflicted on Muhammad.<sup>107</sup> The prophet hears a voice commanding him to “recite.” Later, the voice is revealed as Jibril’s, but violent aggression accompanies the commands, causing Muhammad to fear for his life. In the examples included above, Jibril offers revelation, instruction, and strategy, but the examples do not describe his personality as joyful, celebrative, or happy.

### **Jibril’s Status**

Muslims believe that angels are among God’s creations. They believe that Jibril is an important angel who was “responsible for transmitting God’s Divine revelations to all of the human Prophets, ending with Muhammad.”<sup>108</sup> As noted, only two *surahs* mention Jibril by name; however, many Muslims assert that the Qur’an also refers to him as “Spirit.”<sup>109</sup> In Q2:97, Jibril is said to have “brought down” the Qur’anic revelation and put it within Muhammad’s heart. Because of this angelic action, Jibril has also been “attributed to ‘the trustworthy spirit’ (Ar. Rūḥ al-amīn) at Q26.193 and to the ‘holy spirit’

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<sup>106</sup> Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, 5:219.

<sup>107</sup> Ibn Ishaq, *The Life of Muhammad*, 106.

<sup>108</sup> Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, 6:481.

<sup>109</sup> Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, 6:481.

(ruh al-qudus) at Q16.102. This coincidence led most interpreters to identify the spirit with Gabriel, and thereby they were able to bring these passages into alignment.”<sup>110</sup>

The *hadith* records that God sent Jibril to give revelation and to provide protection. In a narrative given to Aishah, Muhammad’s wife, Khadija’s cousin, Waraqah bin Naufal, identifies the spiritual being from Muhammad’s encounter in the cave:

Khadija then took him to Waraqah bin Naufal, the son of Khadija’s paternal uncle. Waraqah who become a Christian in the pre-Islamic period and used to write Arabic and also write some portion of the Injeel (Gospel) in Arabic as much as Allah wished him to write. He was an old man and had lost his eyesight. Khadija said (to Waraqah), “O my cousin! Listen to what your nephew has to say.” Waraqah said, “O my nephew! What have you seen?” The Prophet then described whatever he had seen. Waraqah said, “This is the same angel Jibril (Gabriel) who was sent to Mūsa (Moses).”<sup>111</sup>

Waraqah’s assertion that Muhammad’s visitor is Gabriel from the biblical narratives is confused. Potentially, Waraqah simply conflated angelic visitation stories regarding the messianic birth narratives with the birth narrative of Moses. Waraqah’s understanding of biblical stories was most likely limited due to his lack of textual access and his physical blindness. Perhaps his knowledge was limited because he lacked formal Christian training. It is impossible to know for sure. However, this detail is of interest because the spiritual being who spoke to Muhammad in the cave was disembodied and gave no credentials in the encounter. Only after Waraqah’s confirmation is the being known to assert that he is Jibril.

According to *hadith*, Jibril took his instructions from Allah and descended to earth at his command: “The Prophet said, ‘O Jibril (Gabriel), what prevents you from visiting us more often than you do?’ Then this verse was revealed: ‘And we (angels) descend not except by the Command of your Lord (O Muhammad). To Him belongs what is before us and what is behind us.’”<sup>112</sup> Jibril’s status is that of an important angel of Allah

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<sup>110</sup> Droge, *The Qur’an*, xxi.

<sup>111</sup> Bukhari, *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, 6:402.

<sup>112</sup> Bukhari, *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, 6:336–37.



sent to human beings to transmit his revelation. In addition to the work of herald, Jibril acts as Muhammad's divine protector against those who would accuse him or attempt to cause him harm.<sup>113</sup>

### **BIISB Analysis**

The traditional accounts describing Jibril are numerous. My examination covered two *surahs* in the Qur'an, selected *hadith*, and salient passages in *The Life of Muhammad* by Ibn Ishaq. Table 5 displays the application of the instrument for identifying angelic beings to Jibril.

The Quranic examination yielded limited details regarding Jibril's appearance, behavior, personality, and status. Primarily, Q2.97–98 revealed Jibril's role as mediator in transmitting revelation to Muhammad. Q66.4 highlights Jibril's service as Muhammad's protector against those who would make false accusations against him. One can draw two conclusions from these passages. First, the Qur'an teaches that Jibril is an agent of Allah who actively obeys Allah's will in disseminating his message to Muhammad. Second, Jibril serves as guard over Muhammad by the command of Allah. These two elements address Jibril's status and behavior, albeit limitedly.

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<sup>113</sup> Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, 4:150.

Table 5. BIISB application to Jibril

Principles for Identifying Angels	Islamic Jibril
Angels are invisible spiritual creatures.	Jibril's first encounter with Muhammad is invisible. He is depicted as speaking with Muhammad, but without a visible presence.
Angels manifest as anthropomorphic beings.	The sources describe Jibril most often as bearing human appearance. He presents himself as an ordinary human being, with the ability to wield weapons, embrace, and teach verbally to Muhammad and his followers.
Angels are associated with light, fire, and purity.	Jibril is not described with terms such as light, fire, or purity. However, they do describe him as wearing white clothing, which could symbolize purity or light. Additionally, he was unable to enter a residence because of the uncleanness of a dog inside.
Angels are warriors.	The sources refer to Jibril as a warrior. He actively engaged in battle and led a number of troops. He also directed Muhammad's military strategy on occasion.
Angels speak human languages verbally.	Jibril spoke to Muhammad on numerous occasions with verbal speech.
Angels are loyal to God and his rule.	Jibril transmitted God's revelation to Muhammad after God sent him to Muhammad.
Angels are subservient to Jesus.	Jibril is only submissive to Allah. Texts do not indicate that he is subservient to Muhammad, Jesus, or any other prophet.
Angels disseminate God's plans for judgment and deliverance.	Jibril's transmission of the Qur'an contains many proclamations regarding God's judgment upon unbelievers. While he does not explicitly speak about deliverance, he does communicate the importance of obedience to Allah's will.
Angels stand, walk, and fly.	The sources describe Jibril as walking with Muhammad, floating in the air, and standing. Additionally, they describe him as sitting on a chair while hovering in the air before Muhammad.
Angels observe human behavior.	Jibril's observation of human activity is limited. The texts do not comment on this behavior, but he does observe humans as he relates to them.
Angels cause human beings to fear when visibly present.	Jibril's presence does evoke fear, but his actions are most often the reason for alarm. Muhammad became fearful during his encounter with an unseen voice in the cave because of the intense pressure put on him. The sources record that Muhammad fell down in fear when Jibril appeared sitting in a chair suspended in air.
Angels convey God's messages through speech, visions, and dreams.	Jibril communicates through verbal speech, dreams, and visions.

Table 5 continued

<b>Principles for Identifying Angels</b>	<b>Islamic Jibril</b>
Angels protect and provide for human beings at God's direction.	The sources mention Jibril as a protector for Muhammad only. This allusion is about Muhammad's marital conflict.
Angels perform tasks of judgment upon humanity at God's direction.	Jibril does not perform any acts of judgment in these texts.
<b>Non-Angel Principles</b>	<b>Islamic Jibril</b>
Non-angels are spiritual beings who can manifest as physical creatures.	The sources report that Jibril is a spiritual being, but he manifests with a human appearance. They describe his spiritual form as enormous and say that he has 600 wings.
Non-angels appear in deserted locations.	Jibril's first encounter with Muhammad is in a cave. He meets Muhammad most often when Muhammad is isolated from other people, such as their meeting on a mountaintop.
Non-angels are visibly associated with darkness and water.	Jibril, on several occasions, washes Muhammad with water. Additionally, his spiritual form is described as filling the void between heaven and earth, but no mention of darkness is given.
Non-angels are spiritually oppressive toward human beings.	Jibril's encounter with Muhammad in the cave is oppressive. He invisibly squeezes Muhammad so that Muhammad thought he would die. Additionally, Jibril cuts open Muhammad's chest and cleanses his heart.
Non-angels are physically violent toward human beings.	Jibril's violence toward Muhammad in the cave is most notable.
Non-angels exert power over human beings through physical manipulation, illness, and temptation.	Jibril's violence toward Muhammad in the cave is most notable.
Non-angels are spatially limited.	Jibril is spatially limited because he must travel to Muhammad in order to meet him.
Non-angels deceive human beings through verbal communication, dreams, and visions.	No record describes Jibril deceiving Muhammad.
Non-angels undermine God's plan and slander Jesus and his followers.	Jibril's transmission of the Qur'an indicates a lack of submission to Jesus, as noted in the Christian Scriptures. Additionally, the Qur'an indicates that followers of Jesus who do not support Jibril's message are unbelievers in danger of hell.
Non-angels are intelligent beings.	Jibril is an intelligent being who communicates Allah's messages.
Non-angels are emotional beings displaying rage toward God and human beings.	Jibril is not associated with these descriptions.
Non-angels are described as unclean or impure.	Jibril is not associated with these descriptions.
Non-angels obey God and are under the authority of Jesus and his followers.	Jibril is not subservient to Jesus or any other prophet.

After examining Q2.97–98 and Q66.4, I uncovered more detail about Jibril from the *hadith* collections of Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim. Along with these *hadith* collections I examined salient portions of Ibn Ishaq’s *The Life of Muhammad*. These sources provided ample material for examination. They highlighted Jibril’s appearance as predominately anthropomorphic in manifestation, but also revealed details about his winged spiritual appearance. They provided appropriate evidence describing Jibril’s behavior, which included communication, physical manipulation, mobility, and even military engagement. The discussion about Jibril’s message was the longest section because of the volume of material available. Arguably, the Qur’an could be incorporated into the analysis of Jibril’s message; however, I chose to examine only those portions of the Qur’an that interacted with the narratives included in the *hadith*. Jibril’s messages focused on military strategy, theology, orthopraxy, and testing. My study of Jibril’s personality was limited because insufficient detail exists in these sources regarding Jibril’s emotions, whether positive or negative. Finally, I examined Jibril’s status, as revealed in the sources. Based on the *hadith* and *The Life of Muhammad*, it is apparent that the authors viewed Jibril as a messenger of God who has conveyed God’s messages to prophets throughout history. In addition to this role, he served as Muhammad’s guardian against accusers.

Based on this study, Jibril shares some qualities similar to the angelic beings described in the Bible. He is also distinct concerning particular themes in his revelations, his regular theological training of Muhammad, his aggression and violence, and his spiritual appearance. In the next chapter, I will compare and contrast the accounts of the biblical Gabriel and the Islamic Jibril.

## CHAPTER 6

### A COMPARISON OF GABRIEL AND JIBRIL

Gabriel and Jibril, as presented in the Bible and Islamic sources, share similarities but are also distinctive. In this chapter, the biblical instrument for identifying angelic beings will help to highlight those similarities and differences. As noted previously, this study involved a qualitative data analysis that examined 1,084 occurrences related to spiritual beings in the Old and New Testaments. Labeling each occurrence with multiple codes revealed specific qualities observed about spiritual beings. Subsequent division of the codes into five distinct categories—appearance, behavior, message, personality, and status—enabled the extrapolation of salient details consistent within the accounts included in the chapter 2 overview of the biblical instrument. Each section described the qualities that emerged from the data analysis, enabling distillation into a specific principle for identifying angelic and non-angelic beings. In this chapter I will compare the BIISB results related to Gabriel and Jibril.

#### **BIISB Summary**

Establishing fourteen principles for identifying angelic beings and thirteen principles for identifying non-angelic beings and applying each set of principles to Gabriel in the biblical texts and Jibril in the Islamic sources enabled comparison. The principles emerged during the theoretical coding process and were based upon thematic consistency and rate of occurrence, which allowed the research to proceed with limited bias. Also, all spiritual beings described in the Old and New Testaments, whether good or evil, share patterns or qualities that make them distinct from human creations.

The application of the biblical instrument for identifying angelic and non-angelic beings provided a comparative assessment of both representations of Gabriel and Jibril. Gabriel, as examined in Daniel 8:15–27; 9:2–27; Matthew 1:18–25; and Luke 1:5–23, 1:26–38, displayed 86 percent of the qualities that describe angelic beings. Gabriel displayed 30 percent of the qualities that describe non-angelic beings. However, the 30 percent of non-angelic principles relate to the shared qualities by all spiritual beings, as noted in table 6. Jibril, as examined in Q2.96–97, Q66.4, selected *hadith*, and the *Life of Muhammad*, displayed 86 percent of the qualities that describe angelic beings. Jibril also displayed 76 percent of the qualities that describe non-angelic beings.

If one eliminates the principles shared by both angelic and non-angelic beings, the contrast is even more apparent. Gabriel displays 90 percent of the angelic qualities described as angelic. The role of protector or guardian is a consistent quality of angels throughout the Old and New Testaments; however, Gabriel does not serve in this capacity in the references studied. Jibril displays 80 percent of the qualities related to angelic beings, which include verbal communication, self-identification, subservience to God, and the mediation of revelation. Concerning non-angelic qualities, Gabriel shares no identifying markers with non-angelic beings, while Jibril displays 70 percent of the qualities related to non-angelic beings. While these two figures share many similarities, stark contrasts related to visitation location, aggression and violence, overall message themes, physical and spiritual appearance, and posture are apparent. In this chapter I examine the details regarding these similarities and differences.

Table 6. BIISB angelic criterion comparison of Gabriel and Jibril

<b>Principles for Identifying Angels</b>	<b>Gabriel</b>	<b>Jibril</b>
Angels are invisible spiritual creatures.	X	X
Angels manifest as anthropomorphic beings.	X	X
Angels are associated with light, fire, and purity.	X	X
Angels are warriors.	X	X
Angels speak human languages verbally.	X	X
Angels are loyal to God and his rule.	X	X
Angels are subservient to Jesus.	X	
Angels disseminate God's plans for judgment and deliverance.	X	X
Angels stand, walk, and fly.	X	X
Angels observe human behavior.	X	X
Angels cause human beings to fear when visibly present.	X	X
Angels convey God's messages through speech, visions, and dreams.	X	X
Angels protect and provide for human beings at God's direction.		X
Angels perform tasks of judgment upon humanity at God's direction.	X	

Table 7. BIISB non-angelic criterion comparison of Gabriel and Jibril

<b>Non-Angel Principles</b>	<b>Gabriel</b>	<b>Jibril</b>
Non-angels are spiritual beings who can manifest as physical creatures.	X	X
Non-angels appear in deserted locations.		X
Non-angels are visibly associated with darkness and water.		X
Non-angels are spiritually oppressive toward human beings.		X
Non-angels are physically violent toward human beings.		X
Non-angels exert power over human beings through physical manipulation, illness, and temptation.		X
Non-angels are spatially limited.	X	X
Non-angels deceive human beings through verbal communication, dreams, and visions.		
Non-angels undermine God's plan and slander Jesus and his followers.		X
Non-angels are intelligent beings.	X	X
Non-angels are emotional beings displaying rage toward God and human beings.		
Non-angels are described as unclean or impure.		
Non-angels obey God.	X	X
Non-angels are under the authority of Jesus and his followers.		

## Gabriel versus Jibril

### Examination of Angelic Qualities

**Angelic appearance.** While many biblical angelic visitations include significant details about spiritual beings, the narratives that include Gabriel provide limited detail.<sup>1</sup> According to the Bible, spiritual beings are immaterial beings who display emotion, personality, and volition. Occasionally, they manifest themselves in physical form. Most often, this form is anthropomorphic. In Matthew 1:20–22, Gabriel visits Joseph in a dream, which indicates an immaterial visitation through a dream-vision. The narrative does not say whether Gabriel was visible in the dream or if he displayed a semblance of embodiment. Because dreams occur in the mind, it is good to assume that this particular visitation was an immaterial or invisible communication by Gabriel. While Daniel 9 describes Gabriel as “flying” to Daniel in Babylon, his method of flight is not specified. Because the Bible does not mention Gabriel as serving as cherubim or seraphim, it is unlikely that he possesses wings.

The appearance of Jibril in Muhammad’s first encounter is unknown. Muhammad enjoyed retreats in the desert, and on this occasion, he found solace in a cave outside of Mecca to reflect and meditate. As he was sleeping, an unnamed angel came to him. Muhammad heard a voice commanding him to “recite.” After three commands to recite and three violent moments of pressure caused by the figure, Muhammad began to recite. After this intense encounter, Muhammad explains, “And I awoke from my sleep, and it was as though these words were written on my heart.”<sup>2</sup> Muhammad recounts, “The angel sometimes comes to me with a voice which resembles a bell, and when this state passes away from me, I grasp what the angel has said, and this type of Divine Revelation is the hardest on me; and sometimes the angel comes to me in the shape of a man and

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<sup>1</sup> Additionally, the data collected regarding Gabriel and Jibril’s personalities did not provide substantial comparison. As a result, this category was omitted from the following comparative analysis.

<sup>2</sup> Ibn Ishaq, *The Life of Muhammad: A Translation of Ibn Ishaq’s Sirat Rasul Allah*, Alfred Guillaume, trans (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1982), 106.



talks to me, and I understand and grasp what he says.”<sup>3</sup> Another account describes Muhammad as walking at night, conversing with an invisible being. When questioned about this encounter, Muhammad explained he was communicating with Jibril, but that Jibril did not want to be seen or heard by others who might be listening.<sup>4</sup> Jibril’s true form is described as an enormous “form filling the space between heaven and earth”<sup>5</sup> with 600 wings.<sup>6</sup>

Various texts record both Gabriel and Jibril manifesting in physical human form. Daniel 8:16 describes Gabriel as a “man” standing before Daniel to offer an interpretation of the vision he had just received. In a subsequent encounter Daniel explains, “The man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the first, came to me in swift flight at the time of the evening sacrifice” (Dan 9:21). In Luke’s Gospel accounts of Gabriel’s birth annunciations to Zechariah and Mary, Gabriel appears physically. While neither account specifically describes his physical manifestation, Luke does acknowledge that he was “standing” and “entering” a doorway, which suggests at the very least that his form was small enough to enter a residential home in Nazareth and that he possessed legs on which to stand. Additionally, one might assume that Gabriel’s embodiment was human-like because no details state the contrary.

Most accounts refer to Jibril as taking on human form. They present him as appearing to be ordinary man bearing similarities to one of Muhammad’s associates. They also mention him wielding weapons, embracing Muhammad, and teaching Muhammad and his followers verbally, which would necessitate vocal chords and other portions of human anatomy.

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<sup>3</sup> Muhammad ibn Ismail Bukhari, *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, trans. Muhammad Muhsin Khan (Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: Darussalam, 1997), 4:279.

<sup>4</sup> Abul Hussain Muslim ibn Al-Hajjaj Al-Hajjaj, *English Translation of Sahih Muslim*, trans. Nasiruddin Al-Khattab (Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: Darussalam, 2007), 2:506.

<sup>5</sup> Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, 1:282, 285.

<sup>6</sup> Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, 1:281.

An additional element that is important to note in reference to Gabriel's and Jibril's appearances is the mental agitation or fear associated with their encounters. Gabriel's presence and appearance evokes fear on two occasions. First, Gabriel's encounter with Daniel elicits a fear response that results in Daniel fainting. Daniel recalls, "So he came near where I stood. And when he came, I was frightened and fell on my face. But he said to me, 'Understand, O son of man, that the vision is for the time of the end.' And when he had spoken to me, I fell into a deep sleep with my face to the ground. But he touched me and made me stand up" (Dan 8:17–18). Daniel's second encounter with Gabriel does not include this overwhelming fear. Second, Gabriel's appearance causes Zechariah extreme fear. Luke writes, "And Zechariah was troubled when he saw him, and fear fell upon him" (Luke 1:12). In both instances, Gabriel encourages the human being to refrain from fear.

The descriptions of Jibril's first encounter with Muhammad include extreme fear from Muhammad; however, in these accounts, Jibril's visage does not seem to be the reason for Muhammad's fear. Rather, it seems that Jibril's violent aggression is the cause. After this encounter, Muhammad goes to Khadija:

Then Allah's Messenger returned with that (the Revelation) and his (heart severely beating; and the) muscles between his neck and shoulders were trembling till he came upon Khadija (his wife) and said, "Cover me!" They covered him, till his fear was over, and after that he said to Khadija, "O Khadija! What is wrong with me? I was afraid that something bad might happen to me."<sup>7</sup>

A second encounter records Muhammad's fear because of Jibril's appearance:

The Divine Revelation was delayed for a short period but suddenly, as I was walking, I heard a voice in the sky, and when I looked up towards the sky, to my surprise, I saw the angel who had come to me in the Hīrā cave, and he was sitting on a chair in between the sky and the earth. I was so frightened by him that I fell on the ground and came to my family and said (to them), 'Cover me (with a blanket)! Cover me!'<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Bukhari, *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, 1:47.

<sup>8</sup> Bukhari, *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, 4:287.

These accounts in relation to human fear are dissimilar. While the mere presence of a spiritual being may cause fear, the dissimilarity is found in the angel's response to the human being's fear, which is discussed subsequently.

**Angelic behavior.** The behavior of angelic beings are given the most detailed descriptions. Spiritual beings' actions range from verbal communication to facilitating divine judgment of human beings. Because angelic encounters predominately involve transmitting messages to human beings, it is not surprising that both Gabriel and Jibril speak. Gabriel speaks verbally to Daniel (Dan 8:17–26; 9:22–27), and in the messianic birth narratives of Luke's Gospel, to Zechariah and Mary (Luke 1:13–20, 28–37). In addition, he communicates, presumably, with verbal speech to Joseph in a dream (Matt 1:20–22).

Jibril also communicates verbally to Muhammad. Traditionally, Jibril dictated the entirety of the Qur'an (Q2.97) and put it into the heart of Muhammad. Additionally, numerous accounts, discussed in chapter 4, describe Jibril's ability to speak verbally in human language.

Angelic behavior includes mobility and posture. As noted in table 6, biblical Scripture primarily describes angels as standing, walking, and flying. The Bible describes angels as sitting on only two occasions, both of which occur at the tomb of Jesus (Matt 28:2; Mark 16:5). In the other resurrection accounts, two angels stand next to the tomb (Luke 24:4); and John's Gospel omits the angelic visitation (John 20:1–10).

In the accounts examined from Daniel and Luke, Gabriel performs all three activities while embodied. He is described as "standing" before Daniel and Zechariah (Dan 8:17; Luke 1:11) prior to relaying God's message. Gabriel moves or walks in Daniel's account, presumably to wake him from his faint (Dan 8:18), and he is mentioned "entering" Mary's home or stable, which potentially involves walking (Luke 1:28). Additionally, Gabriel is described as flying to Babylon in response to Daniel's intercession for the people of Israel (Dan 9:21).

Likewise, Jibril performs these activities of mobility and posture. The texts describe Jibril as walking with Muhammad at night<sup>9</sup> and walking up to Muhammad and his followers to test Muhammad.<sup>10</sup> Jibril also engages in battle, which would necessitate walking, running, and riding a horse.<sup>11</sup> Most interestingly, the texts describe Jibril as sitting with Muhammad and his followers as well as sitting with Muhammad in a private moment of teaching.<sup>12</sup> However, the most unusual account depicts Jibril seated in a chair hovering over the ground.<sup>13</sup> While no reference specifically addresses Jibril's ability to fly, he does take Muhammad to heaven, which could include some manner of flight, although it is not mentioned.<sup>14</sup>

Biblical Scriptures describe angels as observers.<sup>15</sup> In the Gabriel accounts, his active observation of human activities is limited. However, he does observe those with whom he is communicating and wakes Daniel after he faints (Dan 8:18). Similarly, Jibril's observation of human activity is limited. No text comments about this behavior, but this activity is assumed to be similar to Gabriel's observation of humans in his interactions.

According to Scripture, angels protect and provide for human beings at God's direction.<sup>16</sup> In the texts examined regarding Gabriel, he performs no such tasks. His role is to communicate God's revelation to Daniel, Joseph, Zechariah, and Mary. Conversely,

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<sup>9</sup> Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, 3:38-39.

<sup>10</sup> Bukhari, *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, 6:260.

<sup>11</sup> Bukhari, *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, 5:228.

<sup>12</sup> Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, 2:336.

<sup>13</sup> Bukhari, *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, 4:287.

<sup>14</sup> Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, 1:264–70.

<sup>15</sup> Biblical examples of angelic observation include Gen 16:7; Judg 6:11; Dan 4:13, 17, 7:27; Zech 1:11; 1 Cor 4:9; 1 Tim 3:16, 5:21, 1 Pet 1:12; Rev 3:5.

<sup>16</sup> Biblical examples of angelic provision and protection include Gen 19:15; 24:7, 40; 48:16; Exod 4:19, 23:20, 23; 32:34; 33:2; Num 20:16; Job 33:23; Pss 34:7; 91:11; Isa 63:9; Dan 10:21, 12:1; Matt 4:6; 24:31; 26:53; Mark 1:13; 13:27; Luke 4:10; 22:43; Acts 5:19, 12:9–11; Heb 1:14; Jude 9.

Islamic sources identify Jibril as Muhammad’s protector. Q66.4–5 describes an example of this duty:

If both of you turn to God (in repentance), both your hearts are (well) inclined, but if both of you support each other against him, surely God—He is his *Protector*, and Gabriel (too), and the righteous among the believers, and beyond that the angels are (his) supporters. It may be that, if he divorces you, his Lord will give him in exchange better wives than you—women who have submitted, believing, obedient, repentant, worshiping, fasting—(both) previous married and virgins. (Q66.4–5, (emphasis added))

Angels also perform tasks of judgment upon humanity at God’s direction.<sup>17</sup>

Both Gabriel’s and Jibril’s active role in judgment is limited; however, Gabriel’s is clearer. In Luke’s Gospel, Gabriel levies punishment against Zechariah because of his unbelief: “And the angel answered him, ‘I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. And behold, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time’” (Luke 1:19–20). However, no significant reference is available for Jibril’s active involvement of judgment other than participating in battle against Muhammad’s adversaries. One example describes Muhammad becoming frustrated by his followers, similar to Moses at Sinai. Jibril offers his services to destroy Muhammad’s community because of their disobedience: “[Jibril] called me saying, ‘Allah has heard your people’s saying to you, and what they replied back to you, Allah has sent the angel of the mountains to you so that you may order him to do whatever you wish to these people.’”<sup>18</sup> While Jibril’s facilitation of Allah’s will is noteworthy, he himself does not participate in dispersing the judgment.

Finally, as indicated by Scripture, angels are subservient to Jesus. The New Testament mentions angels serving Jesus, being available for his deployment, and

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<sup>17</sup> Eighty-three instances were coded for angelic facilitation of divine judgment. The following list is not exhaustive, but it provides examples of angelic judgment in canonical Scripture. Examples include Gen 3:24; Num 22:26; 2 Sam 24:16; 1 Kgs 22:21; 2 Kgs 19:35; 1 Chron 21:12; 2 Chron 18:20–21; Ps 78:49; Isa 4:4; Jer 51:1; Matt 16:27; Acts 12:23; Rev 8:5.

<sup>18</sup> Bukhari, *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, 4:285.

worshipping Jesus as God. A prime example of angels serving Jesus occurs after Satan's temptation of Jesus in the wilderness. Matthew writes, "Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him" (Matt 4:11). In a similar fashion, an angel provided strength to Jesus in the garden before his betrayal: "And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him" (Luke 22:43). On several occasions Jesus highlights his authority over the angels so that they obey his instruction (Matt 13:41, 16:27, 24:31, 25:31, 26:53; Mark 13:27; John 1:51). For example, Jesus states that, at the end of days, at his command, the angels will gather God's elect: "And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. 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" (Mark 13:26–27). Similarly, Jesus explains to Peter and the disciples the true nature of his authority on the evening of his arrest: "Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?" (Matt 26:53). Angels are present to announce Jesus' birth and his resurrection. While shepherds are in a field outside of Bethlehem, an angel announces Jesus' arrival alongside the host of heaven, saying,

"Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased! (Luke 2:10–14)

The announcement of Jesus' resurrection is no less dramatic. Matthew writes, "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 on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow" (Matt 28:2–3). Based on these references, it is obvious that angels are subservient to Jesus.

Jibril, conversely, is strangely silent about any subservience to Jesus. In Muhammad's visit to the second heaven, he and Jibril interact with Isa (Jesus):

Then we ascended to the second heaven. It was asked, "Who is it?" Jibril said, "Jibril." It was said, "Who is with you?" He said, "Muhammad." It was asked, "Has

he been sent for?" He said, "Yes." It was said, "He is welcome. What a wonderful visit his is!" Then I met 'Īsā (Jesus) and Yahya (John) who said, "You are welcome O brother and a Prophet."<sup>19</sup>

Jibril is not identified as a servant of Jesus; he is mentioned only as a servant of Allah.

Jibril says to Muhammad, "And we (angels) descend not except by the Command of your Lord (O Muhammad). To Him belongs what is before us and what is behind us."<sup>20</sup> In the Qur'an angels announce Jesus' birth to Mary:

When the angels said, "Mary! Surely God gives you good news of a word from him: his name is the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, eminent in this world and the Hereafter, and one of those brought near. He will speak to the people (while he is still) in the cradle and in adulthood, and (he will be) one of the righteous." She said, "My Lord, how shall I have a child, when no man has touched me?" He said, "So (it will be)! God creates whatever He pleases. When He decrees something, He simply says to it, 'Be!' and it is." (Q3.44–47)

The Qur'an acknowledges Jesus' special role as prophet, but says that he is a created being, just like any other human (Q3.52). Additionally, the Qur'an instructs Muslims to refrain from worshipping any god other than Allah, including any associates: "People of the Book! Come to a word (which is) common between us and you: 'We do not serve (anyone) but God, and do not associate (anything) with Him, and do not take each other as Lord's instead of God'" (Q3.64). Gabriel and Jibril bear some similarities regarding their behavior. However, noticeable differences are also apparent, as highlighted subsequently.

**Angelic message.** Angels transmit God's plans of judgment and deliverance to human beings. This role, of course, is present in the accounts of both Gabriel and Jibril, but they discharge their duties dissimilarly. All of Gabriel's messages focus on God's plans regarding past or future judgment and the promise of God's deliverance (Dan 8:17–26, 9:22–27; Luke 1:13–20, 28–37). The interpretations Gabriel gives regarding Daniel's vision encompass God's restoration of Israel and deliverance from exile: "Seventy weeks are decreed about your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end

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<sup>19</sup> Bukhari, *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, 4:273.

<sup>20</sup> Bukhari, *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, 4:280.

to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place” (Dan 9:24). Included in these interpretations is information about a “prince” who will bring about desolation (Dan 9:25). In his first encounter, Gabriel also predicts geopolitical shifts of power (Dan 8:19–26). In Gabriel’s messianic annunciations, his message is even more clear regarding God’s salvific purposes. Regarding Zechariah’s son, John, Gabriel says,

You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great before the Lord. . . . And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared. (Luke 1:14, 16–17)

Gabriel’s messages to Mary and Joseph reveal God’s purpose to deliver the world from sin: “[Mary] will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins” (Matt 1:21–22), and “Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end” (Luke 1:31–33). From these texts, Gabriel’s message clearly focuses on the restoration of Israel, the arrival of the messianic age, and the eternal reign of God’s messiah.

Jibril’s transmission of the Qur’an contains many edicts regarding Allah’s judgment toward both believers and unbelievers, as well as the resurrection of the righteous (Q4.87, 19.66–67, 22.5–7, 30.19, 83:4–6). Jibril communicates the importance of human beings’ obedience to the will of Allah. This obedience includes performing all designated rituals outlined by Jibril. On one occasion, Jibril approaches Muhammad and his followers, wanting to test Muhammad’s understanding of Islam. Jibril asks Muhammad, “What is Islam?” Muhammad replies, “Islam is to worship Allah Alone and not to worship anything besides Him, to perform [*Salat*], to pay *Zakat* and to observe *Saum* (fasts) during the month of Ramadan.”<sup>21</sup> As noted in chapter 4, the spectrum of Jibril’s message includes general

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<sup>21</sup> Bukhari, *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, 6:260.



encouragement about the Muslim community, rules on prayer and alcohol consumption, directions for military strategy, commands for compassion and kindness toward neighbors, prophecy, methodology of prayer, theological significance and value of *jihad*, theological testing, condemnation of the Jews, and commands for strict adherence to monotheism.

**Angelic status.** According to biblical Scripture, angels are most often associated with light, lightning, fire, and purity. While these qualities are not displayed in every case, they dominate the list of features typically associated with angelic beings. In the biblical texts referenced herein regarding Gabriel, no direct links to these specific qualities can be identified; however, two related texts highlight some of the specificity related to Gabriel. In a subsequent encounter that Daniel has with an angelic being, he gives ample description of the figure's appearance. Daniel reports, "I lifted up my eyes and looked, and behold, a man clothed in linen, with a belt of fine gold from Uphaz around his waist. His body was like beryl, his face like the appearance of lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and the sound of his words like the sound of a multitude" (Dan 10:5–6).

While some scholars argue that one should not consider this specific figure to be Gabriel, Daniel's response to this vision echoes his response to Gabriel's appearance in Daniel 9. Daniel expresses the same fear, and he faints:

And I, Daniel, alone saw the vision, for the men who were with me did not see the vision, but a great trembling fell upon them, and they fled to hide themselves. So I was left alone and saw this great vision, and no strength was left in me. My radiant appearance was fearfully changed, and I retained no strength. Then I heard the sound of his words, and as I heard the sound of his words, I fell on my face in deep sleep with my face to the ground. (Dan 10:7–9)

The figure in Daniel's vision in chapter 10 is clothed in linen. He wears a gold belt and his skin shines like a precious stone. His face glows with the luminescence of lightning and his eyes are described as fiery. The entire picture encapsulates the predominate descriptions associated with angels. It cannot be said conclusively that the figure in Daniel 10 is an exact replica of the figure in Daniel 8; however, the similar

message, delivery, and Daniel's repeated response indicates the likelihood that they are the same.

In Matthew's Gospel, the "angel of the Lord" comes to Joseph in a dream. Because of the similar message and role of annunciation regarding messianic narratives in Luke's Gospel, it seems necessary to include Joseph's encounter in the Gabriel examination. Matthew only uses the phrase "angel of the Lord" in four other places in his Gospel, indicating a high probability that he is referring to the same angel. Matthew describes three additional dream visitations of the "angel of the Lord" to Joseph (Matt 1:24, 2:13, 2:19). In each encounter, the angel's purpose in instructing Joseph is to protect Jesus. The last instance of the phrase occurs at the resurrection: "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 on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow" (Matt 28:2-3). If the "angel of the Lord" is interpreted as Gabriel in the previous four texts, then it seems inconsistent to not interpret the final account similarly. At the tomb, Matthew describes the angel as wearing white garments, denoting purity, and bearing the appearance of lightning. These qualities are consistent with the aforementioned angelic markers.

None of the texts examined specifically describe Jibril with terms such as light, fire, or purity; however, one account does describe him as wearing white clothing, which might symbolize purity or light.<sup>22</sup> Regarding Jibril's purity, one account notes his inability to enter a house because of the presence of a dog; Muslims consider dogs to be unclean animals:

It was narrated that Aishah said: "Jibril, promised to come to the Messenger of Allah at a certain hour, and that time came but he did not arrive. He (the Messenger) had a stick in his hand which he threw down and said: 'Allah does not break His promise, and neither do His Messengers.' The he turned and saw a puppy beneath a bed. He said: 'O Aishah, when did this dog get in here?' She said: 'By Allah, I do not know.' He ordered that it be taken out, and Jibril, came. The Messenger of Allah said: 'You made an appointment with me and I waited for you, but you did not

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<sup>22</sup> Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, 6:160.

come.’ He said: ‘I was prevented by the dog that was in your house. We do not enter a house in which there is a dog or an image.’”<sup>23</sup>

Biblical scripture repeatedly characterizes angels as divine warriors. Gabriel’s role as messenger does not focus on this particular aspect; however, as noted, other accounts related to Gabriel indicate his potential service in warrior activities. The activities of both Michael and Gabriel can be understood in concert with one another because they occur in rapid succession in the book of Daniel.<sup>24</sup> As noted, Heiser asserts that the figure Daniel encounters in chapters 10 and 12 should not be considered to be Gabriel, but his reasoning is inconclusive. Heiser argues,

It is important to note several things about this exchange. First, this “man” is *not* identified as Gabriel. Second, the speaking “man” was opposed by the “prince” of Persia (v. 13) and Greece. Third, the “man” is not only distinct from Gabriel; he is also not Michael, since he refers to Michael in the third person (vv. 13, 20). Michael assisted this unidentified figure in his spiritual warfare against the prince of Persia. Fourth, the unidentified figure later touches Daniel (v. 18) to strengthen him, informing him in the first person, “I will return to fight against the prince of Persia,” adding that he expects the “prince of Greece” will also be part of the battle (v. 20).<sup>25</sup>

Heiser’s interpretation hinges on the fact that Gabriel does not re-introduce himself to Daniel in subsequent encounters (Dan 10:1–21; 12:1–13). Of course, this introduction might not have been necessary because Daniel was already familiar with Gabriel. Additionally, almost an exact replica of events takes place in the two encounters. The angel appears, Daniel becomes fearful and faints, and the angel touches Daniel to wake him so the angel can finish transmitting his message. Heiser asserts the figure in chapters 10 and 12 is the “prince of hosts” or the “visible Yahweh.”<sup>26</sup> However, if it is assumed the figure in Daniel 10 and 12 is the visible Yahweh or “angel of the Lord” (i.e., the commander of the Lord’s army or the pre-incarnate Christ), there is a significant

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<sup>23</sup> Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, 5:469–70.

<sup>24</sup> Michael S. Heiser, *Angels: What the Bible Really Says about God’s Heavenly Host* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018), 68.

<sup>25</sup> Heiser, *Angels*, 70.

<sup>26</sup> For more information about Heiser’s argument regarding the visible Yahweh see Michael S. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015), 135–40.

theological dilemma. The figure in chapter 10 faces an adversary that he is unable to subdue individually. As a result, Michael, the prince of Israel, joins him in battle so he can finish his errand of speaking with Daniel. Would the visible manifestation of Yahweh or a pre-incarnate Christ face a challenger whom he could not personally conquer? It seems unlikely. What seems more probable is that the figure in Daniel 10 and 12 is an angel with tremendous authority and in whom God places great trust. With this likelihood in mind, Gabriel is an ideal candidate. After all, as he proclaimed to Zechariah, “I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news” (Luke 1:19).

The *hadith* refer indirectly to Jibril as a warrior. No indication of any spiritual battles are found, but the *hadith* depict Jibril fighting in several physical battles. At the battle for Medina, Jibril led a regiment comprising Muhammad’s followers.<sup>27</sup> Muhammad remarks to his followers that the dust kicked up by Jibril’s regiment was visible.<sup>28</sup> The *hadith* also describe Jibril as armed with weaponry while mounted on a horse ready for battle.<sup>29</sup> Most specifically, Jibril instructs Muhammad to continue fighting after Muhammad returns to a mosque for rest:

When the Prophet returned from (the battle) of *Al-Khandaq* (i.e., the Trench) and laid down his arms and took a bath, Jibril (Gabriel) . . . came to him while he (i.e., Jibril) was shaking the dust off his head, and said, “You have laid down the arms? By Allah, I have not laid them down. Go out to them (to attack them).” The Prophet said, “Where?” (Angel) Jibril pointed towards Bani Quraiza. So Allah’s Messenger went to them (i.e., Bani Quraiza) (and besieged them). They then surrendered to the Prophet’s judgment but he directed them to Sa’d to give his verdict concerning them.<sup>30</sup>

Finally, both biblical and Muslim texts describe angels in reference to their loyalty to God and his rule over the world. This quality is clearly apparent in the studied

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<sup>27</sup> Bukhari, *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, 5:229.

<sup>28</sup> Bukhari, *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, 5:228.

<sup>29</sup> Bukhari, *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, 5:228.

<sup>30</sup> Bukhari, *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, 6:271.

instances about Gabriel. Daniel reports, “Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the first, came to me in swift flight at the time of the evening sacrifice . . . [Gabriel says,] ‘At the beginning of your pleas for mercy a word went out, and I have come to tell it to you, for you are greatly loved. Therefore, consider the word and understand the vision’” (Dan 9:21, 23). Gabriel’s loyalty to God and his plan for reconciling the world through Jesus is obvious from the messianic birth narratives. Gabriel proclaims to Zechariah, “[John] will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared” (Luke 1:16–17). Heralding this message of God’s ongoing plan for the people of Israel speaks to Gabriel’s pledge of loyalty. Additionally, Gabriel’s self-disclosure to Zechariah indicates not only a closeness to God, but also his specific role of proclaiming the gospel (Luke 1:19). In Gabriel’s encounter with Joseph and Mary, he highlights his allegiance to God and his plan. Gabriel says to Mary, “[Jesus] will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end” (Luke 1:32–33). To Joseph, Gabriel proclaims, “[Mary] will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins” (Matt 1:22). Matthew continues by pointing out the fulfillment of God’s plan to dwell among his people: “All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: ‘Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel’ (which means, God with us)” (Matt 1:21–23).

Jibril demonstrates allegiance to Allah’s rule and reign over the world.

According to tradition, Jibril plays an active role in transmitting the Qur’anic message to Muhammad. Scholars debate the order of transmission<sup>31</sup>; however, the legitimacy of

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<sup>31</sup> The order of transmission is debated by scholars. According to Arthur Droge, Many scholars hold that Q96.1–5 were the words Muhammad received in the visions referred to in Q53 and Q81 and are therefore the very first lines of the Qur’an to be revealed. But this may only be

Jibril's contribution is not disputed. The most poignant Qur'anic passage denoting Jibril's involvement in the inspiration of the Qur'an is Q2.96–97: "Say: 'Whoever is an enemy to Gabriel—surely he has brought it down on your heart by the permission of God, confirming what was before it, and as a guidance and good news to the believers. Whoever is an enemy of God, and His angels, and His messengers, and Gabriel and Michael—surely God is an enemy to the disbelievers'" (Q2.97–98). As noted, some believe that Jibril is referred to as the "spirit" in the Qur'an. With this in mind, additional references include the following:

Say: "The holy spirit has brought it down from your Lord in truth, to make firm those who believe, and as a guidance and good news for those who submit" (Q16.102).

The trustworthy spirit has brought it down on your heart, so that you may be one of the warners, in a clear Arabic language (Q26.193).

Exalter of ranks, Holder of the throne, He casts the spirit of His command on whomever He pleases of His servants, to warn of the day of Meeting (Q40:15).

Both Gabriel and Jibril display a range of angelic qualities by their appearance, behavior, message, and reported status. Both figures claim to speak for God to human beings, demonstrating allegiance to God's rule in the world. However, in addition to these angelic characteristics, Jibril displays additional features that are unequivocally non-angelic.

### **Examination of Non-Angelic Qualities**

**Non-angelic appearance.** Few differences exist between angelic and non-angelic appearances. Both entities are supernatural beings with immaterial form. They have the ability to manifest in human form, but the most notable difference is that non-angelic beings occasionally manifest as animals. Various texts depict both Gabriel and

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an inference on their part, based on the logical priority of the command to "recite" (*iqra'*), since this word is from the same root as 'Qur'an.' In any case it goes beyond what the Qur'an itself asserts. Other scholars have claimed that Q1 or Q74.1–5 was revealed first, and still others that it was the *basmala* ("In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate"). Once again "tradition" turns out not to be uniform or to speak with only one voice. (Arthur Droge, *The Qur'an: A New Annotated Translation* [Bristol, CT: Equinox Publishing, 2013], xvii)

Jibril either as an invisible spiritual being or as manifesting in human-like form. While both Gabriel and Jibril only manifest as human beings, it is notable that non-angelic spirits or demons in the Old and New Testaments may manifest as invisible entities, attach themselves to human beings through “possession,”<sup>32</sup> and manifest as corporeal or metaphorical creatures (i.e., serpents, goat-like creatures, sea monsters, etc.).<sup>33</sup>

**Non-angelic behavior.** Non-angelic behaviors include spiritual or physical oppression toward human beings, physical violence and aggression, and exertion of power over human beings through physical manipulation, illness, and temptation. The biblical Gabriel does not display any of these indicators of non-angelic behavior. However, accounts indicate that Jibril displays a variety of these characteristics.

In Muhammad’s first supernatural encounter in the cave at Hijra, he experiences violent pressure from Jibril. The intensity of this pressure was so great that Muhammad believed he would die. No account in the Old or New Testaments describe an angel exercising such violence against a human being. The only account remotely close to physical violence against an individual occurs in the story of Jacob, when he wrestled with a spiritual being. However, even in this story, the spiritual being’s act of dislodging Jacob’s hip comes as a last recourse to gain freedom from the encounter. According to

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<sup>32</sup> Demonic possession is a phrase used to describe demonic control over an individual’s body and mind. While the term denotes varying levels of control, a clearer rendering is demonic attachment. “Possession” is the most significant manifestation of the demonic on the spectrum of demonization. Other points on the spectrum include temptation, oppression, infestation, and obsession.

<sup>33</sup> Descriptions of demonic entities manifesting as physical or metaphorical creatures are found in both the Old and New Testaments. Examples include Gen 3:1–6, Lev 17:7 and Ps 74:12–17. Edward Langton asserts that the manifestation of evil spirits as animals or other kinds of creatures was a belief in the ancient Near East: “They are usually portrayed as serpents, antelopes, gazelles, anthropoids, crocodiles, lizards, hawks, and jackals.” Edward Langton, *Essentials of Demonology: A Study of Jewish and Christian Doctrine, Its Origin and Development* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2014), 41–43. One notable example is the *Se’irim*, or he-goat, in Hebrew beliefs. Langton notes, “The word [*se’irim*] itself, however, means simply ‘hairy’ . . . This would suit better the hypothesis that the allusion in Leviticus 17 and 2 Chronicles 11 is to creatures in the form of a cow or calf. On the other hand, the theory that *Azazel* (Leviticus 16:8) was the chief of the *Se’irim* would strongly support the view that they were actually goat-shaped.” Langton, *Essentials of Demonology*, 41. Other animalistic manifestations of spiritual beings described among the Egyptian, Hebrew, and Arab cultures include wild beasts (Isa 34:14, *ziyyim*), doleful creatures (*’ochim*), ostriches (*benoth ya’anah*), *se’irim*, and wolves (*’iyyim*). See Langton, *Essentials of Demonology*, 3, 41–42.

Traugott Oesterreich, demonic entities have a historic pattern of causing inordinate pressure on a human being, such that they feel as if they will suffocate. Oesterreich notes a report by Philipp Negele involving acute pressure and torment:

I had recourse to all sorts of medical treatment, but in vain, for the malady rose year by year and finally reached the head. I was tortured with twitchings, prickings, and dizziness in the head which often made it seem as if I were being struck on the back of the neck with the fists and my body dragged upwards as if someone wished to throw me to the ground with murderous violence. It often seems to me that I have on my head a weight of several quintals which must break down my legs. This attack comes on almost every day and I feel that under this heavy burden my feet leave prints on the ground. From day to day these terrible pains increase, together with diabolic thoughts against God which are most anguishing inner torment. This agitation in my body and these painful eruptions are often most violent during prayer and I then have horrible feelings of suffocation.<sup>34</sup>

In another account, Oesterreich reports how one individual remembered the violence enacted against him while being physically manipulated by the demonic: “On the 3rd of January, he was taken with a fit so violent that he believed that if it were repeated he would die.”<sup>35</sup> The man was reportedly thrown into the air repeatedly and forced to stomp his feet. Others reported hearing the sound from a great distance. Oesterreich recounts Jeanne des Anges’ experience with demonic spirits: “The evil spirit got into such a fury that I thought he would kill me; he beat me with great violence so that my face was quite disfigured and my body all bruised with his blows. It often happened that he treated me this way.”<sup>36</sup>

Another example of Jibril’s violent behavior occurs when Jibril attempts to purify Muhammad. According to the *hadith*, this event occurred twice, the first instance taking place when Muhammad was a child:

Jibril, came to the Messenger of Allah (when he was a boy and living with Halima, the wet nurse) while he was playing with the other boys. He took hold of him and threw him to the ground, then he opened his chest took out his heart, from which he took a clot of blood and said: “This was the *Shaitan*’s share of you.” Then he washed

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<sup>34</sup> Traugott K. Oesterreich, *Possession and Exorcism: Among Primitive Races, in Antiquity, the Middle Ages, and Modern Times* (New York: Causeway Books, 1974), 96–97.

<sup>35</sup> Oesterreich, *Possession and Exorcism*, 44.

<sup>36</sup> Oesterreich, *Possession and Exorcism*, 50.



it in a vessel of gold that was filled with Zamzam. Then he put it back together and returned it to its place. The boys went running to his mother—meaning his wet nurse—and said: “Muhammad has been killed!” They went to him and his color had changed. Anas said: “I used to see the mark of that stitching on his chest.”<sup>37</sup>

The second account occurred as Jibril prepared Muhammad to ascend into heaven. Before departure, Jibril cut open Muhammad’s chest from clavicle to pubic bone so that he could cleanse him and give him a pure heart. “The roof of my house was opened when I was in Makkah, and Jibril—came down and split open my chest, then he washed it with Zamzam water. Then he brought a golden basin filled with wisdom and faith and emptied it into my chest. Then he sealed it and took my hand and took me up to heaven.”<sup>38</sup> The only possible connection with biblical texts in reference to angelic purification is Isaiah 6:6–7, which reads, “Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth and said: ‘Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for.’” However, this event does not indicate a parallel amount of trauma to the prophet. In the *hadith* accounts, Muhammad is thrown to the ground and forcibly cut open. Therefore, the similarity is weak.

Islamic sources record Jibril as physically manipulating Muhammad’s body in the transmission of the Qur’an: “Whenever Jibril (Gabriel) descended to Allah’s Messenger with the Divine Revelation, Allah’s Messenger used to move his tongue and lips, and that used to be hard for him, and one could easily recognize that he was being inspired divinely.”<sup>39</sup> Felicitas Goodman describes character traits of spiritual possession among primitive peoples, including radical changes in expression, ecstatic utterances, and instructions given by an alien force.<sup>40</sup> Additionally, as noted, Muhammad reports that

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<sup>37</sup> Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, 1:263–64.

<sup>38</sup> Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, 1:264.

<sup>39</sup> Bukhari, *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, 6:452.

<sup>40</sup> Felicitas D. Goodman, *How about Demons? Possession and Exorcism in the Modern World* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988), 12–24.

Jibril's communication sometimes occurred like the ringing of a bell: "The angel sometimes comes to me with a voice which resembles a bell, and when this state passes away from me, I grasp what the angel has said, and this type of Divine Revelation is the hardest on me; and sometimes the angel comes to me in the shape of a man and talks to me, and I understand and grasp what he says."<sup>41</sup> This disembodied voice combined with a ringing sensation was a common demonic pattern according to Arab culture. Langton comments, "The Arabs believed that the mysterious buzzing, humming, or whistling noises that are heard in the desert are caused by demons. They are therefore cautious about whistling lest they should attract them."<sup>42</sup>

**Non-angelic message.** As noted, Jibril's message is different from the biblical Gabriel's message. In both Daniel and the messianic birth narratives, Gabriel's proclamations focus on the restoration of Israel and the arrival of God's messiah, who will bring about the forgiveness of sins.

Jibril's message does not include these elements at all. Instead, his message highlights the oneness of God, strict obedience to Allah's will, avoidance of idolatry, and various practical instructions regarding military strategy and religious ritual. Non-angelic beings are associated with deception, which is not apparent in the sources researched regarding Jibril. Additionally, non-angelic beings, according to Scripture, seek to undermine God's plan and slander Jesus and his followers. Regarding the message and tone about Jesus revealed in the Qur'an, it is obvious that Jibril's communication included an undermining of Jesus' identity as the son of God (Q17.111). Additionally, individuals who reject Jibril's teaching (i.e., followers of Jesus, Jews, and Arab polytheists) are considered to be unbelievers in danger of hell:

Prophet! Struggle against the disbelievers and the hypocrites, and be stern with them. Their refuge is Gehenna—and it is an evil destination! They swear by God that they did not say (it), but certainly they have said the word of disbelief, and have

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<sup>41</sup> Bukhari, *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, 4:279.

<sup>42</sup> Langton, *Essentials of Demonology*, 5.

disbelieved after their submission. . . . God will punish them (with) a painful punishment in this world and the Hereafter. They have no ally and no helper on the earth. (Q9.73–74)

**Non-angelic status.** The biblical Gabriel’s status is clearly an angel of God who stands in God’s heavenly presence. Non-angelic beings are associated with darkness and water in the Bible. Scripture also describes them as unclean or impure. As noted, the angelic purification in Isaiah 6 describes an angel’s cleansing of Isaiah through the application of a hot coal to the prophet’s lips. Jibril uses *zamzam* water to purify Muhammad’s heart in the *hadith*.<sup>43</sup> No related sources suggest that Jibril is unclean or impure; however, his use of water is indirectly related to non-angelic beings. Additionally, the Bible provides no accounts of angels using water purification.

The *hadith* refer to Jibril as the enemy of the Jews.<sup>44</sup> This statement of his role or status contradicts the obvious relationship that the biblical Gabriel has with the Jews. From the book of Daniel and the messianic birth narratives in the Gospels, it is obvious Gabriel poses no threat to the Jewish people; rather, he champions God’s full restoration of Israel.

Finally, it is important to note the opinion of those who rejected Muhammad’s teaching and Jibril’s instruction. After a long absence between Jibril’s revelations, some of the women of the *Quraish* tribe observed, “His Satan has deserted him.”<sup>45</sup> Of course, this question is inconclusive for drawing any credible notions regarding Jibril’s origin or identity. However, the occurrence is noteworthy because it provides additional insight regarding the non-angelic qualities possessed by Jibril.

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<sup>43</sup> Bukhari, *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, 2:402.

<sup>44</sup> Bukhari, *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, 4:272.

<sup>45</sup> Bukhari, *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, 2:141.

## **Are the Representations of Jibril and Gabriel Different?**

The purpose of this dissertation has been to examine the representations of Gabriel and Jibril using primary sources to ascertain whether these figures are different. After examining the figures individually and comparing them by means of a biblical instrument for identifying angelic and non-angelic beings, I have discovered many similarities. However, the research has also revealed significant differences. Are Gabriel and Jibril different? The following discussion seeks to answer the question.

### **Similarities Between Gabriel and Jibril**

The sources present both Gabriel and Jibril as angels of God. As a result, they share similar aspects that display them in that light. I will subsequently examine key similarities extrapolated from the discussion provided in the previous section.

**Verbal communication.** Both figures use verbal communication in their visitations. Gabriel proclaims God's message to Daniel, Joseph, Zechariah, and Mary by means of human language, whether by auditory communication or dream-vision communication. Gabriel provides this revelation to the human beings in a known human language, enabling them to understand the message. In similar fashion, Jibril verbally communicates to Muhammad. He expresses himself through the Arabic language using auditory communication. He also communicates to Muhammad's mind without sound. Verbal communication is a shared quality that both figures utilize.

**Self-identification.** The two figures identify themselves as Gabriel/Jibril. This self-identification is noteworthy because many angelic visitations do not include such a clear identifying marker. Gabriel does not identify himself to Daniel; an unseen entity from the middle of the river, Uhai, introduces Gabriel. However, Gabriel does self-identify in the temple with Zechariah. Jibril does not introduce himself in his first encounter with Muhammad. Only after Muhammad's brother-in-law asserts that Jibril is the angel who

also communicated to Moses does Jibril self-identify. Jibril tells Muhammad his name while on a mountain after their first encounter in a cave.

**Subservience to God.** Both figures demonstrate allegiance to God, albeit with differences related to their message and role. God sends Gabriel to Daniel, Joseph, Zechariah, and Mary. He proclaims a message of good news that supports God's rule and will. Jibril also is sent from Allah. He transmits revelation from Allah to Muhammad. He also is directed by Allah to instruct, train, and protect Muhammad.

**Revelation transmission.** Both figures transmit God's messages to human beings, which is the most significant similarity. Gabriel announces God's plan for restoring Israel and predicts future political reality to Daniel. He then announces the birth of John the Baptist and Jesus while proclaiming the launch of the messianic kingdom. Jibril announces Allah's revelation to Muhammad through multiple visions over a period of years. He regularly communicates with Muhammad and dedicates strategic times of training during Ramadan.

### **Differences Between Gabriel and Jibril**

While the texts provided present both Gabriel and Jibril as angels of God from each tradition's sources, Jibril presents characteristics that are non-angelic. Next, I will examine seven significant differences between Gabriel and Jibril, extrapolated from the discussion provided in the previous section.

**Ongoing transmission.** Gabriel's mediation occurs at two points in history. His first encounter takes place during the Babylonian exile, and the second encounter is in the first century, when he announces the arrival of Jesus and John. After the arrival of Jesus, Gabriel's transmission of revelation ceases. Additional revelations occur, but they are primarily given by Jesus himself (Acts 9:3–9, 10–16; Rev 1:9–20). Other unnamed angels appear in Acts and Revelation, but the messages conveyed are not revelation meant for the

entire community; rather, these revelations were given to specific people at specific times for specific purposes (Acts 8:26, 10:3–22, 11:13, 12:7–15, 12:23, 27:23). The differences between the Qur’an and the Bible are stark. Biblical revelation portrays a messianic plan culminating in the arrival of Jesus in the first century. The Qur’an does not share the same christocentricity as the Bible. According to the Qur’an, Jesus is a significant prophet, but not central to God’s overall plan to restore humanity. That Gabriel/Jibril would reappear six hundred years after the first century to offer a distinctly different message to Muhammad that is inconsistent with his previous messages is surprising.

**Response to human fear.** As noted previously, angelic appearances almost always evoke fear from the human being present.<sup>46</sup> Stephen Noll explains that human beings often respond to angelic visitations with fear:

Frequently, the person who meets a glorious angel ends up facedown, overwhelmed with awe (Dan 8:18, 27, 10; Rev 19:9–10; 22:8, Tob 12:16; Asc. Isa. 7–8). There is good reason to expect that mystical encounters with angels may lead to physical reactions, then and now. The biblical accounts, however, are careful to distinguish a response to a vision of God from a response to an angel.<sup>47</sup>

This human response is, of course, true in the accounts examined regarding Gabriel and Jibril. Daniel and Zechariah both express extreme fear when they encounter Gabriel. Similarly, Muhammad expresses significant fear when he first encounters Jibril in the cave and on other occasions. However, Gabriel and Jibril’s responses to the fear experienced by humans differ considerably. In every case, the biblical Gabriel attempts to calm the human being by encouraging him or her to remain unafraid. Jibril does not. He

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<sup>46</sup> Stephen Noll notes,

(1) The question of reverencing an angel never raises in throne visions but only when angels appear singly on earth. (2) The proximate cause of astonishment is not the visage of the angel but the significance of the message brought or deed done, which is attributed to God. (3) In an angelophany, the phrase *fear not* carries overtones of *do not worship*, which is not the case when God or Christ appears. (4) In John’s Apocalypse, the angel identifies himself as the prophet’s fellow servant. (5) The angel commands the recipient to worship God. (Stephen Noll, *Angels of Light, Powers of Darkness* [Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2003], 45–46)

<sup>47</sup> Noll, *Angels of Light, Powers of Darkness*, 45.

is completely silent regarding the mental agitation his appearance has caused.<sup>48</sup> This dissimilarity is significant when discussing the motivation of angelic beings versus non-angelic beings. Angels seek to communicate God's message without harm to the listener, whether that harm is physical, emotional, or spiritual. Anger, envy, and hatred motivate non-angelic beings. They do not avoid causing harm to human beings, whether that harm is physical, emotional, or spiritual. Jibril's silence regarding Muhammad's fear is deafening.

**Location of appearances.** Third, Gabriel and Jibril meet their human recipients in different locations. Gabriel appears to Daniel next to a river in Babylon, which is not an isolated location. In fact, in his second encounter, Daniel notes the presence of other people. When Gabriel meets Zechariah, he is in the temple complex. Thousands of people have gathered at the temple. The temple is not an isolated place even though their encounter is private. Mary's encounter with Gabriel takes place in Nazareth, a small village. As previously noted, the language Luke uses to describe Gabriel's arrival indicates that Gabriel entered a residence before speaking to Mary.

While Jibril's later encounters depict him meeting with Muhammad in his residence, the first two encounters are noteworthy. Jibril approaches Muhammad while he is isolated in the wilderness outside Mecca. Additionally, Muhammad is secluded in a cave. In the second encounter, Muhammad sees Jibril while standing on the summit of a mountain. Muhammad is alone and hours go by before a search party sent by Khadija finds him. It is important to note Langton's comments about demonic haunts:

The *Jinn*, the "dark ones" or the "concealed ones," are regarded as the descendants or ghostly shadows of nations who have passed away. They dwell in places that were formerly populated, but are now desolate, and believed to be bewitched. . . . Burial grounds, and any places of filth or refuse, were especially associated with demons. Speaking more generally, the desert is believed to be the favorite haunt of demons, and they are attracted to any ruined or desolate place.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Bukhari, *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, 1:48.

<sup>49</sup> Langton, *Essentials of Demonology*, 4-5.

Langton's description of demonic haunts is insightful. His assertion about the places with which demons associate echoes accounts found in the Gospels regarding Jesus' exorcism of the Gadarene demoniac who was living in the wilderness among the tombs (Mark 5:1–13).

**Aggression and violence.** Fourth, Jibril's evident aggression and violence in his first encounter with Muhammad is highly unusual. Gabriel does not act in this way in the biblical narratives. His only physical act describes him touching Daniel to wake him and assist him in standing up, whereas Jibril violently presses Muhammad three times to motivate his obedience to "recite." Muhammad feared for his life and his sanity. He was deeply concerned about his spiritual and emotional state and was hoping that others would not think he was demon possessed.<sup>50</sup> Additionally, Jibril is reported splitting Muhammad's chest on two occasions, which would have caused significant amounts of pain.

**Content of revelations.** Fifth, the messages proclaimed by Gabriel and Jibril are dramatically different. As noted, Gabriel's message focuses on God's restoration of Israel from exile and the arrival of the messianic age through Jesus. Jibril's messages do not address these issues at all. In one account, Muhammad says, "Jibril (Gabriel) said to me, 'Whoever amongst your followers die without having worshipped others besides Allah, will enter Paradise, or will not enter the (Hell) Fire.' The prophet asked, 'Even if he has committed illegal sexual intercourse or theft?' He replied, 'Even then.'"<sup>51</sup> This message lacks any consistency with the gospel of the New Testament of which Gabriel says he is a messenger (Luke 1:19). Jibril's revelations focused on religious ritual, obedience to Allah's will, and military strategy. One revelation that should not be overlooked occurs in this way:

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<sup>50</sup> Ibn Ishaq, *The Life of Muhammad*, 106.

<sup>51</sup> Bukhari, *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, 4:281.



The Divine Revelation was delayed for a short period but suddenly, as I was walking, I heard a voice in the sky, and when I looked up towards the sky, to my surprise, I saw the angel who had come to me in the Hira cave, and he was sitting on a chair in between the sky and the earth. I was so frightened by him glittering like the moon on a full-moon night, and those who will follow them will glitter like the most brilliant star in the sky. They will not urinate, relieve nature, spit, or have any nasal secretions. Their combs will be of gold and their sweat will smell like musk. The aloes-wood will be used in their censers. Their wives will be *Hur*.<sup>52</sup> All of them will look alike as if they are one person in the image of their father Adam, sixty cubits tall.<sup>53</sup>

Jibril's promise of supernatural offspring to all who will follow his revelation is reminiscent of one interpretation of Genesis 6:1–14:<sup>54</sup>

When man began to multiply on the face of the land and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of man were attractive. And they took as their wives any they chose. Then the LORD said, "My Spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh: his days shall be 120 years." The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of man and they bore children to them. These were the mighty men who were of old, the men of renown (Gen 6:1–4).

The aforementioned selection in the *hadith* that describes Jibril sitting a chair between heaven and earth, is similar to other writings that are associated with the fall of the watchers in 1 Enoch.<sup>55</sup> The claim that all who follow Jibril will wed beautiful women and have supernatural giant offspring is not a biblical angelic message.

Muhammad's description of Jibril as glittering like the moon is an interesting detail. Heiser, regarding the *nachash* or serpent in Genesis 3, identifies him as a divine being. The term *nachash* signifies a triple *entendre* at play. The creature displays serpentine

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<sup>52</sup> *Hur* are females created by Allah. They are believed to be more beautiful than any woman born naturally and are noted for having black irises and intensely white sclera.

<sup>53</sup> Bukhari, *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, 4:327.

<sup>54</sup> Three primary interpretations exist concerning Gen 6:1-4. Since the late fourth century, the most popular view has been the Sethite interpretation. According to this view, the "sons of God" are believed to be descendents from the line of Seth, the son of Adam and Eve. Most evangelicals hold to this interpretation. The second interpretation associates the "sons of God" with divinized human rulers. This view echos similar ideas present within other ancient Near Eastern cultures concerning sonship language and kingship. The final interpretation associates the "sons of God" with rebellious angels who have rejected their place as God's emissaries. Instead, they chose human wives and had sexual relations. Second Pet 2:1-10 and Jude 5-7 are used to support this position.

<sup>55</sup> R. H. Charles, ed., *The Book of Enoch or 1 Enoch*, trans. R. H. Charles (Oxford: Clarendon, 1912), 13–18.

qualities associated with other angelic beings. However, when one uses the term *nachash* as a verb or adjective, the meaning is different. The verb conveys the role of a diviner and the adjective describes something metallic, such as polished brass.<sup>56</sup> This explanation, coupled with Isaiah 14:12–20 and Ezekiel 28:11–19, describes the fall of a divine being who shimmered and “glittered” like “sardius, topaz, and diamond, beryl, onyx, and jasper, sapphire, emerald, and carbuncle” (Ezek 28:13).

**Physical and spiritual appearance.** Sixth, both Gabriel’s physical and immaterial appearance are given limited detail in the biblical texts. Biblical scripture describes him as having the appearance of a man. The Bible does not indicate Gabriel’s possession of wings. Jibril’s appearance, while typically described as a human form, is described in its spiritual form as well. He is said to have an enormous spiritual form that covers the sky or extends from the earth to the heavens. Additionally, he is depicted with 600 wings. These descriptions are different from the accounts of Gabriel in the Bible.

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<sup>56</sup> Heiser provides additional clarity regarding the term *nachash*.

The pivotal character of Genesis 3 is the serpent. The Hebrew word translated serpent is *nachash*. The word is both plain and elastic. The most straightforward meaning is the one virtually all translators and interpreters opt for: serpent. When the Hebrew root letters *n-ch-sh* are a noun, that’s the meaning. But *n-ch-sh* are also the consonants of a verb. If we changed the vowels to a verbal form (recall that Hebrew originally had no vowels), we would have *nochesh*, which means “the diviner.” Divination refers to communication with the supernatural world. A diviner in the ancient world was one who foretold omens or gave out divine information (oracles). We can see that element in the story. Eve is getting information from this being. The consonants *n-ch-sh* may also form an alternative noun, *nachash*, which is at times used descriptively, like an adjective. This term is used in place names outside the Bible and once within the Old Testament. First Chronicles 4:12 refers to “Tehinnah, father of *Ir-Nachash*.” The otherwise unknown Tehinnah is regarded in this verse as the founder of the city (Hebrew: *ir*) of *nachash*. This city has yet to be securely identified by archaeologists. The phrase means “the city of copper/bronze (smiths).” Hebrew words like *nechosheth* (“bronze”; “copper”) are derived from this noun. *Ir-nachash* was a place known for copper and bronze metallurgy. The option is interesting because copper and bronze are shiny when polished. In fact, the Old Testament uses *nechosheth* to describe divine beings (Dan 10:6). . . . The serpent (*nachash*) was an image commonly used in reference to a divine throne guardian. Given the context of Eden, that helps identify the villain as a divine being. The divine adversary dispenses divine information, using it to goad Eve. He gives her an oracle (or, an omen!): You won’t really die. God knows when you eat you will be like one of the *elohim*. Lastly, a shining appearance conveys a divine nature. All the meanings telegraph something important. They are also consistent with the imagery from Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28. (Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, 88-90)

**Posture.** Finally, the posture of Gabriel and Jibril should be noted. As previously mentioned, angels in the Bible are recorded predominantly as walking, standing, or flying. The Bible's only mention of angels sitting occurs at the resurrection of Jesus as the angels wait for the disciples' arrival to communicate the news of Jesus' resurrection. Islamic sources also record Jibril walking and standing. Indirectly, one may assume his ability to fly given Jibril's escort of Muhammad into heaven, but this is not certain. The scene of Jibril sitting in a chair floating between heaven and earth contrasts starkly with the biblical Gabriel. No angel is described sitting in a chair, throne or otherwise, in the Bible. Those who sit in chairs of authority, symbolized by Jibril's chair floating between heaven and earth, are kings or gods. This difference is distinct because Gabriel says, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God" (Luke 1:19). God is the one who sits upon the throne, and from that throne he rules both heaven and earth (Rev 5:1–14). This posture is aberrant from biblical descriptions of angelic behavior.

### **Seven Distinct Differences**

Are the representations of Gabriel and Jibril different? While they do share certain similarities, the differences between them are stark. Gabriel and Jibril share 80 percent of the qualities associated with angelic beings; however, only Jibril bears 70 percent of the non-angelic qualities.

A reasonable conclusion from Jibril's portrayal of 80 percent of the angelic markers would be to assume he is truly angelic; however, this conclusion would not take into account the differences between the two figures. Jibril's message and behavior are dissimilar from the biblical Gabriel, as noted previously.

While these differences may seem unimportant or possibly a result of authorial choices determined by the religious and cultural context, the differences might also signify an overt deception.

When the apostle Paul reports being accused of being inferior to the super apostles in 2 Corinthians, he asserts that one of the devil's strategies is to portray himself as a normal angel of light by misrepresenting the gospel:

“For if someone comes and proclaims another Jesus than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or if you accept a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it readily enough. Indeed, I consider that I am not in the least inferior to these super-apostles.” (2 Cor 11:4–5)

He continues, “And what I am doing I will continue to do, in order to undermine the claim of those who would like to claim that in their boasted mission they work on the same terms as we do. For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds.” (2 Cor 11:12–15)

Gabriel and Jibril are different in seven specific ways, as noted. After Gabriel's announcement of Jesus' birth, the New Testament does not describe Gabriel as having responsibilities for the ongoing dissemination of God's revelation. Islamic tradition asserts that Gabriel (Jibril) appears 600 years after the first century to offer a new and final revelation from Allah, which is dissonant from the content of the New Testament (Gal 1:8).

When Gabriel encounters humans, he mitigates their fear with the command, “fear not.” Jibril offers no such consolation to Muhammad when his appearance causes acute anxiety and fear. Gabriel's appearances occur in populated areas such as Babylon, Jerusalem, and Nazareth. Several times Jibril appears to Muhammad in isolated locations in the wilderness or while Muhammad is walking alone at night. Jibril appears to Muhammad in the company of his companions as well, but Jibril's encounters with Muhammad in wilderness settings are notable because non-angelic activities often occur in isolated locations.

In the biblical narratives, no indication of any aggression or physical violence toward humans can be found in the accounts of Gabriel. Jibril, however, especially in his first encounters with Muhammad, is described as nearly suffocating Muhammad to make Muhammad obey his commands. Additionally, Jibril opens Muhammad's chest to clean his heart and remove the impurity placed there by Satan.

The messages offered by Gabriel and Jibril do not share similar themes or content; in fact, their messages are contradictory. In Daniel and the messianic birth narratives, Gabriel proclaims a message of Israel's restoration and promised reconciliation with God through Jesus. Jibril's message neglects these themes and instead explores a different way to have peace with Allah through strict obedience to ritual practices.

While notable, the difference between Gabriel's and Jibril's appearance is not the most significant disparity. Gabriel's appearances are described limitedly. As a result, the comparison unclear. However, Jibril's appearance, both physical and spiritual, are described in detail. In Jibril's human form, he resembles one of Muhammad's followers and in Jibril's spiritual form he is described as filling the sky and having hundreds of wings. The silence of the biblical record regarding Gabriel's appearance makes the comparison lack clear definition; however, the silence does provide a contrast to the detail provided in the Islamic sources.

A final disparity is found in the status or posture of Gabriel and Jibril. From the biblical texts, Gabriel is described as serving God as a messenger. He stands in the presence of God, presumably as a guardian or attendant to do the will of God. While Jibril shares some of these qualities (i.e., service to Allah, messenger, etc.), Muhammad's recollection of Jibril sitting in a chair hovering between heaven and earth is an obvious alteration from the biblical description.

While both Gabriel and Jibril share similar qualities, the differences between them indicate they are not the same representations. The research confirms the hypothesis. The representations of Gabriel and Jibril are different.

## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSION

The purpose of this dissertation was to assess the nature and character of the Islamic Jibril by using biblically derived criteria for identifying spiritual beings and by comparing the Islamic Jibril with the biblical Gabriel. My hypothesis held that the Islamic Jibril is different from the Gabriel of the Bible. The identity of this particular figure is significant for both Christians and Muslims because of his essential role in transmitting God's revelation in both religions. The design of this project assessed the accounts that describe the appearances, behaviors, messages, personalities, and statuses of both Gabriel and Jibril.

Gabriel and Jibril transmit revelation to human prophets in biblical and Islamic texts. Muslims assert that the figures of Gabriel and Jibril represent the same figure; however, Christians question the validity of Islamic claims regarding Jibril's identity. Thus far, these questions have received minimal academic exploration. This project sought to answer the question, "Are the representations of Gabriel and Jibril different?" If the Islamic claims of Jibril's status as an angel of God are false, then the correlation between the angelologies of the Bible and the Qur'an will be further distanced providing Christians additional opportunity to point toward the uniqueness of the Bible, its messengers, and the God who is its author as they bear witness to the "faith that was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3).

## Summary of the Research

### Establishment of BIISB

This project established a BIISB based on qualitative data analysis and the application of grounded theory. I selected twenty-three terms for data analysis, the analysis forming an angelic taxonomy. I examined an additional fifteen terms that relate to spiritual beings in general. I imported biblical references related to these terms into Atlas.ti qualitative research software. Of the 2,867 references collected, I coded 1,084 references using initial, selective, and theoretical coding. Based on the analysis, twenty-seven principles emerged for identifying spiritual beings. Of these twenty-seven principles, fourteen denote the characteristics of angels, and thirteen denote the characteristics of non-angels.

### Exegetical Analysis

Both Gabriel and Jibril were examined independently through exegetical analysis. Five scriptural texts were examined regarding the biblical Gabriel (Dan 8:15–27, 9:20–27; Matt 1:18–25; Luke 1:5–25, 1:26–38). I inspected specific terms and themes for salient information regarding Gabriel’s appearance, behavior, message, personality, and status. Finally, BIISB principles were applied to Gabriel based on the textual analysis.

I examined two *surahs* in the Qur’an (Q2.96–97, Q66.4), multiple accounts from *Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim’s hadith* collections, and portions of Ibn Ishaq’s biography of Muhammad in reference to Jibril. I inspected specific terms and themes for salient information regarding Jibril’s appearance, behavior, message, personality, and status. Finally, I applied the BIISB principles to Jibril based on the textual analysis.

### Application of BIISB

Using the BIISB based on qualitative data analysis, the current research applied fourteen principles for identifying angelic beings and thirteen principles for identifying non-angelic beings to Gabriel and Jibril for comparison.

This application yielded the following results. The biblical Gabriel demonstrated 90 percent of the angelic characteristics and zero percent of the non-angelic characteristics used in the BIISB. The Islamic Jibril demonstrated 80 percent of the angelic characteristics and 70 percent of the non-angelic characteristics in the BIISB.

The application of textual comparative analysis to Gabriel and Jibril revealed that, while the figures shared multiple qualitative similarities, they also had noticeable qualitative disparities between them. Gabriel and Jibril's similarities include verbal communication, self-identification, subservience to God, and transmission of revelation. Their differences include ongoing transmission, response to human fear, location of appearance, aggression and violence, content of revelation, physical and spiritual appearance, and posture.

### **Conclusion of the Research**

Based on the critical analysis provided by the BIISB and a thorough comparison of the representations of Gabriel and Jibril, the apparent dissimilarities displayed by these two representations are irreconcilable. Jibril's embodiment of non-angelic qualities, coupled with the stark contrast of his message, does not coincide with the descriptions of the biblical Gabriel or the content of his messages. After thorough examination, I believe that the Islamic representation of Jibril is different from the spiritual being described in the Bible as Gabriel.

### **Implications of Research**

#### **Biblical Demonology**

The rise in occult activities recorded in the 1960s through the early 1990s necessitated strong Christian response. During that approximately thirty-year period, numerous books and articles were published regarding spiritual warfare, the occult, and



even demonology.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, there has been little serious Christian engagement of these topics during the past twenty years. The need for critical assessment, theory, and application of biblical demonology is essential to meet the rising interest in cultural animism, occult practice,<sup>2</sup> new religious movements<sup>3</sup> associated with New Age spiritualism and Asian mysticism,<sup>4</sup> and America's cherished pluralistic embrace of the world's religions.<sup>5</sup>

The rise of the internet in the 1990s precipitated an increase in the availability of occult and demonological information to the general public. A 2019, general Google query of the term "demonology" resulted in 4,390,000 references. The top-ranking results are discussions or reviews of Christian books published in the eighteenth century, Catholic positions on demonic possession and exorcism, and secular paranormal researchers discussing demoniacal phenomena. A general Amazon book query for the term

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<sup>1</sup> See Anderson, *The Bondage Breaker*; Neil T. Anderson, *Victory Over the Darkness* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2000); Arnold, *3 Crucial Questions*; Bubeck, *The Adversary*. Dickason, *Demon Possession & the Christian*; Kurt E. Koch, *Occult Bondage and Deliverance* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1971) ; Felicitas D. Goodman, *The Exorcism of Anneliese Michel* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2005) ; Felicitas D. Goodman, *How about Demons? Possession and Exorcism in the Modern World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988); Kurt E. Koch, *Demonology: Past and Present* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1973); MacArthur, *How to Meet the Enemy*; Murphy, *The Handbook for Spiritual Warfare*; Agrippa von Nettesheim and Heinrich Cornelius, *Occult Philosophy or Magic* (New York: AMS Press, 1982); Stephen F. Noll, *Angels of Light, Powers of Darkness: Thinking Biblically about Angels, Satan & Principalities* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1998); Traugott Konstantin Oesterreich, *Possession and Exorcism: Among Primitive Races, in Antiquity, the Middle Ages, and Modern Times* (New York: Causeway Books, 1974); Philpott, *A Manual of Demonology and the Occult*; Kurt D. Singer, *They Are Possessed: Masterpieces of Exorcism* (London: W. H. Allen, 1976); Unger, *Demons in the World Today*; Unger, *What Demons Can Do*; Unger, *Biblical Demonology*.

<sup>2</sup> Mitch Horowitz summarizes historic occult influence on the cultural and religious development of American. Mitch Horowitz, *Occult America: The Secret History of How Mysticism Shaped Our Nation* (New York: Bantam, 2009).

<sup>3</sup> New religious movements have had a constant presence in the formation of American cultural and religious life since the colonial period. See Philip Jenkins, *Mystics and Messiahs: Cults and New Religions in American History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 209–26.

<sup>4</sup> The increasing influence of Asian mysticism is evident from the rising American interest in meditation, yoga, and other pseudo-religious applications of Asian religion and philosophy. See Andrea R. Jain, *Selling Yoga: From Counterculture to Pop Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 20–41.

<sup>5</sup> See D. A. Carson, *The Gagging of God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 18–19.

“demonology” resulted in over 5,000 results. Non-Christian professionals have written the top-ranking books, including *The Dictionary of Demons: Names of the Damned*; *The Encyclopedia of Demons and Demonology*; *The Black Arts: A Concise History of Witchcraft, Demonology, Astrology, and Other Mystical Practices through the Ages*; *The Encyclopedia of Witchcraft & Demonology*; *The False Hierarchy of Demons: Illustrated English Translation of Pseudomonarchia Daemonum*; and *Demonology: Of King James I*. All of these resources fall outside the boundaries of Christian theology of demonology based upon the Bible. American culture is engaging more with the prospect of supernatural realities and the concept of spirits.<sup>6</sup>

Christian researchers must meet this interest with clear theological teaching about the nature of demons, angels, and the spiritual realm. This dissertation provides a modest step in that direction. The principles developed from qualitative data analysis might assist in examining spiritual beings outside of the Christian faith. Additionally, this research might reawaken the wider academic Christian community to the ongoing need for thoughtful Christian engagement of demonology.

### **Christian Engagement of World Religions**

While the Christian study of world religions is certainly a focus of Christian academia, the interplay between spiritualism or demonology and the Christian examination

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<sup>6</sup> Stafford Betty addresses the issue of demonic possession as related to the field of psychiatry. See Stafford Betty, “Why We Should Take ‘Demonic Possession’ Seriously,” Huffpost.Com, January 16, 2017, [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/why-we-should-take-demonic-possession-seriously\\_b\\_587d6daee4b0a7ab06ed2c6a](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/why-we-should-take-demonic-possession-seriously_b_587d6daee4b0a7ab06ed2c6a). Betty’s article is a summary of an academic article, published in the *Journal of Religion*: Stafford Betty, “The Growing Evidence for ‘Demonic Possession’: What Should Psychiatry’s Response Be?” *Journal of Religion and Health* 44, no. 1 (2005): 13–30. Mike Mariani summarizes the increasing request of Catholic exorcisms in the United States. See Mike Mariani, “American Exorcism,” *The Atlantic*, December 2018, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2018/12/catholic-exorcisms-on-the-rise/573943/>.

of world religions is not.<sup>7</sup> Richard Gallagher, writing about his twenty-five-year history of working with demonologists and exorcists, notes,

One of the major aims of demons is to confuse human beings, and throughout history they have repeatedly feigned being dead souls or angels, or, perhaps, the deities of pagan religions. Evil spirits take delight stimulating superstitious and frightful beliefs in people about their nature, which is why they try to obfuscate their diabolic identities. Such obfuscation is also an attempt to create havoc with our belief systems. Demons disguise their aims sometimes by faking what may otherwise be supposed to be what are known as “private revelations.”<sup>8</sup>

Gallagher agrees with the apostle Paul (1 Cor 10:20-21; 2 Cor 11:14) that the demonic beings might masquerade as angelic or divine figures. Gerald McDermott’s *God’s Rivals: Why Has God Allowed Different Religions? Insights from the Bible and the Early Church* is an attempt to engage this topic.<sup>9</sup> McDermott discusses the theme of particularity with relationship to God’s choice of Israel and the church, the concept of divine council in relationship to the “Lord of Hosts,” and early church theologians’ perspectives on the world’s religions in relationship to spiritual beings. McDermott’s project was met with mixed praise in academia. Glenn Krieder, in a review published by the *Criswell Theological Review*, writes, “McDermott’s work is insightful and practical, it helps us to reach out to those other religions and to be used by God to help them reach out and find the God who wants to be found by them. This book is highly recommended for students and Christian leaders and should be required reading for missionaries and

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<sup>7</sup> One notable exception to the academic negligence of the overlap between the study of world religions and biblical demonology is Daniel Strange’s *Their Rock is Not Like Our Rock: A Theology of World Religions*. Strange states that some scholars, like Christopher Wright, disregard the importance of demons in the overarching story of the Bible, but from Strange’s perspective, texts such as Deut 32:17 and 1 Cor 10:20 cannot be ignored. He remarks, “In constructing a theology of religions, therefore, it would be remiss not to include some reference to the role of the demonic, especially in an academic environment when an antithetical approach to the religious Other is extremely countercultural.” Daniel Strange, *Their Rock is Not Like Our Rock: A Theology of World Religions* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 262.

<sup>8</sup> Richard Gallagher, *Demonic Foes: My Twenty-Five Years as a Psychiatrist Investigating Possessions, Diabolic Attacks, and the Paranormal* (New York: HarperOne, 2020), 95-96.

<sup>9</sup> Gerald R. McDermott, *God’s Rivals: Why Has God Allowed Different Religions? Insights from the Bible and the Early Church* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2007).

evangelists.”<sup>10</sup> Scott Horrell, pointing to other less celebrative responses to McDermott’s books, writes, “Not all will agree with some of the particulars of biblical and patristic interpretation or the author’s practical directives. But as a committed evangelical McDermott helps believers see how they can interact significantly with people in other religious systems.”<sup>11</sup>

McDermott’s work and the response to his research signal the need for further engagement by Christian theologians. The principles established in this dissertation will, hopefully, further expose the need for more serious biblical angelological and demonological research in relation to Christians’ studies of world religions. Additionally, the research completed in this work will enable me to examine other spiritual beings discussed in texts used by the world’s religions.

### **Christian Apologetics**

As noted, Christian apologetics against Islam began soon after the religion’s inception.<sup>12</sup> While apologetics has some value with regard to evangelism and church planting efforts, it is a critical field of study that could benefit from the conclusions of this project. Numerous articles and books have refuted the claims of Islam from a Christian perspective. Limited examination has focused on the spiritual beings associated with the inspiration of Islam’s primary scriptures.

The methodology used in this dissertation could benefit Christian apologists wishing to highlight the disparity between the biblical Gabriel and the Islamic Jibril.

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<sup>10</sup> Glenn R. Kreider, “God’s Rivals: Why Has God Allowed Different Religions? Insights from the Bible and the Early Church,” *Criswell Theological Review* 6, no. 1 (2008): 115.

<sup>11</sup> J. Scott Horrell, “God’s Rivals: Why Has God Allowed Different Religions? Insights from the Bible and the Early Church,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 165, no. 660 (October 2008): 486–87.

<sup>12</sup> Apologetic engagement of the world’s religions has been a constant academic effort over the last 2,000 years. Scott Bridger provides a summary of Christian apologetic efforts toward Islam and Christian apologetic usage of Qur’anic texts from the medieval to the contemporary period. Additionally, he proposes a proper method for Christian theologizing in Islamic milieus. See Scott Bridger, *Christian Exegesis of the Qur’an: A Critical Analysis of the Apologetic Use of the Qur’an in Select Medieval and Contemporary Arabic Texts* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2015), 65–160.

Additionally, the conclusions herein give academic credibility to the Christian intuition that the Jibril presented in Muslim sources is different from the figure described as Gabriel in the Bible.

### **Missions Engagement**

The priority of the Christian faith is making disciples of all people from every tribe, religion, language, and social demographic. During the past twenty-five years, missiologists have narrowed the target of greatest priority to the 10/40 window, in which the Islamic faith is dominant.<sup>13</sup> The conclusions made in this project could serve missionaries in their discipleship of believers from a Muslim background and give them information that could be helpful in explaining the differences between the Islamic faith and the Christian faith.

The credibility of the Qur'an is essential to Islamic theology. This research project questions the spiritual identity of the figure responsible for disseminating the Qur'anic revelation to Muhammad (i.e., Jibril). Potentially, the conclusions of this project might assist missionaries serving among Muslims as they share the true message of Gabriel from the Bible.

### **Limitations of the Research**

First, as noted in chapter 1, my Arabic proficiency limited a thorough examination of Islamic sources in Arabic. Engaging Islamic sources through translations limited this study in some respects; however, the selected volumes were editions translated by Islamic scholars. While the major themes and terms regarding Jibril were obvious through English translation, additional research in Arabic would elicit syntactical and etymological nuances not discussed in this project.

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<sup>13</sup> Luis Bush coined the term "10/40 window" in the early 2000s. He is a Christian missiologist and founder of Transform World, an international missions agency. Luis Bush, "10/40 Window: Do You Need to be Stirred to Action?" Missions Mobilizer, accessed on January 4, 2020, <http://home.snu.edu/~hculbert/1040.htm>.

Second, my delimitation of research of select sources within the Islamic tradition truncated a comprehensive examination of all accounts related to Jibril. I examined *The Qur'an: A New Annotated Translation*, translated by Arthur J. Droge<sup>14</sup>; selected English translations of Sunni *hadith*;<sup>15</sup> and Alfred Guillaume's English translation of *The Life of Muhammad*.<sup>16</sup> Further research could include the study of all *hadith* collections from every stream of Islamic tradition. I chose to restrict *hadith* research to the two most widely accepted Sunni collections.

### Recommendations for Further Research

#### Wider *Hadith* Jibril Research

This project examined a narrow selection of Sunni *hadith*, although the majority of Muslims consider the chosen selections to be the pinnacle *hadith* traditions. As Burton notes,

Apart from the Book of God, no more lavish praise has been heaped on any writing in Arabic than the praise which for 1,000 years has accompanied mention of the twin pinnacles of the *musannaf* type of work. They tend to be spoken of as "second only to the Holy Qur'an" in terms of authority, as the repositories of the record of the sayings and doings of the Prophet."<sup>17</sup>

However, additional *hadith* collections, such as *Sunan An-Nasâ'i*, *Sunan Abu Dawud*, *Jâmi' At-Tirmidhi*, *Sunan Ibn Mâjah*, could be examined to gain a wider perspective on the Jibril traditions available. Given the fact that the Islamic sources examined in this dissertation are the most highly esteemed *Hadith* collections, I do not believe that the

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<sup>14</sup> Arthur J. Droge, *The Qur'an: A New Annotated Translation* (Bristol, CT: Equinox, 2013).

<sup>15</sup> Abul Hussain Muslim ibn Al-Hajjaj, *English Translation of Sahih Muslim*, trans. Nasiruddin Al-Khattab, vol. 1–7 (Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: Darussalam, 2007). Muhammad ibn Ismail Bukhari, *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, trans. Muhammad Muhsin Khan, vols. 1–9 (Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: Darussalam, 1997).

<sup>16</sup> Ibn Ishaq, *The Life of Muhammad: A Translation of Ibn Ishaq's Sirat Rasul Allah*, trans. Alfred Guillaume (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1982).

<sup>17</sup> John Burton, *An Introduction to the Hadith* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994), 123.

additional sources would challenge the conclusions of this project, but they could amplify the differences found between Gabriel and Jibril.

### **Christian Assessment of Jibril as the “Spirit of God”**

The interpretation of claims that Jibril should be understood as the “Spirit of God” revealed in the Qur’an should be assessed from a Christian perspective. An examination of these texts in the Qur’an was outside the parameters of this study, but it could prove insightful for further development on the topic of Gabriel and Jibril. This study would require research from sources in Arabic to establish syntactical and etymological conclusions.

### **Christian Assessment of Islamic Supernatural Worldview**

The Islamic supernatural worldview is complex. A thorough examination of each reference to angels—*jinn*, *Iblis*, and other spiritual beings—was outside the narrow parameters of this project; however, further research could contrast the Christian understanding of the supernatural world and the Islamic supernatural world. Islam’s strict monotheism and deterministic theological perspective places spiritual beings in a narrow category of function in relationship to Allah. The Christian understanding of the supernatural realm displays a more hierarchal function regarding spiritual beings and does not necessarily support the idea of determinism. While spiritual beings in both traditions share particular qualities, the differences between them would serve Christian practitioners in the work of highlighting the differences between Islam and Christianity. Further research could assist missionaries in engaging folk Islam’s tendency toward syncretistic animism.

### **Application of BIISB to Other Religious Figures**

The world’s religions describe numerous spiritual beings. Further research could establish the BIISB as a helpful tool in examining various figures who supposedly

speak for God or reveal themselves as gods. One example is Moroni from the Mormon accounts. According to Mormon religious texts, an angelic figure approached Joseph Smith and gave him additional revelation by God. The content of this revelation is suspect from a Christian perspective because it contradicts portions of the Old and New Testaments. Additionally, Moroni's interaction with Smith displays qualities discovered in the interactions between Muhammad and Jibril. Application of this instrument would help Christian theologians identify aberrant details about spiritual beings in various religions and could potentially assist in evangelistic and missiological endeavors.



APPENDIX

DATA ANALYSIS CASE LIST

Table A1. Data analysis case list

Term	Occurrences
Angel   <i>mal'ak</i>	<p>Gen 16:7, 9, 10, 11; 16:11; 19:1, 15; 21:17; 22:11, 15; 24:7, 40; 28:12; 31:11; 32:1, 3, 6; 48:16; Exod 3:2; 14:19; 23:20; 32:34; 33:2; Num 20:14, 16; 21:21; 22:5, 22, 23–27, 31–32, 34–35; 24:12; Deut 2:26; Josh 6:17, 25; 7:22; Judg 2:1, 4; 5:23; 6:11–12, 6:20–22, 35; 7:24; 9:31; 11:12–14, 17, 19; 13:3, 6, 9, 13, 15–18, 20–21; 1 Sam 6:21; 11:3–4, 7, 9, 16:19; 19:11, 14–16; 19:20–21; 23:27, 25:14, 42; 29:9; 2 Sam 2:5; 3:12, 14, 26; 5:11; 11:4, 19, 22–23, 26; 5:11; 11:4, 19, 22–23, 25; 12:27; 14:17, 20; 19:27; 24:16; 2 Sam 24:17; 1 Kgs 13:18; 19:2,5,7; 20:2, 5, 9; 22:13; 2 Kgs 1:2–3, 5, 15–16; 5:10; 6:32–33; 7:15; 9:18; 10:8; 14:8; 16:7; 17:4; 19:9, 14, 23, 35; 1 Chron 14:1; 19:2, 16; 21:12, 15–16, 18, 20, 27, 30; 2 Chron 18:12; 32:21; 35:21, 36:15–16; Neh 6:3; Job 1:14; 4:18; 33:23; Ps 34:7; 35:5–6; 78:49; 91:11; 103:20; 104:4; 148:2; Prov 13:17; 16:14; 17:11; Eccl 5:6; Isa 14:32; 18:2; 30:4, 7, 9, 14, 36; 42:19; 44:26; 63:9; Jer 27:3; Ezek 17:15; 23:16, 40; 30:9; Hos 12:4; Nah 2:13; Hag 1:13; Zech 1:9, 11–14, 19; 2:3; 3:1, 3, 5–6; 4:1, 4–5; 5:5, 10; 6:4–5; 12:8; Mal 2:7, 3:1</p>
Angel   <i>angelos</i>	<p>Matt 1:20, 24; 2:13, 19; 4:6, 11; 11:10; 13:39, 41, 49; 16:27; 18:10; 22:30; 24:31, 36; 25:31, 41; 26:53; 28:2, 5; Mark 1:2, 13; 8:38; 12:25, 13:27, 32; Luke 1:11, 13, 18–19, 26, 30, 34–35, 38; 2:9, 10, 13, 15, 21; 4:10; 7:24, 27; 9:26, 52; 12:8–9; 15:10; 16:22; 22:43; 24:23; John 1:51; 12:29; 20:12; Acts 5:19; 6:15; 7:30, 35, 38, 53; 8:26; 10:3, 7, 22; 11:13; 12:7–11; 15, 23; 23:8–9; 27:23; Rom 8:38; 1 Cor 4:9; 6:3; 11:10; 13:1; 2 Cor 11:14; 12:7; Gal 1:8; 3:19; 4:14; Col 2:18; 2 Thess 1:7; 1 Tim 1:7; 3:16; 5:21; Heb 1:4–7, 13; 2:2, 5, 7, 9; 2:16; 12:22; 13:2; Jas 2:25; 1 Pet 1:12; 3:22; 2 Pet 2:4, 11; Jude 6; Rev 1:1, 20; 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 5, 7; 3:14; 5:2, 11; 7:1–2; 7:11; 8:2–6; 8:8, 10, 12–13; 9:1, 12–13; 9:1, 11, 13; Rev 9:1, 11, 13–15; 10:1, 5, 7–10; 11:15; 12:7, 9; 14:6, 8–10, 15, 17–19; 15:1, 6–8; 16:1, 5; 17:1, 7; 18:1, 21; 19:17; 20:1; 21:9, 12, 17; 22:6, 8, 16</p>
Archangel   <i>archangelos</i>	<p>1 Thess 4:16; Jude 9</p>
Azazel   <i>azazel</i>	<p>Lev 16:8, 10; 16:26</p>

Table A1 continued

Term	Occurrences
Cherubim   <i>kerubim</i>	Gen 3:24; Exod 25:18–20, 22; 26:1, 31; 36:8, 35; 37:7–9; Num 7:89; 1 Sam 4:4; 2 Sam 6:2; 22:11; 1 Kgs 6:23–29, 32, 35; 7:29, 36; 8:6–7; 2 Kgs 19:15; 1 Chr 13:6; 28:18; 2 Chr 3:7, 10–14; 5:7–8; Pss 18:10; 80:1; 99:1; Isa 37:16; Ezek 9:3; 10:1–9, 14–6, 18–20; 11:22; 28:14, 16; 41:18, 20, 25
Cherubim   <i>cheroubin</i>	Heb 9:5
Demons   <i>daimonia</i>	Matt 7:22; 9:33–34; 10:8; 11:18; 12:24, 27–28; 18:18; Mark 1:34, 39; 3:15, 22; 6:13; 7:26, 29–30; 9:38; 16:9, 17; Luke 4:33, 35, 41; 7:33; 8:2, 27, 29–30, 33, 35, 38; 9:1, 42, 49; 10:17; 11:14–15, 18–20; 13:32; John 7:20; 8:48–49, 52; 10:20–21; Acts 17:18; 1 Cor 10:20–21; 1 Tim 4:1; Jas 2:19; Rev 9:20; 16:14; 18:2
Demons   <i>sed</i>	Deut 32:17; Ps 106:37
Destruction   <i>qeteb</i>	Deut 32:24; Ps 91:6; Isa 28:2; Hos 13:14
Devil   <i>diabolos</i>	Matt 4:1, 5, 8, 11; 13:39; 25:41; Luke 4:2–3, 5, 13; 8:12; John 6:70; 8:44; 13:2; Acts 10:38; 13:10; Eph 4:27; 6:11; 1 Tim 3:6–7, 11; 2 Tim 2:26; 3:3; Titus 2:3; Heb 2:14; Jas 4:7; 1 Pet 5:8; 1 John 3:8, 10; Jude 9; Rev 2:10; 12:9, 12; 20:2, 10
dragon   <i>drakon</i>	Rev 12:3–4, 7, 9, 13, 16–17; 13:2, 4, 11; 16:13; 20:2
Dragon   <i>tannin</i>	Gen 1:21; Exod 7:9–10, 12; Deut 32:33; Job 7:12; Pss 74:13; 91:13; 148:7; Isa 27:1; 51:9; Jer 51:34; Ezek 29:3; 32:2
Elemental spirits   <i>stoicheion</i>	Gal 4:3, 9; Col 2:8, 20; Heb 5:12; 2 Pet 3:10, 12
Goat demons   <i>seirim</i>	Lev 17:7; 2 Chron 11:15; Isa 13:21; 34:14
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ABSTRACT

TESTING THE SPIRITS:  
A BIBLICAL ASSESSMENT OF THE ISLAMIC JIBRIL

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The purpose of this dissertation is to assess the nature and character of the Islamic representations of Jibril by means of biblically derived criteria for identifying spiritual beings and by comparing the representations of the Islamic Jibril with the representations of the biblical Gabriel. Gabriel is one of two angels named in canonical Scripture. He stands in God's presence and serves as God's messenger. He is only mentioned by name in the book of Daniel and the Gospel of Luke. Similarly, Jibril serves a vital role in Islam. Muhammed is believed traditionally to have received the words contained in the Qur'an by means of Jibril's dictation. The origin and allegiance of this spiritual being is significant for both Christianity and Islam. While the biblical narratives supply readers with multiple instances, few texts give thorough investigation regarding spiritual beings' origins, roles, personalities, and specific behaviors. Taken individually, these descriptions do not provide the reader with a comprehensive understanding about spiritual beings; however, if these instances are examined in conjunction with one another and properly analyzed, they provide a paradigm by which one can compare and contrast spiritual beings outside Scripture in hopes of determining a specific spiritual being's identity, allegiance, and purpose.

The purpose of this data analysis research was to develop a biblical instrument for identifying spiritual beings (BIISB), in particular the angel Gabriel (Jibril), as revealed in both biblical and select Islamic texts. The data extrapolated through this research

method was used to infer specific character traits, behavioral qualities, and informational themes that are consistent with angelic beings in both the Old and New Testaments. The inferred qualifications were then used to assess texts specifically discussing Gabriel from both traditions. Gabriel and Jibril were analyzed through textual comparative analysis. While the figures shared multiple qualitative similarities, the comparison also revealed noticeable qualitative disparities between them as well. Based upon the critical analysis provided by the biblical instrument for identifying spiritual beings and the thorough comparison of Gabriel and Jibril, the apparent dissimilarities displayed by these two figures are irreconcilable. Jibril's embodiment of non-angelic qualities coupled with the stark contrast of his message do not coincide with the descriptions of the biblical Gabriel or the content of his messages.

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