

April 15, 2018 AM
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***THE LETTER TO THE HEBREWS:
2. “The Ministry of Jesus and the Angels of God”
Hebrews 1:4 – 14***

Introduction:

This morning we reengage in our study of the Letter to the Hebrew Christians. This study is a paragraph by paragraph walk through this amazing letter. The author writes with deep love and passionate heart-cry to a people who were in danger of **Falling Away** from their sincere devotion to **Know** and **Follow** Jesus in life!

The writer seeks to enable the reader to see the powerful truth that everything that matters in our salvation is seen in and done by Jesus on our behalf. The saving action of God Almighty in the human heart, soul, and spirit made alive, always **Originates** in **Heaven** and is always in and through who Jesus is and what He has done on our behalf!

What these Christians were doing was walking the dangerous path of bringing their salvation experience into the human arena and what they had done and were doing for God. They were perilously close to falling away from their sincere faith relationship with Jesus Christ, precisely because they were focusing on their works and deeds for God as the proof of their salvation.

The Hebrew author again and again points them back to the **Superiority** of the **Ministry** of Jesus Christ for us and our acceptance of His work on the Cross on our behalf as the foundation stone of our salvation. He has one primary truth on his heart and mind as he writes: What we do for God in works and deeds is always a result of our having opened our hearts to receive the ministry of the Holy Spirit within us, making very personal what Jesus has done for us on the Cross!

The proof of our salvation is that we are invaded by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. His nature takes up residence in our hearts. His nature is holy, self-emptying, other-oriented love, a love that desires to know the heart and mind of God in Christ Jesus! Our good deeds are not proof of our salvation unless they are deeply **Rooted** in and **Compelled** by God’s **Love** poured out in our hearts and lives by the indwelling Holy Spirit!

II Corinthians 5:14, 15 “For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore, all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.”

When we reduce our salvation experience to what we are doing in the human arena we get into the shaky ground and murky waters of our **Human Religious Effort** to please God once we have been redeemed. It is as though we are saying to Jesus: “Thank you so much for saving me, Lord Jesus! Now I can pretty much take it from here!” That is precisely what these Hebrew Christians were doing and it broke our author’s heart to see what was happening to their earlier sincere devotion to know and follow Jesus. They were focusing on their efforts at getting it all together for God and that focus created a danger to them.

It could lead the astray from the simplicity and the superiority of what Jesus had done and desired to do in them. They were becoming self-important, and had begun to supplement what Jesus did on the Cross. They were living “**Jesus And**” something else. In their case it was: Jesus and the prophets, Jesus and angels, Jesus and Moses, Jesus and the Law, Jesus and the Priesthood, Jesus and the sacrificial system.

This letter is written by a man of God who knew the Old Testament Scriptures extremely well. The author was also thoroughly trained in the Levitical Priesthood and sacrificial system. He has key thoughts guiding his mind and key texts he quotes from memory as he writes. He has keen awareness of how completely Jesus Christ had fulfilled the Levitical demands of the Law!

It is written as a **Word** of **Encouragement**, and exhortation of the heart to remove the add-ons to what Jesus Christ had done, is doing, and will do through His “once-and-for-all” sacrifice for sins! The author will brilliantly argue that who Jesus and is and what He has done for us is superior and sufficient to all add-ons! He will use the Greek word “kraitton” rendered “better or superior” depending on the version you are reading thirteen times!

There are two key texts in the Letter to the Hebrews that we will want to have in our thinking as we study this great book of the Bible:

Hebrews 4:14 – 16 *“Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”*

Hebrews 10:19 – 22 *“Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is his body, and since we have a great high priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.”*

As we study this great book what God has on His heart for us at Cedar Grove is to fix our eyes on Jesus, to remain rooted and founded in our need to **Know** His **Saving Works**! This is not just our initial salvation experience, which is being forgiven of sins and washed in the blood of Jesus, but is also being set free from the dominion of fleshly, selfish desires.

It is in the heart of God that you and I will stay centered in and focused on the superior ministry of Jesus on our behalf. The Spirit of God desires to take us deeper in spiritual insight and understanding of just who Jesus really is and the profound and powerful nature of what the Son of God was providing for us on the Cross!

I. The Ministry of the Angels:

Hebrews 1:7 *“In speaking of the angels he says, ‘He makes his angels winds, his servants flames of fire.’”*

Hebrews 1:14 *“are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?”*

The author began his letter by telling the readers the simple truth that Jesus is the Son of God, and that the revelation of who God is and what God is doing Jesus brought to the earth is far superior to anything the Old Testament prophets had ever been able to communicate. As great as their ministry was, hearing the voice of God and speaking as a mouthpiece for God to a nation that had gone astray, Jesus is the Son of God in humanity and as such He speaks the very Word of God, the Counsel of the Most High God.

Let’s read again what the author says about Jesus in comparison to the voice of the prophets: *“In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.”*

Then the author jumps right in to the second “Jesus and something else” thought process of his readers. He says Jesus is far superior to the angels of God in every way. Apparently some of them had gotten pretty far off base in thinking that if they had **Encounters** with **Angels** that placed them on some special level of spirituality, making them better than others who had not had an encounter with the angels.

In order to understand better the angels of God and what our Hebrew author wants us to see let’s look at what the Bible teaches us about who angels are and what they do. In these two verses of Scripture we are studying here, the author tells us two things about them: They are God’s **Ministering Servants** and the Lord sends them to **Serve People** who will become the sons and daughters of God!

The angels of God are given the **Task** of **Watching Over** the people of God who are in Christ Jesus. Look at all of the things in the Bible angels of God are said to watch over as God acts in history to create His great plan of salvation:

They were there watching over **Creation**, Job 38:4 – 7 is the record of God speaking in person to Job. *“Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation? ... On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone – when the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?”*

They were there watching over the giving of the **Mosaic Law**, Galatians 3:19b *“The law was put into effect through angels by a mediator.”* Hebrews 2:2, 3a *“For if the message spoken by angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment, how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation?”*

They were there watching over the **Incarnation** of Jesus Christ, I Timothy 3:16 *“Beyond all question the mystery of godliness is great: He appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up to glory.”*

They were there watching over the **Birth** of Jesus Christ, Luke 2:9 – 11 *“An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.’”*

They watched over **Mary** and **Joseph** as they raised Jesus, Matthew 2:13 *“When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. ‘Get up,’ he said, ‘take the child and his mother to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.’”*

They watched over the **Temptation** of Jesus, Matthew 4:11 *“Then the devil left him and angels came and attended to him.”*

They watched over the **Resurrection** of Jesus, Matthew 28:2 *“There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men. The angel said to the women, ‘Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay.’”*

There are two holy angels named in the Bible Gabriel and Michael, who are said to have access to the very throne of God the Father and of the Lamb. They are said to **Stand** in the **Presence** of God, signifying their readiness to spring into action and carry out the will of God on earth with speed and finality.

The angel Gabriel speaks to the priest Zechariah, in Luke 1:19, 20 *“I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news. And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their proper time.”*

And one angel named who fell from his place in heaven, Lucifer, Satan, the Devil, the Adversary, who was at one time a high ranking angel and who was lifted up with pride and self-will, and who rebelled against the will of God, creating the spiritual warfare every son and daughter of God in Christ Jesus faces in this world today.

Isaiah 14:12 – 15 *“How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: ‘I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.’ Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, to the lowest depths of the Pit.”*

II. The Ministry of Angels of God to Us Today:

Hebrews 1:14 *“are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?”* Hebrews 13:2 *“Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it.”*

It is really important that we understand the Biblical truth about the ministry of angels of God in our lives today. Just because we can't always see them with our physical eyesight does not mean they do not exist! I believe what the Scriptures are a **Revelation** of the **Truth** of God. So when the Bible speaks to us regarding the holy angels of God we should receive that truth. They are all around us and, sometimes while carrying out the will of the Father and the Son on earth, they manifest in the physical realm.

For example Luke tells his readers that at the birth of Jesus the angels who were there attending to His birth made themselves **Manifest** so the shepherds could **See** them and **Hear** them:

Luke 2:9, 10 *“An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.’”*

Luke 2:13, 14 *“Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.’”*

The Lord Jesus himself told us the truth that God **Assigns** angels to do exactly what the Hebrew author says they do in this verse of Scripture: They are ministering spirits **Sent** to **Serve** the sons and daughters of God.

Matthew 18:10 *“See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven.”*

Remember the story of Peter who was being held in prison in Jerusalem and was going to be executed the very next day. Luke records that the church of Jesus was earnestly praying for him in Acts 12:5. Peter got a holy interruption from an angel of the Lord sent to set him free, to protect him, and deliver him.

Acts 12:7 – 10 *“Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him up. ‘Quick, get up!’ he said, and the chains fell off of his wrists. Then the angel said to him, ‘Put on your clothes and sandals.’ And Peter did so. ‘Wrap your cloak around you and follow me,’ the angel told him. Peter followed him out of the prison, but he had no idea that what the angel was doing was really happening; he thought he was seeing a vision. They passed the first and second guards and came to the iron gate leading out of the city. It opened by itself, and they went through it. When they had walked the length of one street, suddenly the angel left him.”*

Raina and I have one memory that is as vivid today as it was the night it happened. We were youth pastoral couple here. Our sons were four, Sam and two and one half, Danny. Danny was the typical two year old boy, head-strong, and out to prove what all he could do for himself. We were shopping for Christmas presents at Sears in the Capital City Mall after a day at Messiah College attending class with dad.

My job was to watch the two boys while Raina picked out gifts. I was trying to watch these two little guys but they kept getting away from me by crawling under racks of clothing. Suddenly, I

was aware I could not find Danny. I started to call out his name loudly. I turned around and a blond young man, about 6' 6" wearing a brown winter coat had Danny on his right shoulder as he walked into Sears. He smiled and said, "I found this guy headed down the mall crying." I swept him up in my arms and when I turned back to thank the man in the brown jacket he was gone! I am convinced we got a physical visit from Danny's angel protecting him.

III. The Superiority of the Ministry of Jesus:

Hebrews 1:4 – 6 *"So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs. For to which of the angels did God ever say, 'You are my Son; today I have become your Father?' Or again, 'I will be his Father, and he will be my Son?' And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says, 'Let all God's angels worship him.'"*

Hebrews 1:13 *"To which of the angels did God ever say, 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet?'"*

The Hebrew author talks about the ministry of angels and it is wonderful to know what the Bible teaches about their ministry on our behalf. But there is one specific **Danger** that these Hebrew Christians were perilously close to experiencing. They could begin to think that angels were another mediary between the believer and the Lord God.

The One **Mediator** between God and human beings is the Lord Jesus Christ who took our sins and put them to death for us on the Cross. The One mediary act is the human suffering of Jesus the Son of God. Paul spelled this out to Timothy his son in the faith, I Timothy 2:5, 6 *"For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men – the testimony given in its proper time."*

To substantiate his point about the superiority of the ministry of Jesus our Lord the author quotes seven Old Testament passages of Scripture, making some very clear points about how much superior is the ministry of Jesus to the ministry of angels on our behalf.

1. The superiority of Jesus' **Relationship** with the Father God. To substantiate his point the author quotes from Psalm 2:7 *"You are my Son; today I have become your Father."*
2. The superiority of Jesus as the **Creator** of all that is, the Word of God from eternity through whom all things were made. To substantiate his point he quotes Psalm 102:25 – 27.
3. The superiority of **Ministry** to the ministry of angels. To substantiate his point he quotes from memory Psalm 45:6, 7. He makes the point that only Jesus could do what was necessary to live a righteous life and make it possible for human beings to be made righteous.
4. The superiority of Jesus' essence as a **Person**, Son of God by His **Divine Nature**! To substantiate his point he quotes from Psalm 90:2 *"But you remain the same and your years will never end."*

The author will tell us again and again! Remove all the add-ons to Jesus! Fix your eyes on Jesus! There is only Name and one way by which we may be saved! It is in and through the ministry of Jesus!

THE LETTER TO THE HEBREWS:
2. "The Ministry of Jesus and the Angels of God"
Hebrews 1:4 – 14

Introduction:

We're studying the Book of Hebrews this morning! The author writes with deep love and heart-cry to a people who were in danger of **F**_____ **A**_____ from their sincere early devotion to know and follow Jesus.

He writes to enable people to see and understand the truth that the saving action of God done by Jesus for us all **O**_____ in **H**_____ in the heart of God.

He points the readers to the **S**_____ of the **M**_____ of Jesus.

Our good deeds must be rooted in the Holy Spirit pouring out His love into our hearts. It's always about being **C**_____ to obey Him by **L**_____. II Corinthians 5:14, 15

When we reduce our salvation to what we are doing we get on the shaky ground of **H**_____ **R**_____ effort!

These Hebrew Christians were becoming self-important, supplementing what Jesus did for them on the Cross: A "**J**_____ **A**_____" something else mentality.

The author writes as a **W**_____ of **E**_____ and exhortation to his readers to follow Jesus.

There are two key texts in the letter: Hebrews 4:14 – 16 and 10:19 – 22

As we study this great work, the Lord wants us all to fix our eyes on Jesus, to stay rooted and founded in our need to **K**_____ His **S**_____ **W**_____.

I. The Ministry of the Angels of God: Hebrews 1:7 and 14

The author began by telling his readers Jesus is the revelation of God and what He came to tell us and show us about God is far superior to the revelation the Lord spoke through the prophets.

Then he jumps right in to his second "Jesus and something else" thought: Jesus is far superior to the angels in every way. Some of his readers got off base thinking if they had **E**_____ with **A**_____, that experience made them superior to others.

He makes two statements about angels: They are **M**_____ spirits sent to **S**_____ **P**_____ who would be redeemed. They have the task of watching over people:

- They watched over the **C**_____ Job 38:4 – 7
- They watched over the giving of the **M**_____ **L**_____. Galatians 3:19b
- They watched over the **I**_____ of Jesus Christ. I Tim. 3:16
- They watched over the **B**_____ of Jesus, Luke 2:9 – 11
- They watched over Mary and Joseph as they **R**_____ Jesus.
- They watched over the **T**_____ of Jesus, Matthew 4:11
- They watched over the **R**_____ of Jesus, Matthew 28:2 – 4

There are two holy angels named in the Scriptures; Gabriel and Michael. They are said to **S**_____ in the very **P**_____ of God. And there is one fallen, unholy angel, named in the Bible; Lucifer. Isaiah 14:12 – 15

II. The Ministry of Angels of God Today: Hebrews 1:14 and 13:2

The Bible is a written revelation of the **T**_____ of God to us. So when the Bible speaks about angels we should receive the teaching!

Luke tells us at the birth of Jesus Christ angels of God made themselves **M**_____ so the shepherds could **S**_____ and **H**_____ them. Luke 2:9, 10 and 13, 14

Jesus told us God **A**_____ angels to be ministering spirits **S**_____ to **S**_____ the children of God, Matthew 18:10.

Remember the story of Peter being held in prison in Jerusalem and Herod was going to execute him the next day. Acts 12:5 – 10 (selected)

Raina and I have a vivid memory of a holy interference in our lives while Christmas shopping in 1980 at Sears in the Capital City Mall.

III. The Superiority of the Ministry of Jesus: Hebrews 1:4 – 6 and 13

The author says there is one specific **D**_____ to avoid.

There is only one **M**_____ between God and humankind, Jesus. I Timothy 2:5, 6

He tells us Jesus is superior to the angels in terms of His **R**_____ with His Father God, Psalm 2:7 ... As **C**_____ of everything that exists, Psalm 102:25 – 27 ... His **M**_____ of redeeming love is far superior to the ministry of angels, Psalm 45:6, 7 ... and in His essential **P**_____, His **D**_____ **N**_____ as Son of God, Psalm 90:2

He tells his readers; remove the “add-ons to Jesus” and fix our eyes on Him.

Discussion Starter Questions for Home Groups

1. The Book of Hebrews is written to address the issue of falling away from our walk with Jesus by faith. Can you name some things that lead to falling away?
2. What do you think about the truth that our obedience must always be as a result of the Holy Spirit motivating us with His love poured out in our hearts?
3. Why do you think people tend to make their/our salvation experience with Jesus about “Jesus and something else?”
4. Do you agree that the Bible teaches us about the role of or ministry of angels to us as believers? Why do you think people tend to downplay angels working in our lives today?
5. The Bible teaches us angels have a role of “watching over” the will of God on earth. What does knowing that truth do to your heart and mind?
6. In the message we learned there are two named angels who stand in the very presence of God. What is the significance of them standing in God’s presence?
7. In the message we ended by looking at the superiority of Jesus to the angels. The author tells us Jesus is superior in a variety of ways, and uses Old Testament Scriptures to validate his point. Which ones touched your heart? Why?
8. Read together aloud Peter’s deliverance from Herod’s clutches by an angel of the Lord, Acts 12:1 – 19 and discuss insights you have regarding things that stand out to you in that story.
9. Read together aloud Job 1:6 – 13 and 2:1 - 8 and discuss insights you have from things that stand out to you in that text about the meeting of angels with God.
10. Do you believe what the Bible teaches us about angels? Do you believe the angels of God watch over us today? Have you ever had an experience that made you think you got an angelic interference? Can you share it with your group?