

THE ANGELS OF THE LORD: THE SERVANTS OF THE SON AND THE SAVED

Hebrews 1:

INTRODUCTION:

Angels played a prominent part in God's revelation to man in the Old Testament. They were used regularly to bring important messages to individuals and to the people of God as a whole. It was the understanding of the Old Testament people that angels had been used in giving the law to Moses. Because of this prominent place that angels played in God's revelation, there developed a lot of ideas among the people of God about angels. Most of these ideas were based on human speculation and not upon divine revelation.

The writer of Hebrews has as his purpose to demonstrate the superiority of Jesus Christ over all of the Old Testament order. He begins his presentation by demonstrating that Jesus Christ is superior to the angels. It is his thesis that angels are actually the servants of Jesus Christ and the servants of the people that Jesus Christ is in the process of saving. The writer gives us a very detailed statement with seven quotations from the Old Testament to demonstrate that the angels of the Lord are actually the servants of the Son and of the saved.

Much of the popular literature in our day concerning angels misses this point. If the books you pick up to read concerning the angels does not clearly state that the angels are actually servants of Jesus Christ and of His people, then you should read them with extreme caution. Many of the popular books actually claim that angels are intermediaries between us and God. With this contention they are actually putting angels in the place that belongs to Jesus Christ alone. We Christians should be jealous for the place of honor that belongs to Jesus - it should never be

surrendered to even an angel.

I. THE ANGELS OF THE LORD ARE THE SERVANTS OF THE SON.

This is where the writer of Hebrews begins. After he has given the seven fold exalted positions that belongs to the Son, he says, "So He became as much superior to the angels as the name He has inherited is superior to theirs." He then gives us seven Old Testament quotations that demonstrate how the Son is superior to the angels. The bottom line in this superiority is that the angels are actually the servants of the Son. There are a number of ways that this particular passage could be developed but lets just look at it in a brief overview form to see how the angels of the Lord are the servants of the Son.

1. They serve the Son because of His unique relationship to the Father.

The writer quotes from the Psalm that says, "You are my Son, today I have become your father." And then he adds the quotation, "I will be His father and He will be my Son." Even though these words were originally spoken of Solomon the ultimate fulfillment is in this descendent of Solomon, even the Lord Jesus. Angels are a special created order of servants, but Jesus is the eternal Son of God. He is the one who has the relationship with the whole world of the first born." This means that He has the position of priority and Lordship over all of the creation.

2. The angels are to serve the Son through their worship.

The writer of Hebrews quotes again from the Old Testament. "Let all of God's angels worship Him." It is the calling of the angels to give to the Son worship. They minister to the exalted Son of God worship day and night for all of eternity. He adds, "In speaking of the angels, He makes His angels winds, his servants flames of fire."

3. The angels serve the Son because He is the enthroned Lord of the universe.

The writer of Hebrews quotes again from the book of Psalms. "But about the Son He says your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever and righteous will be the scepter of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy." The writer of Hebrews does not hesitate to give to Jesus the Son of God the title of God Himself. He interprets the passage from the Psalm that addresses God as being addressed as the Son of God. Jesus, the Son has the right to the throne and has been so seated on the throne of God. It is the role of angels not to sit on the throne but to serve the one who sits on the throne. Angels are the servants of the Son. .

4. The angels serve the Son because of His unique nature.

In the next quotation from the Psalms the writer points to the unique nature of the Son.

"In the beginning, O Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. You will roll them up like a robe; like a garment they will be changed. But you remain the same, and your years will never end." This is another passage that speaks of God that the writer of Hebrews comfortably interprets as referring to the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. The passage claims that as the Son He has the same character of God in His eternity and His immutability. While He is the source of the created order that is constantly going through change, He is over that created order as the one who remains the same and your years will never end." The angels are the servants of the Son.

5. The angels serve the Son because of the promise He has received.

"To which of the angels did God ever say, "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet?" This promise again taken from the Psalms is seen as given to the Lord Jesus Himself. As the Son He has received the promise from the Father that every enemy will be made His footstool. He has been instructed to sit at the right hand of the Father and to wait patiently for that day when every enemy shall be subdued and His kingdom shall triumph. The writer claims that no promise like that has ever been given to an angel. In fact, when we study the scriptures we cannot find any promise that has been given to the angels. The angels are simply and only spiritual beings created to serve the Son. They render to the Son worship and service as it will please Him. They are to be seen as the servants of the Son.

II. THE ANGELS OF THE LORD ARE THE SERVANTS OF THE SAVED.

The writer closes this great chapter in which He has set forth the superiority of the Son to the angels by making a bold statement about the relationship that the angels have to the saved. He makes the statement in the form of a question, "Are not all angles ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?" This is one of the most helpful statements found in all of scriptures concerning the roles of the angels.

Lets look at this statement in some detail for a moment. You will notice first that the statement refers to "all angels." While there are indications in scriptures that there may be different orders of angels, "This statement is inclusive of all of those orders. Whether it be archangels or any other order of angels, they are all included in this statement that says their role is to be ministering spirits.

The second word in this statement that would bear our study is the word "spirits." This is a reminder to us that the angels are spiritual beings. This does not question the reality of their being, nor put them in some kind of ghost like category, but it simply means that they are not of the human order where the body is a basic part of our being. They are spirits. But they are spirits who have as their purpose "ministering." This word translated "ministering" is used in the New Testament for priestly kind of ministry as well as expressions of practical ministry. Ordinarily the word is used however when what ever is being done is being done with reference to God. The point would be in this statement that the angels have as their assignment to look after the needs of the saints. This is the way they serve the purposes of God.

Another term in this passage that needs some exploration is the word "serve." The word is the translation of the same word from which we get our word deacon. It refers to a practical kind of service that one renders to another. The service that the angels perform is of a practical nature. They look after practical and personal needs in the life of those they serve. Those that they are to serve are identified as "those who will inherit salvation." Salvation is used here in that comprehensive sense. It includes the whole of God's saving activity on the part of His people. The focus in this particular context is probably upon the future consummation of God's saving work at the second coming of the Lord Jesus. Those that God is in the process of saving and has the intention of finally saving at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ are the objects of this priestly ministry on the part of the angels of God.

Our concern at this point is probably as to what form this ministry may take in our day. What do the angels do for God's people in our day?

1. They provide protection.

As you read the Acts of the Apostle and the Epistles it is obvious that angels still have the task of providing protection for the people of God. They did this in the Old Testament as the servant of Elisha discovered in that confrontation with the enemies of Israel at Dothen. You will remember that when Elisha asked the Lord to open the eyes of His servant that he was allowed to see a whole army of angels that were all around Him and Elisha. This has not changed. Those who God is in the process of saving are under angelic protection. Paul experienced this protection on more than one occasion in his life. Doubtlessly most of us in this room who know the Lord Jesus as Savior have experienced such protection on more than one occasion, whether we were aware of it or not.

2. They bring provisions.

It might be helpful to remember how the angels ministered to the Lord Jesus during the days of His earthly ministry. There are two references to angels ministering to Jesus. They both involve them ministering to Him physically at a particular point of need in his life. The first occasion was after the 40 days of fasting and the intense spiritual battle with Satan in the wilderness. The gospel writers simply report that the angels ministered to Him. What does this mean? It could mean they brought Him a nourishing meal to eat after the battle was over. They did this for God's profits in the Old Testament so why should they not do it for God's Son in the New Testament. The second instance of our Lord receiving angelic ministry was after his agonizing prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. He was so wrung out from that experience that God sent angels to minister to Him. I do not know what form the ministry took on that occasion. We only know that it served the purpose of strengthening him for the ordeal that was just ahead.

As those who are numbered among the heirs of salvation, we have every right to expect that the angels of God will so minister to us. If there is some point of need for which there is no human resource, our heavenly Father is not limited to earthly resources in meeting the needs of His people. He has a whole company of spiritual beings which will move at the least word from Him to bring what ever may be needed for that child of God at that particular point of need. However, this does not mean that we look to the angels for the provision that we need. But instead we look to the one that the angels serve. They are the servants of God with the assignment of meeting the needs of those that are the heirs of salvation.

So, we can see that angels are not the object of our worship, rather Jesus is the object of our worship. Angels are not the object of our trust, God is the object of our trust. Angels are not the focus of our attention in the Christian life. Jesus is the focus of our attention in the Christian life. Angels are the servants of the savior - Son and the servant of those of us who are the heirs of salvation. So, thank God for what Jesus has done and for what God does for us through His angels. Let us worship and serve the Son who is served and worshiped by the angels.