

Ministering Spirits

Introduction.

I. This lesson is entitled “Ministering Spirits.”

II. This title is taken from Hebrews the 1st chapter.

A. The purpose of this magnificent chapter is to show that Jesus is **far superior to the angels**.

1. Men are greater than the lower creation and are made in God’s image. (Gen. 1:26-30; Psa. 8:6-8).

2. Angels are greater than men. (Psa. 8:4,5).

PSA 8:4 What is man, that Thou dost take thought of him? And the son of man, that Thou dost care for him?
 PSA 8:5 Yet Thou hast made him a little lower than God, And dost crown him with glory and majesty!

a. Angels are not flesh.

b. They are not subject to death as men are. (Lk. 20:36).

3. They are, however, greatly inferior to Jesus.

B. The Hebrew writer uses a number of arguments to prove Jesus is superior.

1. First, the Hebrew writer shows it is Jesus, not angels, who is **seated at the right hand of God**. (Heb. 1:1-4).

HEB 1:1 God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways,
 HEB 1:2 in these last days has spoken to us in **His Son**, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.

HEB 1:3 And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high;
 HEB 1:4 having become as much better than the angels, as **He has inherited a more excellent name than they**.

<p>“in these last days has spoken to us in His Son” Jn. 17:5</p>	<p>“ through whom also He made the world” He created the whole universe. See Col. 1:16-18</p>	<p>“ He had made purification of sins” Heb. 9:14 - He is our Redeemer and High Priest.</p>
<p>“whom He appointed heir of all things” Psa. 2:8</p>	<p>“He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature” Col. 1:15; Jn. 10:30; 14:9; Phil. 2:5-7. - He is exactly like His Father in all His infinite attributes.</p>	<p>“He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high” “Right hand” is highest place of honor. “Majesty on high” is periphrasis for “God.” (Eph. 4:10; Phil. 2:9).</p>
	<p>“upholds all things by the word of His power” - This probably has the idea of His mighty word.</p>	

a. The Hebrew writer says, “having become as much better than the angels.”

1) Jesus has always been superior to the angels. He is Deity.

2). For a short time He was lower than the angels because He was flesh and subject to death.

HEB 2:9 But we do see Him who has been made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone.

b. He then adds “**He has inherited a more excellent name than they.**” (Heb.1:4).

1) The “more excellent name” the writer has in mind are the words “My Son” and “God.” (Heb. 1:5, 8).

2) Paul used similar language in Philippians 2:9.

PHI 2:9 Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, PHI 2:10 that **at the name of Jesus** every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, PHI 2:11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The name “Jesus” is the name above every name.

The name “Jesus” stands for the Person of Christ. Whether you call Him “Jesus, Savior, Redeemer, Christ, Immanuel, King, Lord, etc. He is above all.

He was given this name, Jesus, prior to His birth. (Matt. 1:21). God planned to save man through Jesus “before the foundation of the world.” (Eph. 1:3, 4).

Note:

- The word “inherited” does not mean He did not have the name before His exaltation.
- Christ is God’s eternal Son. (Heb. 1:2; 5:8, 9; Gal. 4:4; Lk. 1:32). He is Deity. (Jn. 1:1; Isa. 9:6,7).
- “Son” does not mean the “Father” was before the “Son,” but it denotes the close relationship between these two members of the Godhead. Both have always existed. Both have the same infinite attributes.

2. Second, the Hebrew writer affirms that **unique language is used of Jesus**, not the angels.

HEB 1:5 For to which of the angels did He ever say, "Thou art My Son, Today I have begotten Thee"? And again, "I will be a Father to Him And He shall be a Son to Me"?

a. This statement is taken from the 2nd Psalm - a Messianic psalm.

PSA 2:7 "I will surely tell of the decree of the Lord [God]: He [God] said to Me [Jesus], 'Thou art My Son, Today I have begotten Thee.'"

b. This language was used of God’s beloved Son.

c. It most probably refers to **Jesus coming forth from the grave** rather than His birth .

d. It also refers to His coronation upon arriving back to heaven.

e. We can only imagine how excited heaven was when Christ arrived back in heaven and was exalted at the right hand of God as “the Lord of lords and the King of kings.”

- 1) Jesus was now the Supreme Ruler of the universe. (Matt. 28:18). See chart below.
- 2) He had made atonement for all who submit to Him in faith and obedience.
- 3) They rejoice when just one sinner repents (Lk. 15:10), and consequently since all men have the potential to be saved would create enormous excitement among the angels who work for the good of mankind.

<p>LUK 1:35 And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy offspring shall be called the Son of God.</p>	<p>COL 1:18 He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; so that He Himself might come to have first place in everything.</p>	<p>REV 1:5 and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us, and released us from our sins by His blood,</p>
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d. "I will be a Father to Him And He shall be Son to Me" - 2 Sam. 7:14.

- 1) The words were originally spoken to Solomon who would be permitted to build the house of God.
- 2) The words not only applied to God and Solomon, but they also applied to God and Christ.

3. Third, the Hebrew writer assert that **angels worshiped Jesus.**

HEB 1:6 And when He again brings the first-born into the world, He says, "And let all the angels of God worship Him."

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The word "again" most likely should be translated after "And" and refers to this new quotation from the Old Testament "And again when He brings the first-born into the world, He says...." • It denotes a further quotation setting forth the prominence and preeminence of Christ. |
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Note:

- The language does not likely refer to the incarnation or 2nd coming.
- It likely refers to His exaltation and enthronement as sovereign over the inhabited universe.

<p>See Psa. 97:7 Let all those be ashamed who serve graven images, Who boast themselves of idols; Worship Him, all you gods [elohim].</p>

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heb. "elohim" can mean "gods" or "angels." • The Septuagint uses the Greek "angeloi" to translate "elohim." • The Hebrew writer follows the Septuagint and uses "angeloi" "angels." • He informs us that Psalms 8 should be translated "a little lower than the angels." |
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a. "First-born" refers to Christ. (Col. 1:18; Rev. 1:5).

b. The “first-born” is one who enjoys special privileges and honors.

1) Jesus was first-born because He was **before creation** and is **pre-eminent over creation**. (Col. 1:15-17).

2) He is also the first to be raised from the dead who did not die again. All others had to die again.

3) He is the guarantee of our resurrection from the dead. (1 Cor. 15:20-23).

c. The words “brings the first-born into the world” refers to His resurrection.

d. The point is that angels worship Jesus manifesting His supremacy over them.

4. Fourth , the Hebrew writers gives a **description of angels**.

HEB 1:7 And of the angels He says, "Who makes His angels winds, And His ministers a flame of fire." See Psa. 104:4.

⁷ And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire KJV	In speaking of the angels he says, "He makes his angels winds, his servants flames of fire." NIV	Of the angels he says, "He makes his angels winds, and his ministers a flame of fire." ESV
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a. The Greek “pneuma” [pnoo’ ma] can mean either “wind” or “spirit”.

b. The idea may be that angels are **as swift and strong as winds** and can be **as destructive as “flames of fire.”**

c. **Bruce:** “It may be that the angels are portrayed as executing the divine commands with the swiftness of wind and the strength of fire.”

5. Fifth, the Hebrew writer **gives the exalted language used in reference to the Son**.

Picture of Christ’s Coronation

HEB 1:8 But of the Son He says, "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever, And the righteous scepter is the scepter [emblem of royal authority] of His kingdom. HEB 1:9 "Thou hast loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; Therefore God, Thy God, hath anointed Thee With the oil of gladness above Thy companions."	PSA 45:7 Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated wickedness; Therefore God, Thy God, has anointed Thee With the oil of joy above Thy fellows. “Companions” or “fellows” may mean all who hold the kingly office or above all others.
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a. **Note:** Angels were called “sons of God” (Job 1:6; 2:1; 33:7), but never “My Son” or “the Son of God.”

b. It is Jesus who is called “God.” (Jn. 1:1; Matt. 1:23; Col. 1:15-17; 2:9).

c. It is Jesus who reigns “forever and ever.” See Dan. 2:44; Lk. 1:33.

d. It is Jesus who has been anointed “with the oil of gladness above Thy companions.”

e. Hebrews 1:8 does not have double meaning.

1) It refers to Christ and was not true of Solomon.

2) Solomon was not “God” and he did not reign forever.

6. Sixth, the Hebrew writer shows the “Son” created the heavens and earth.

HEB 1:10 And, "Thou, Lord, in the beginning didst lay the foundation of the earth, And the heavens are the works of Thy hands; See Psa. 103:25 - Words true of God and Christ.

a. The word “Lord” is here used of Christ.

b. See Jn. 1:1-3; 1 Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:15-17; Heb. 1:2; Rev. 3:15

7. Seventh, the Hebrew writer shows Jesus will not have an end, but creation will end.

HEB 1:11 They will perish, but Thou remainest; And they all will become old as a garment, See 2 Pet. 3:10

HEB 1:12 And as a mantle Thou wilt roll them up; As a garment they will also be changed. But Thou art the same, And Thy years will not come to an end [cease]. " They will be exchanged for the new heaven and new earth. (2 Pet. 3:13).

8. Eighth, again the Hebrew writer uses **exalted language in regard to Christ.**

HEB 1:13 But to which of the angels has He [God] ever said, "[My Son] Sit [reign] at My right hand, Until I make Thine enemies A footstool for Thy feet"? Psa. 110:1-5; Acts 2:34, 35; 1 Cor. 15:24-27.

9. Ninth, the Hebrew writer states **one function of angels.**

HEB 1:14 Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation? Salvation has a eschatological meaning.

ROM 13:11 And this do, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed.

1PE 1:5 who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

I. **Angels Are Ministering Spirits** (Heb. 1:14). See above.

A. The Hebrew writer emphatically affirms that angels are “ministering spirits.”

1. They are created beings. (Psa. 148:2, 5).

2. They are great, but do not even begin to compare to Jesus [the Son of God.]

3. They have been appointed to “render service.”

a. They have always rendered service to God.

b. They also “render service” to man.

B. He clearly affirms to whom they minister.

1. They minister to the "heirs of salvation."
2. In Christian age this is Christians - those who trust in Christ.
3. It refers to those who have been saved by grace and have been baptized into Christ. (Eph. 2:8, 9; Mk. 16:16; Gal. 3:26, 27).

II. How Do Angels Minister To Christians?

A. The Bible does not say.

1. There is no evidence that angels use miracles to minister to believers.
2. The Bible teaches us that miracles have ceased. (1 Cor. 13:8-10).

B. Here are some non-miraculous ways angels may help Christians.

1. God helps us **overcome temptation**. (1 Cor. 10:13).
 - a. He may use His angels.
 - b. God helps us when we draw near to Him, and resist the devil. (Jas. 4:7, 8).
2. God **answers our prayers**. (1 Jn. 5:14,15).
 - a. No one knows exactly how God answers our prayers.
 - b. He may use His angels or answer our prayers in any way He chooses.
3. God **disciplines** Christians. (Heb. 12:5-11).
 - a. God may do this personally.
 - b. He may use men or angels.
 - c. He may use trials.
4. God **strengthens** us.
 - a. He may do this through angels.
 - b. Angels strengthened Christ. (Matt. 4:11; Lk. 22:43).
5. God **works in His providence to bless Christians** without superseding the laws of nature.
 - a. God works in mysterious and undefined ways for our good.
 - b. He may use His angels.
6. God **escorts His children to Abraham's bosom**. He uses angels. (Lk. 16:22).

Summary: It is not necessary for God to do everything Personally. He can use His Son, angels, men, etc. to accomplish His purposes. We know God helps us, but we do not know the details on the how.

III. Guardian Angels

A. Many contend each Christian has his own personal guardian angel assigned to him to protect him.

1. This is a comforting theory.
2. Several proof texts are used to defend it.

B. Proof texts refuted

1. Psalm 34:7

PSA 34:7 The angel of the Lord [Jehovah] encamps around those who fear Him, And rescues them.

- a. This is a miraculous action by "the angel of the Lord."
- b. It does not suggest each Israelite had his own personal guardian angel, but "the angel of the Lord" guarded all of the obedient Israelites.
- c. This did not mean they could not sin or get sick or get hurt or die, etc.
- d. Today miracles have ceased. (1 Cor. 13:8-10).

1CO 13:8 Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away. 9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part; 10 but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away.

- 1) God's children can sin, have accidents, get sick, die.
- 2) There is no evidence God has not given us a personal angel to miraculously prevent these things.
- 3) One can experience bad things because of his/her choices or the choices of others or because of nature, etc..

2. Acts 12:15

ACT 12:15 And they [those praying, Acts 12:12] said to her, "You are out of your mind!" But she kept insisting that it was so. And they kept saying, "It is his angel."

- a. The church was praying for Peter's release. (Acts 12:5,12).
- b. Rhoda thought Peter was at the gate. (Acts 12:14,15).
- c. It was Peter. (Acts 12:16).

ACT 12:16 But **Peter** continued knocking; and when they had opened the door, they saw him and were amazed.

- d. The disciples thought Peter was in prison or was dead or on the verge of being killed.
- e. They did not know of his release by an angel. (Acts 12:7-11). (Keep in mind that this was done in the age of miracles - the time of Christ and the apostles.)
- f. They assumed he was in prison or dead and could not be at the gate.
- g. **Many Jews believed guardian angels protected them.** The Jewish Talmud informs us the Jews taught that guardian angels assumed the appearance of the persons they protected and thus served as their doubles.

1) This belief is without scriptural evidence.	3) What is the alleged guardian angel doing for Peter?
2) It seems strange one would think this was Peter's guardian angel at the gate, but think Peter is either dead or in prison.	4) This appears to be one of the myths or fables held by some early Christians and Jews.

New Testament Warning Against Myths, Etc.

1TI 1:4 **nor to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies**, which give rise to mere speculation rather than furthering the administration of God which is by faith.

1TI 4:7 **But have nothing to do with worldly fables** fit only for old women. On the other hand, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness;

2TI 4:4 and will turn away their ears from the truth, and **will turn aside to myths**.

TIT 1:14 **not paying attention to Jewish myths and commandments of men** who turn away from the truth.

2PE 1:16 **For we did not follow cleverly devised tales** when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty.

3. Acts 27:23

ACT 27:23 "For this very night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood before me,

- a. An angel of God speaks to Paul. (Acts 27:24,25).

ACT 27:24 saying, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar; and behold, God has granted you all those who are sailing with you.'

ACT 27:25 "Therefore, keep up your courage, men, for I believe God, that it will turn out exactly as I have been told.

- b. This passage in Acts does not say the angel was Paul's personal guardian angel.
- c. "For this very night there stood by me an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I worship." R.S.V. The Greek "latreu'ō" means to "serve or worship."

1) The antecedent of the words “to whom” is “God.”	3) He did not belong to the angel and did not worship or serve the angel
2) He [Paul] belonged to God and worshiped God.	4) Worship of angels is forbidden. (Col. 2:18).

5. **Matthew 18:10**

MAT 18:10 "See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you, that **their angels** in heaven continually behold the face of My Father who is in heaven.

- a. "These little ones" refers to believers and to the children in context. (Matt. 18:6).

MAT 18:6 but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it is better for him that a heavy millstone be hung around his neck, and that he be drowned in the depth of the sea.	1JO 2:1 My little children, I am writing these things to you that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; 1JO 2:18 Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have arisen; from this we know that it is the last hour. See also Jn. 13:33; 1 Jn. 2:12, 28; 3:7,18; 4:4; 5:21.
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- b. This affirms "these little ones" have angels who "always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven."
c. This verse teaches that angels (in general) are interested in believers and perhaps even help them.
d. It does not plainly teach or imply each believer has his own personal guardian angel.

C. **What do guardian angels protect us from?**

1. Do they keep us from being overcome by temptation?
2. Do they keep us from getting sick or seriously ill?
3. Do they keep us from getting injured?
4. Do they keep us from dying prematurely or suffering a violent death?

D. This doctrine implies if one is hurt or overcome by temptation or dies or becomes ill that the guardian would be at fault. He didn't do his job.

1. This is a preposterous position.
2. This makes some angels very incompetent and makes all angels incompetent when bad things happen to us.

E. **This doctrine interferes with the free agency of man.**

1. We can make choices and these choices sometimes end with serious consequences.
2. Others can make choices and these choices sometimes end with serious consequences for themselves and others.

F. Summary

1. Angels are "ministering spirits."
2. They minister to the "heirs of salvation."
3. They minister in accordance with God's will.
 - a. This is taught by Matthew 6:10.
 - b. Jesus prayed that God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
4. Their ministry is non-miraculous (1 Cor. 13:8-10), and does not interfere with the free moral agency of man.
5. Angels minister to Christians, but it is not clear or implied that each Christian has his own personal guardian angel.
6. The fact that each Christian does not have a guardian angel does not diminish from the fact that angels do minister to us.
7. Those who believe in the power of prayer should not have difficulty in believing that God can use others, even angels, in answering our prayers.

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