

Hebrews 1.5-14 & Revelation 22.8-9 (Perplexing Passages)

Week 2/2 “The Main Thing”

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Bible Passage: Hebrews 1.5-14 & Revelation 22.8-9

*Loving Father, thank you for the creation, for the created order of things. Let us hear you speak and guide us
by your word today. In Jesus Name. Amen.*

Men, women, children, we all love accessories.

Take golf, at its core, it is simply a matter of hitting a small ball into a small hole. Yet it is the accessory sport of accessory sports. Up to 14 clubs, a bag, balls, tees, gloves, shoes, layers of clothing, an umbrella, alignment sticks and even a buggy!

And then there is fishing, multiple rods, reels, lines, countless lures, baits, tackle boxes, nets, waders, clothing, endless tools and a boat!

Oh, and let’s not mention photography, cycling, skiing or scuba diving.

But pastor, I’m not into sports.

Well Parents do this with their kids.. My first pram cost more than my first car! And there are jobs! The right pants, the best stethoscope.

We humans, we love accessories, so much so that often the accessories become more important than the thing.

And sadly, our faith can have a bit of this too.

Take Korong, for example, that shop has us Christians pegged. Try leaving there without a lovely case for your Bible, a necklace and a cup that says “be careful or you might end up in my sermon”.

And it isn't just us modern Christians, back in the day, in a similar way, angels appear to have been somewhat of an accessory to the faith, and sadly for some, they became the main thing.

To this the book of Hebrews speaks volumes.

Three things.

1-Angels are attractive for worship.

C.S. Lewis points out that “Our joy is not complete until it is expressed in worship. It is out of his love for you that God created you to worship”

Worship is a good and proper thing; no wonder the enemy seeks to corrupt it with the worship of angels.

2-Angels are powerful, but they are created beings.

In the bible we see them with flaming swords and often appearing with a brightness and an authority that can overwhelm human senses.

No wonder people fear them, clearly they are impressive to behold, but like us, they are created by God for a purpose, a lower purpose than you and me.

3-Angels are servants and messengers.

Glory belongs to the Sender, not the messenger.

Let's open up our Bibles to Revelation 22:8.

1-Angels are attractive for worship.

I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I had heard and seen them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who had been showing them to me. (Rev 22.8)

This is the second time in the book of Revelation that John has attempted to worship an angel, and both times he is rebuked. Clearly something about angels makes people want to worship them.

And here it appears to be the message that the angel brings that makes them attractive for worship.

Elsewhere it is their magnificence and power.

Angels are attractive for worship, so much so that in Colossians, the worship of angels is a live threat for the community, a threat that Paul specifically calls out as a disqualifying act.

We are getting serious. Ow.

Colossians 2:18

“Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you. Such a person also goes into great detail about what they have seen; they are puffed up with idle notions by their unspiritual mind.” (Col 2:18)

Despite Paul's warnings and angels themselves refusing to receive our worship, there quickly became a whole heretical Gnostic tradition in the 2nd and 3rd centuries around the worship of angels.

Clearly they are attractive for worship, for why else would Satan masquerade as one?

2 Corinthians 11:14

“Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light.” (2 Cor 11:14)

The devil is in the details..

Revelation 13:4

“People worshipped the dragon because he had given authority to the beast” (Rev 13:4)

The dragon is Satan, and his desire for our worship, is a corruption of the created order.

Ok.

People have worshipped angels; people will worship angels, so surely, I am not drawing a long bow when I say that we continue to be in danger of worshipping angels today, or at least in blurring the lines?

Take the so-called new age religions and the spiritual but not religious. People who actively seek guidance from spiritual beings.

These people are at best blurring the lines, but at the worst they are engaged in a terrible deception that the scriptures speak volumes against.

But wait, there is more.

Take our high church brothers and sisters who, on paper, distinguish between the worship of God and the veneration of angels. In practice, though, it is often dangerously close to what the scriptures are speaking against.

They are dangerously close to the worship of created things.

So, what do we do?

We keep the main thing the main thing. We be clear that we are all about Jesus, that he is the one who is worthy of our praise and worship.

We be clear, that nothing of this creation is worthy of our worship. That any enjoyment or pleasure that we get from worshiping the accessories, is a corruption that can lead us astray, a disqualifying act to quote Paul.

1-Angels are attractive for worship.

And people have worshiped them in the past; they do worship them in the present and will worship them in the future.

This remains a live threat, a danger for us.

2-Angels are powerful, but they are created beings.

The flaming swords, the flames of fire, the burning ones. Some of the descriptions we see in the Bible are literal, while others are metaphors, yet they all present us with a description of an impressive creation that can overwhelm human senses.

Hebrews 1:7-8

In speaking of the angels he says, 'He makes his angels spirits, and his servants flames of fire.' But about the Son he says, 'Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever; a sceptre of justice will be the sceptre of your kingdom. (Heb 1.7-8)

The words, “who makes his angels spirits”, can be equally translated as “breath” or “wind”, meaning; that God is making an intentional distinction between the son who is begotten and the angels who were created, like you and me.

Yes, they are impressive, they are like flames of fire, but they are created beings, created for a purpose, and that purpose is not to receive our worship, but to be our servants.

3-Angels are servants.

Verse 6.

And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says, 'Let all God's angels worship him.' (Heb 1:6)

Angels are Servants and they are made to worship the Son, are they are not to rule.

verse 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'? Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation? (Heb 1:13-14)

These magnificent creatures, created by God, attractive for worship, were made by God to serve not just Christ, but us Christians too.

And to worship them is a corruption of the created order.

Now, we should stop here and point out that there is a contrast, for this servant language is also used of Christ, but with a difference.

For the Angels, this is constant, ongoing and eternal, while for Jesus taking on the nature of a servant was temporary (Phil 2.7). For he is also our Lord and our judge.

Ok.

Let's press pause here, because I have some BONUS POINTS about the servanthood of angels.

Firstly.

1-Angels serve the church and her people.

The book of Revelation addresses chapters to each of the angels of the seven churches, and in the book of Acts when Peter, who the believers thought was in prison, knocked on the door, they cried out "It must be his angel!" (Acts 12:15).

2- Angels serve the Children.

Jesus himself, when speaking to his disciples warns against harming, neglecting or looking down on children for "their angels always see the face of my Father who is in heaven" (Matt 18:10)

and

3-Angles serve Jesus.

Our Hebrews passage has already proclaimed that they worship him, and in the Gospels, we are told after his 40 days in the wilderness that they “attended to him” (Matt 4:11, Mark 1:13).

Angels serve God, the church, its people, his children and Jesus, for this is their function, they are not accessories to the faith, or objects to be worshipped.

They are servants of all those who will inherit salvation

Let's wrap up.

1-Angels are attractive for worship.

The first and greatest commandment says, "You shall have no other gods before me."

Or to quote Jesus, you must love the Lord with all your heart, mind and soul.

These wouldn't be commands, if the worship of things other than God wasn't a possibility, a problem, a grave mistake for us humans.

Yes, I clean and look after my finishing reels, but there is a fine line between this and putting them on display, and taking pleasure when others notice. It is a fine line.

2-Angels are powerful, but they are created beings.

I just love the story of Balaam's donkey in Numbers 22, and not just because it features a talking donkey, but because it reminds me that if God can use a donkey, surely, he can use me.

If you don't know it, in this story, an angel waits with a flaming sword to exact God's judgement against Balaam, for his greed against God's people. This angel was fearsome and powerful, yet invisible to Balaam, but not to the donkey.

The donkey bucked and fought Balaam, in order to protect him from the angel.

So yes,

Angels are powerful, and it is a natural response to fear them, but they are created by God to serve him and his people.

3-Angels are servants and messengers.

As in the story of Balaam's donkey, in Revelation and in our key passage from Hebrews,

Glory belongs to the Sender, not the messenger.

And our corruption of this is easy to observe. With People buying tiger wood golf clubs, or Jo Jo bows, or sports drinks, all manor of accessories given glory before the one who made them,

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Often credited to G.K. Chesterton are the words "when people cease to believe in God, they do not then believe in nothing, but in anything."

We must be intentional and deliberate in keeping the main thing the main thing.

For we Christians, we worship God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit and this is a good thing. It is the right thing and the sufficient thing.

And if your not a Christian, the joy you have received from accessories, is only a taste of what awaits you in Christ.

For this desire to take joy in the extras, is but a shadow of what is possible in Christ.

Lord, thank you for the gift of worship. Thank you that all will one day worship King Jesus, and we ask for that day to come soon. In Jesus Name. Amen.
