



VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH

SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

Allied Forces, Part 3: Angels

Invisible War: Winning Against Evil | Part 7

Tim Badal | August 9, 2015 | Hebrews 1:14



Turn to Hebrews 1:14. We are currently going through a series entitled, "Invisible War." It is a study on spiritual warfare, broken down into four sections:

1. Our need to be alert to the war around us. We need to be reminded of the battle we face every day against evil, sin and our own flesh and blood.
2. Our enemies: the devil, the world system and our flesh. We need to see how they wage war, what their goals are in disrupting our walk with God and disqualifying us from fruitful ministry. We know that we need to take each of these enemies seriously. We need to understand what each enemy is trying to accomplish.
3. Our allies. We've talked about two of them so far: the Holy Spirit, Who lives and resides within us, Who enables us to live out the fruit of the Spirit and not gratify our sinful nature; and also the local church, which encourages us as we exhort one another, hold each other accountable, bear each other's burdens. These enable us to be victorious.
4. Our weapons.

Angels are the final group of allies that we have in our war against evil. In the weeks to come, we will talk about the armor of God, looking at Ephesians 6. Our series will finish by looking at the weapons God has given us to be victorious in the battle against sin and evil.

Today we'll be focusing on angels. We talked about the devil and demons a few weeks ago. Today we come to the other side of the coin. God has given us His holy angels as instruments of His grace and mercy as He uses them in key parts of our lives.

When someone talks about angels, you may immediately think, "That's kind of crazy." If you are a newcomer to Village Bible Church, you might think we are out of our minds. This happens any time a newcomer enters church on a Sunday. We're going to talk about a Man Who lived 2,000 years ago, Who we believe to be God, Who died on a wooden cross, Who bled blood and Whose blood now saves us from our sins and will give us an eternity with God. That's not easy to swallow if you are a newcomer to Christianity.

I would think that angels would be one of those difficult things to swallow. If you're a newcomer, the topic of angels shouldn't throw you off. However, the world seems to enjoy conversations about angels. You see angels everywhere. Our culture is full of them. They're commonplace and almost mainstream. While our world has no desire for the things of God, angels have somehow become part of the culture. They're in our homes as we decorate. They're in pictures and art. They appear in books. We sing about them. We watch them on TV shows and movies. While the media and the world despise the things of God, they have somehow been touched by an angel.

While angels are things that the world loves to embrace, they have created a new definition of who angels are and what they are called to do. I want to dispel some unbiblical myths today by bringing four of them to your attention:

1. Angels are chubby babies in diapers floating around on a cloud. Nowhere in the Bible do angels have a weight problem, look like babies, wear diapers or float around on clouds. Nothing comes close.
2. Angels receive their wings every time a bell rings. This comes from the movie, *It's a Wonderful Life*. At the end of the movie, the little girl that plays Jimmy Stuart's daughter says this mantra. This isn't found anywhere in Scripture. It is something that Hollywood has invented.
3. Angels are dead people on the highway to heaven. They're not Michael Landon or Victor French, the big, bushy guy from *Little House on the Prairie*. [Some of you have no idea who those people are.] Angels are not dead people. When people die they are taken to one of two places: the presence of God or hell. Family members and friends who have gone before us are not angels waiting to receive their wings. The Bible doesn't say anything about that.
4. Angels wear halos and play harps. Nowhere in the Bible do we see this as their headdress or instrument of choice. They may play harps. Some are musical creatures. However, the Bible never says that this is their sole activity.

What does the Bible say about these beings? We will learn that angels not only serve God in this spiritual battle against evil, but they have also been given the role of ministering to those who have received Christ as their Savior and Lord.

This is where a myth can come into a biblical view. Many people will say that they have a guardian angel. I don't know if I've been assigned a personal, guardian angel, but Hebrews 1 and another passage in Matthew describe angels who watch over us, care for us and minister on our behalf. One of the roles of angels is guardian to those who have inherited salvation. That's where one of the myths draws from some biblical truth.

What does the Bible say about angels? The word "angel" comes up quite a bit. The Bible mentions angels 273 different times. They are referred to in 34 of the 66 books of Scripture. They are found all over the Old Testament and all over the New Testament. They aren't found in only one genre or passage of Scripture. They are mentioned over and over again. It's important for people who want to study the Word of God and understand what the Word says to study angels. They must understand who angels are and what they do and how they minister to us.

Hebrews 1:14 will guide us today, answering three questions about angels. In the middle of the verse, the writer is stating his main thesis of the first part of the book: Jesus' supremacy over all things. One way Jesus' supremacy is shown is in His superiority over angels. We will see this over and over again. Jesus is not an angel. He is the incarnate Son of God. He was with God in the beginning. We will learn the difference between angels and Jesus. Jesus was with God in the beginning. He is the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End. He is God, not some lieutenant in God's army.

Let's look at Hebrews 1:14 as an outline and guide for learning about angels:

Are [angels] not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?

The Bible helps us answer these three questions:

1. Who are these spirits?

The Scripture begins with a question. *"Are they not all ministering spirits?"* First, we need to understand what they're called. They're called angels. In the Greek, the word "angel" means delegate or messenger. This tells us more about what they do than about who they are. We need to ask the question, "What do we know about angels?" As I've told you already, the Bible talks a lot about this subject. We will see:

Angels are created beings

When Colossians 1:16 says that all things were created by Christ and through Christ, angels are included in that term "all." Angels, like the rest of creation, were brought into existence by the power of God's word alone. In Job 38:7, angels sang as God laid the foundation of the earth. If the angels were singing while God was laying the foundation of the universe, then angels predate humanity. They have been around longer than us. We don't know exactly when they were created. The Bible doesn't give us a timeline for when they were born or created.

However, the Bible does tell us that God created angels, and He created them differently from how He created us. People were made with both physical and spiritual aspects. Angels don't have physical characteristics. They weren't made of flesh and blood. A.W. Tozer said it this way: "Angels are beings who are of another substance altogether, one that has no weight, no dimension,

nor existence in space. While they are different, they are altogether real.” We need to understand that we’re not talking about ghosts or figments of our imagination. We are talking about real creatures, but creatures who don’t have the same physical elements as human beings. Unlike us, angels do not marry, they do not procreate and they don’t have any flesh and blood.

In some ways, they are like us. They speak. They sing. They even have some level of emotion. We see them filled with joy. They have expression. They are not robots that utter emotionless words or thoughts. They have discernment. Any time an angel showed up, they told people, “Do not be afraid.” They are able to understand humanity. Unlike people, they do not carry the image of God. That’s what makes us special. We are image bearers of God.

Just like humans, angels have limitations. We need to be careful to recognize this. Their limitations keep them from thinking that they could ever be like God. First of all, angels are not omnipresent. They travel in the heavenly realms. They are bound to time and space. In Daniel, an angel speaks to Daniel saying, “I wanted to come and bring the answer to your prayer, but I was stopped for 21 days by a demon.” It wasn’t until a greater angel came and fed this lower angel that he was able to reach Daniel and it took 21 days. Angels are bound to time and space to some degree.

They are not omniscient. They don’t know the time of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. They don’t know all things like God does. They intently look into things; they investigate. They are unaware of certain things. While their minds may be incredible treasures of knowledge, their minds never rival God because they do not know everything.

They’re not omnipotent. In Revelation 7:1, we see that it takes four angels to hold back the winds of destruction during the tribulation. We recognize that they have limitations in their power. They are limited creatures.

However, angels are of a higher created order than mankind. Psalm 8 says, “*Who is man that you are mindful of him?*” In Hebrew 2:7, Christ in His humanity was made a little lower than the angels. This is an amazing thing. While we are lesser than the angels, God desires to pour out His love and grace on us in ways that the angels could never comprehend. While we may be lesser creatures, God loves us so much more.

Angels are counted and known

Some who are familiar with Scripture may say, “Whenever the Bible talks about angels, it’s almost always in generalities. The angelic hosts are too vast to count.” I would agree with that. Yes, they’re too numerous for us to count. However, God knows every one of them by name. Just as He knows us, He knows angels personally. They all have a place in His created order and they all have a purpose for their existence.

It appears that they have names. Throughout the Scriptures and in Christian tradition, angels have had names. We see in the Scriptures names like Gabriel and Michael. Even Lucifer, the name of the devil before he fell into sin, had a name when he was the guardian cherub.

How many are there? We don’t know. The Bible helps us understand to some degree the vastness of their number. In Revelation, we learn that a third of the angels fell from heaven in their rebellion against God. God has them counted. He knows exactly how many angels there are and how many of them fell in the rebellion. A third of how many? Hebrews 12:22 says that angels are thousands upon thousands. In Revelation 5:11, we learn that ten thousand times ten thousand angels circle the throne. John only sees a glimpse of the heavenly picture. Angels are vast in number. The Bible uses phrases like this to describe in human terms an incomprehensible or infinite number.

We have the numbers behind us. God’s armies are never outnumbered, as if God needs those numbers to be victorious. Just to put an exclamation point on it, the devil has already lost. Just look at the army of God: ten thousand times ten thousand, vast and limitless.

Angels have certain classifications

The Bible doesn’t say much about this. What it does say is enough for us to note today. When the Bible talks about angels, it talks about different kinds of angels. First, there are the archangels. These angels are angels like Michael and Gabriel. They are God’s elite special forces, His Seal Team 6. He sends these angels on the most important missions and difficult assignments. The devil was one of these angels, perhaps even the highest of all angels.

In an obscure passage—Jude 1:9—we see a dispute over Moses’ body. The devil is there and a dispute ensues. We’re not told what the devil wants to do with Moses’ body, but God sends Michael to protect it from desecration. Michael, one of the highest of angels, recognizes that Lucifer is of a higher class than he is. Michael does not even bring an accusatory word against the

devil. He simply says, "The Lord rebuke you." Just like in our military where we have generals and colonels, angels have roles and classifications. They have rank and other angels to whom they are subordinate under God. We learned that when we talked about demons as well. Those are the archangels. They are the elite special forces.

Then there are the seraphim. These beings are only mentioned in Isaiah 6. Isaiah has a heavenly vision where he sees the throne room of God. He says, "I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple." Isaiah looks around and sees seraphim flying about with six wings covering their faces and their feet. They call to one another saying, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory." Seraphim are the holy choir of God. They proclaim the worship and praise of God in heaven.

Then there are the cherubim. These are also mentioned in Isaiah 6. These are not cuddly creatures, but angels who guard the abode of God. They are a part of the angel army. In the Old Testament, the angels who protect the people of God are the cherubs. They are God's secret service.

The heavenly hosts are the more generic, errand angels. These angels announced the birth of Christ to the shepherds. "Joy to the world, the Lord has come. Let earth receive her King." They ascribe glory to God on high. These are the run-of-the mill errand angels who are part of the angelic host.

Angels are curious about how God works

Angels are not omniscient creatures. They try to understand the plan and will and works of God. They watch God. They have been for some time. In 1 Peter 1:10–12, we see a picture of this:

Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.

The passage is saying that the prophets didn't know Who Jesus was. They would study God's work in history, trying to discern Who the Messiah was. They wanted to know Who would come and free humanity and how was He going to do it. Crucifixion hadn't even been invented yet. The prophets wondered how the Anointed One would free them from their sins. The Old Testament saints would inquire and look into these things. Yet, the prophets' job was to serve us. Now we have a full picture. Now that Jesus has come, we can recognize that Jesus is the King of kings and Lord of lords.

Angels are curious about the gospel and redemption. Why? Angels, before creation, saw a third of their compatriots rebel against God. They saw God make a swift and sure judgment: get out. He removed the rebellious angels from His presence. He consigned them to hell, sorrow, grief and pain. There was no hope for the fallen angels. They would always be in a place of rebellion and sin. It was a lesson that was easily understood. No angel ever did it again.

Fast forward to the Garden of Eden. People are created. God declares people to be pretty great and incredible. Just as He does with the angels, God has fellowship with people and allows them to experience His presence. This doesn't happen in the same way that the angels experienced. God has created a universe and placed mankind in the Garden. Adam has a unique experience. He is able to walk and talk with God in the Garden. This unique creation rebelled as well. The angels could have been watching this unfold saying to themselves, "Here we go again. They fell into the same trap. Lucifer tempted them. God will destroy them and send them to hell. They are finished." But what does God do? God brings judgment, but He gives them a second chance.

Have you ever thought about the angels' response? "What about us? There was no second chance. There was no mercy. There was no grace." Fast forward a little more. Over and over again people fall into sin and do so in incredible fashion. They shake their fist at God; they curse Him and conspire against Him. We have all fallen away. Angels see how decrepit we are.

But what happens? The King gets off His throne. He puts on flesh. He goes and makes Himself lower than us! He makes His dwelling among decrepit people. They spit on Him. They abuse Him. They beat Him. They curse His Name. Yet, what does our King do? He goes to a cross. The Living God goes to a cross and dies a sinner's death. The angels must have been thinking, "Are you kidding me? This is insanity! You would do all of this for a lesser creature?" Here's the result: the angels praise the Name of Jesus.

Here's the crazy thing: we don't. This is amazing. The angels are curious. They look into these things and try to understand. They think, "God, what are You trying to accomplish?" When you wonder what God is trying to do in your life, you have just joined the

angels. Angels are trying to figure it out. They are finite creatures in that way. They don't have all the answers. They do know that when they don't have the answers they can investigate. They praise the Name of God.

Angels cheer when repentance occurs

The Bible makes it clear that angels understand the moment when a broken and sinful person is brought into the Kingdom. Luke 15:7 says that there is great rejoicing in heaven when one sinner enters the Kingdom of God. I believe the angels are part of that rejoicing. I assume that when you came into the Kingdom of God, the angels threw a party. "God's doing that thing again. We don't fully understand it, but man, He is awesome! Those evil, decrepit individuals are now singing the praises of God! They've joined us. Instead of shaking their fist at God, their hands are lifted up and they are full of love and joy that God has saved them." We join the angels in rejoicing over the new birth of every lost soul.

Angels are amazing creatures. They reside in the presence of God day and night. They do His bidding. I'd be remiss if I didn't address two dangers that can arise when talking about angels.

1. You could be too amazed at angels. You might be tempted to sing to the angels in church. You might be tempted to devote time to cheer on the angels or focus on the angels. In Revelation 22:8-9, the Apostle John falls for this danger. I understand. They are incredible creatures. An angel appears to him and he bows down in worship. What does the angel say? "Get up! Don't do that! There's only one Person you bow down to: God in heaven. You don't bow down to me. I am a fellow servant." Angels are greater than we are, yes, but they shouldn't be worshiped. He is the Creator of those great things. This was an issue in the Colossian church. They were worshipping angels. We shouldn't do that.
2. You could be tempted to just take their word at face value. In Galatians 1:8 Paul says that there is a new, different gospel being spread. It is wreaking havoc in Galatia. Paul makes it clear that if he or even an angel from heaven preaches another gospel, they are accursed. There are two major sects of religions that have received words from so-called angels: Islam and Mormonism. These are built upon messages from angels and are contrary to the Word of God. Paul warns us not to fall prey to false gospels. Even if an angel from heaven says something different, don't believe him. Just because you might encounter an angel, or have an experience with an angel, it doesn't mean it's from God. The Bible says that the devil masquerades as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14). Be careful. Angels have their place in creation.

2. What are they sent out to do?

Hebrews 1:14 helps us answer this question. What are they sent out to do? I wish the Bible would give us a complete job description but it doesn't do that. We need to search the Scriptures and observe what the angels did when they were sent out to do things.

Angels proclaim messages from God

The Christmas story is full of angelic encounters where God spoke to men and women. An angel came and spoke to Mary, Zachariah and the shepherds. The purpose of these encounters was to announce things: "You're going to have a baby." "The Messiah has been born in Bethlehem." "The baby that you're going to have in your old age, Zachariah, is going to be the forerunner of the Savior." These messages took place at Easter-time as well. Angels appeared and announced that Jesus had risen, just as He had said. Don't forget the angel who told John what to write in Revelation. These encounters tell us a little bit about what angels do.

1. When angels appeared to people, they always looked like men clothed in brilliant white robes. I don't know if that's just their standard appearance. I don't know why God chooses that. Maybe that's exactly how they look. I do know that when people encounter angels, they look like people. They are brilliant, amazing people, but people nonetheless. The Bible doesn't tell us whether or not this form is temporary or permanent.
2. When an angel appears, it always scares the daylights out of people. Usually it takes people's breath away and fills them with fear. This reminds us that these beings are incredible creatures. In some ways they look like us. Yet, they look so incredibly different.

3. Angels sent from God always spoke the very words of God. Nowhere in Scripture do we see angels saying things like, "Mary, you're going to have a baby. By the way, all the angels got together and had a softball game. Angel Team A against Angel Team B." They only speak the words that God gives them; only the words that God has assigned them to share. They never share about themselves. It's always right and true. They are always very specific. Their information is always correct when God sends them with a message. There is never an angel in Scripture giving false information.
4. They share God's message for His glory and not their own. You never see Gabriel say, "Here's the message from God. Oh, and take a look at my new wings! Look at my halo. Aren't I beautiful?" None of that happens with angels. They say, "Hey, it's all about our King! It's all about God."
5. Angels speak all different kinds of messages: encouragement, exhortation, correction and direction. That should be a reminder for us. As ambassadors of God, we should speak all types of things: encouragement, exhortation, correction and direction into one another's lives. Angels spoke words that were exactly what the person needed in that specific place and time. That was their message.

Angels protect God's people from harm

In Daniel 6, an angel came to Daniel's aide. When the king threw Daniel into the lions' den for praying to God, an angel came and shut the mouths of the lions. He played a role in advancing God's plans and purposes in Daniels life and also in the life of the nation.

They protected Jesus' family in Matthew 2. An angel appeared to Joseph in a dream: "Get out of Dodge. Herod's coming. He's going to kill all the boy babies. Go. Get out of here." Joseph listened.

Angels punish the enemies of God

Second Chronicles 32:21 says that the Lord sent an angel to come to the aide of King Hezekiah and Isaiah the prophet. The angel destroyed the Assyrian army under King Sennacherib. Second Chronicles 32:21 says that every mighty man of Assyria was slain and the mighty king of Assyria went home in disgrace and shame. How many angels did it take? How many men were killed? The Bible says that there was one angel sent and 185,000 Assyrian mighty men died. Those are great odds. The angel destroyed them. What power angels have at their disposal!

Angels praise God continually

This is most seen in Isaiah 6. Isaiah sees angels crying out praise to God. Fast forward to Revelation 7:11-12. Here the angels lead the people of God in song. Once again, they do not praise one another. They don't talk about what they have done. They only talk about what God has done and Who He is.

Angels provide for our needs

We see this in two places. The first is in 1 Kings 19:5-8. Elijah is running for his life from Queen Jezebel. He has nothing to sustain him. God sends an angel to feed him and meet his needs. In Matthew 4:11, Jesus is in the wilderness 40 days and nights. He is being tempted by the devil. After being victorious, angels come and minister to His needs.

Angels also did this one more time in the Garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22:42-43). Jesus was in utter agony. He knew the pain and sorrow that awaited Him at the cross. He sweat blood because of it. In that moment, angels attended to Him in the Garden.

I haven't shared any stories of people outside of Scripture where people have had angels watching over them. There are many incredible stories out there. Perhaps many of them are true. However, to talk about the impact of angels outside of Scripture is merely speculative. The stories are difficult to discern at times. How do you know which ones are true and which ones aren't? There are many books written. Billy Graham wrote what is probably the most famous book on angel encounters titled, *Angels: God's Secret Agents*. If you want to know more about how angels may impact the lives of people around us, that book has great stories. You are going to have to use discernment. Are all of them true? Are all of them valid? Some come from famous Christians like John Patton. He has an incredible story of how angels protect him from a group of tribesmen who want to kill him. Cory ten Boom talks about carrying her Bible with the Gestapo around her. She knows that they can see the Bible, but she sees angels come and close their eyes from seeing the Bible she is carrying. There are great stories by great Christians who say that there are angels all around us, watching over us, providing for us and protecting us.

I have a story of my own. This is one of the first questions that I want to ask Jesus when I get to heaven. I have an experience from one of the darkest times of my life. I believe that an angel ministered to me. We are told that when we are hospitable with the things that we have been given, we may be entertaining angels in our midst (Hebrews 13:2). The Bible says that angels are active, just like they were in the Scriptures. They are active in the here and now. We need to open our eyes to it and be ready to receive it, but also use discernment. The devil masquerades as an angel of light.

3. In what ways are they serving us?

Hebrews 1:14 says that they are ministering to those who have inherited salvation. Many of us have never been touched by an angel. If we have, it was a fleeting moment, which only leaves us with more questions than answers. Outside of those miraculous encounters, what do we do with angels? What do angels do for us in this invisible war? Angels show us:

1. **Our walk with God can never grow stale.** Some of us have become bored with God. We've seen all that God has done and we think He no longer carries the pizzazz that He once did. I wonder if our epidemic of low church attendance is because we are bored with the things of God. Before the earth was created, a third of the angels in heaven were bored with God. They grew tired of what God did and started finding other things that were more important. These angels remind us that we can stand in the presence of God, in the holiness and perfection of heaven and still fall away. Some of you are part of a great church. You have a great family who teaches you the things of God. You have people around you who love on you with the love of Christ. Be careful lest you fall. What happened to the angels can happen to you as well. Don't fall away, because it is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of an angry God.
2. **What our world should look like.** In Matthew 6, we have the Lord's Prayer. In the Lord's Prayer, we pray this: *"Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."* This tells us that God's will is being done in one place right now: heaven. This should remind us that when we turn on the news and see God's will not being done and His Kingdom not being built, we are not living the life we should live. We are not experiencing creation as God intended. We are living a life of rebellion and sin. We are experiencing the consequences of that sin. We cannot shake our fists at God when natural disasters happen. We can't say, "Where was God?" God was doing His will and building His Kingdom in heaven. We choose to say no to Him. We are paying the due diligence of our sin. This is a reminder that God wants His will to be done here on earth. God wants His Kingdom to be built here on earth. Angels remind us how that Kingdom is built: through constant obedience to God and His ways.
3. **A heart of servitude to God.** They show us what it means to obey. You never see an angel say no to God or give excuses. Angels remind us how to serve. When God says, "Jump," they say, "How high?" A heart of service is a heart that worships. Angels worship day and night. Our lives should be a living testimony of worship and praise toward God.
4. **We have a strategic role to play.** Every angel has a part in God's redemptive story. No angel sits on the bench; none of them are retired. Every time an angel is mentioned in Scripture, it is fulfilling a specific role in a specific place to a specific people. Where is God sending you? Who is God sending you to proclaim His message to? To whom is God sending you to speak His peace? What needs is God calling you to provide for? What areas or group of people is God calling you to protect? You could go back to point number two and ask the question, "If angels are doing this and have not experienced the grace and mercy and love of God, how much more should I be doing it in the here and now?"
5. **How we should see life.** Angels help us remember that our entire existence is for the glory of God. Angels never write books or pursue their own self-promotion. Their work is always about God. Every day of their existence is to the glory of God. If you interviewed any of them today, I'm sure they'd say that it is all worth it. Is your existence about God's Name and God's glory? You can either live like the angels in heaven, or you can follow the rebels in hell. When you live a life apart from God, you no longer follow the example of angels; you follow the example of the demons. When you pursue self and focus on self and address the needs of self, instead of serving others, you don't follow in the footsteps of God's heavenly armies; you are going after the insurgents from hell. God has made humanity for one purpose: to worship Him and enjoy Him forever. Angels remind us of that and point us to this truth.

I am thankful for God's angel armies that are full of spectacular and powerful creatures. They continually fight the forces of evil and do the will of God. As great as these creatures are, I'm thankful for a God Who is greater still. He is the One Who watches over all of this. He has already won the victory through Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior.

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