



Dr. Harold & Myrna Carpenter

**TEXT:**Hebrews 2:14-17

□ 14 Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; □ 15 □ And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. □ 16 □ For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. □ 17 Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people (Hebrews 2:14-17, KJV).

**KEY**

**VERSE:**

He

brews 2:16

**ou gar dhpou aggelwn epilambanetai alla spermatoV abraam epilambanetai.** (Hebrews 2:16, Greek Text).

### **INTRODUCTION:**

The angels play a significant role in the beautiful presentation of the Christmas story in the Gospel of Luke:

1. It was an angel of the Lord who announced to the elderly priest, Zacharias, that his wife would bear a son who would be the forerunner of the long awaited Messiah (Luke 1:11-20).
2. It was an angel Gabriel who announced to the virgin Mary that she was the vessel chosen by God to bring His son into the world (Luke 1:26-38).
3. It was the angel of the Lord which proclaimed the good news of the birth of the Christ-child to the shepherds of Bethlehem (Luke 2:8-14).

These angelic visits and glorious announcements add a sense of irony to our text from the Hebrew writer who declares **“for verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham”** (Heb. 2:16, KJV).

The word selected by the Hebrew writer adds an additional sense of irony to our subject. The word used throughout the Gospels for verily is *amen* (**amhn**).

The word "amen" is a most remarkable word. It was transliterated directly from the Hebrew into the Greek of the New Testament, then into Latin and into English and many other languages, so that it is practically a universal word. It has been called the best known word in human speech. The word is directly related—in fact, almost identical—to the Hebrew word for "believe" (*amam*), or faithful. Thus, it came to mean "sure" or "truly", an expression of absolute trust and confidence.

In our text, however, the author does not choose this universal affirmation of truth. Instead he choose the Greek word

*depou*

(

**dhpou**

) which is more a statement of amazement and irony which could well be translated, “Can you believe that?” or “Would you believe. . .?”

### I. COMPARING MEN AND ANGELS

A. Positive statements are strong, e.g., “I will never forget you.”

Comparative statements are stronger, e.g., **“15 Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee”** (Isaiah 49:15, KJV).

Or one may say, “I give you my word.!” but a comparative is stronger; **“33 Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away .”** (Luke 21:33, KJV).

Such is the comparison in our text, **“The nature of angels in no wise did he take, but ours he did!”** (Hebrews 2:16, Free translation) B.

Comparisons with ordinary things are strong.

Consider Elihu’s comparison of men and animals in Job:

**“11 Who teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth, and maketh us wiser than the fowls of heaven?”** (Job 35:11, KJV).

Or consider the Psalmist’s comparison of God’s people with the other nations;

**19 “He sheweth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. 20 He hath not dealt so with any nation: and as for his judgments, they have not known them. Praise ye the LORD”**

(Psalm 147:19-20, KJV).

Comparisons with chief or choice things are much stronger. In our case the comparison is

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made between the celestial and the terrestrial.

Both the Old and New Testaments tell us that angels excel us in power:

**“20 Bless the LORD, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word”** (Psalm 103:20, KJV).

**“11 Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord ”** (2 Pet. 2: 11, KJV).

Just as angels excel us in power, so also do they in all other areas as well:

- Perfect in beauty as is said of Stephen, **“15 And all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel”**

(Acts 6: 15, KJV).

- Perfect in wisdom as described of David, **“20 To fetch about this form of speech hath thy servant Joab done this thing: and my lord is wise, according to the wisdom of an angel of God, to know all things that are in the earth”**

(2 Sam. 14: 20 , KJV ).

- Perfect in eloquence as described by the Apostle Paul, **“1 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal”**

(1 Corinthians 13:1, KJV).

For all that man is or has attained, he is yet lower than the angels! C. What are angels?

By nature they are spirits—Hebrews 1:14

By their quality they are glorious spirits—Hebrews 9:5

By their abode they are heavenly spirits—Matthew 24:36

By their duration they are immortal—Luke 20:36 D. What is **“the seed of Abraham?”**

Let Abraham answer for himself; **“...I...but am dust and ashes”** (Genesis 18:27, KJV).

Let one person, Job, answer for all the rest: **“I have said to corruption, Thou art my father: to the worm, Thou art my mother, and my sister”**

(Job 17:14, KJV).

- They [angels] are spirits. What are we—what is the seed of Abraham? Paul answers in a very concise way in **“8 For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption;”**

(Gal. 4:8, KJV). The end of the flesh is corruption, rottenness, and worms.

- They are glorious spirits. We are vile bodies, as the Apostle Paul asks, **“21 Who shall change our vile body...?”**

(Phil. 3:21, KJV).

Or as Job declares, **“4 Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?”** (Job 14:4, KJV).

- They are heavenly spirits, angels of Heaven—that is their place of abode—in Heaven above. Ours is here below in the dust. Our place is here ‘among fleas and flies, moths and spiders, and crawling worms.’ **“5 My flesh is clothed with worms and clods of dust; my skin is broken, and become loathsome”** (Job 7: 5

,KJV).

- They are immortal spirits. While our duration is proclaimed by Isaiah the prophet; **“6...All flesh [is] grass, and all the goodness thereof [is] as the flower of the field:”**

( Isaiah 40:6, KJV).

Or as Job so eloquently puts it, **“4 How much less in them that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, which are crushed before the moth?”**

(Job 4:19, KJV)

E. When the comparison is made between man and the angels, they are far better than the best of us.

Our measure is described by the Psalmist,

**“9 Surely men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie: to be laid in the balance, they [are]altogether [lighter] than vanity”** (Psalm 62:9, KJV).

And again,

**“3 LORD, what is man, that thou takest knowledge of him! or the son of man, that thou makest account of him! 4 Man is like to vanity: his days are as a shadow that passeth away”** (Psalm 144:3-4, KJV).

## II. CHOOSING BETWEEN MEN AND ANGELS

A. The rule of reason should guide all choices; that means to take the better and leave the worse.

**“Yet he in no wise took them, but he did take the seed of Abraham!”** B. The angels in so many ways are ahead of us but in this matter they are left behind.

We—unworthy wretched men that we are—stand above and before the angels, the Cherubim, the Seraphim, and the principalities and powers! It makes me want to sing Handel’s *Halleluia Chorus* ! C.

An intentional choice of words:

Many words would have seemed more likely here such as “assumed” or “chose” or “adopted.”

The word here was carefully chosen. *Epilambanetai*(**epilambanetai**)in the Greek and *apprehen dit* in the

Latin. This word literally means to catch or apprehend. It implies a flight on the one part and a pursuit on the other part.

There were angels who fled and did not keep their original estate (Jude vs. 6). Man also fled and **“hid himself in the thick trees”** (Genesis 3:8, KJV)from the presence of God.

When the angels fled, God made no move to follow after them.

When man fled, God immediately pursued after him and sought to reclaim him. **9 And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?**

(Genesis 3:9, KJV).

A curse on the fallen angel but a promise for fallen man:

**15 And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel** (Genesis 3:15, KJV).

So strong was God's desire to apprehend man that He sent his Son to take hold of and redeem man.

**7 Then said I, Lo, I come in the volume of the book it is written of me, 8 I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law [is] within my heart** (Psalm. 40:7-8, KJV).

The Hebrew writer expands on this and declares;

**5 Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: 6 In burnt offerings and [sacrifices] for sin thou hast had no pleasure. 7 Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God** (Hebrews 10:5-7, KJV).

**The angels offending, he spared them not** (2 Peter 2:4 a, Free translation).

When man sinned, God spared him but in order to do so **"He...spared not His own Son..."** (Romans 8:32, KJV).

### III. MADE LIKE MEN BUT NOT LIKE ANGELS

Why should He be made like men, but not like angels?

A. Man was more to be pitied than the angels, because he was tempted by another and they were not.

B. Man was less than the angels and had fewer resources upon which to base their actions and decisions.

C. In the case of angels some fell (1/3 of the angels) and others did not.

In the case of man the entire race fell. (Men reproduce and angels do not!)

The New England Primer reads "In Adams fall sinned we all!"

**19 For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous** (Rom 5:19, KJV). D. Zachariah's prophecy lets us know it is because of the tender mercies of God;

**76 And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways; 77 To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins, 78 Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, 79 To give light to them that sit in**

**darkness and [in] the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace** (Luke 1:76-79, KJV).

Note that when Zachariah recovered his speech and burst forth in prophetic utterance, it was Jesus the son of Mary who was the focus of his joy.

Verses 78 and 79 let us know that his joy was because of the salvation which had been raised up from the House of David.

Verse 5 indicates that both Zachariah and his wife were of the tribe of Levi and descendents of Aaron. **CONCLUSION:**

The psalmist pondered in amazement the choice made by God and the action taken by God to redeem lost mankind:

**1 To the chief Musician upon Gittith, A Psalm of David. O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens. 2 Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger. 3 When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; 4 What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? 5 For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. 6 Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet: 7 All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; 8 The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas. 9 O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!**

(Psalm 8:1-9, KJV).

Join with me in lifting your voices in praise to God for his tender mercies and for the gift of His Son who has redeemed us from our sins, while we were yet unworthy!

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This is the outline of the Christmas sermon Dr. Harold Carpenter preached 08 December 2002. Dr. Carpenter and his wife served as missionaries for twenty years. Dr. Carpenter also taught missions for twenty years at Central Bible College. He now serves as Pastor of Fair Grove Assembly of God, Fair Grove MO.

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**In Essentials: Unity; In non-essentials: Liberty; In all things: Charity**—Peter Meiderlin 1626.

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