**On Entertaining Angels**

Heb. 13:2

Introduction:

1. Have you ever entertained angels at your house?

2. Such a question might be startling at first. Upon further consideration you might consider the question interesting, but were you to answer the question you would probably say, “Entertaining angels at my house? No, I have never done that!”

3. Yet there is a text in Heb. 13:2 that says, “Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it.”

4. Perhaps you have entertained angels and did not recognize it. The text is saying that we need to exercise hospitality to strangers. Some of them may be angels and we certainly would not want to turn messengers sent by God away.

5. What does the Scripture say about exercising hospitality? What can we learn about the treatment of strangers in Scripture? And what about this entertaining of angels without realizing it?

Discussion:

I. Throughout Scripture the exercise of hospitality is commended.

A. Love for strangers was enjoined on Israel by the Law of Moses (Lev. 19:33-34).

1. Love for strangers would naturally result in doing good toward them instead of wrong.

2. The rule of love is the same for the stranger as with your neighbor: “You shall love

him as yourself.”

a. The lawyer of Luke 10, who questioned Jesus, knew this (25-29). Jesus’

definition of neighbor includes the stranger. Thus His story of the good

Samaritan.

b. This rule of loving neighbor as yourself, of course, stems from our love for the

Lord (27).

3. Thus the N.T. perpetuates the truth revealed in the Law of Moses. This is the

foundation of Heb. 13:2. See the statement of v. 1: “Let love of the brethren

continue.” Hospitality is about the manifestation of love.

B. N.T. passages commending hospitality.

1. 1 Pet. 4:9 enjoins hospitality without complaint.

2. 1 Tim. 5:10 indicates that only widows who practiced hospitality were qualified to be

put on “the list.”

3. 1 Tim. 3:2 and Titus 1:8 identify hospitality as a quality of those who would serve as

elders/overseers.

II. Biblical examples of those who exercised hospitality and what they did.

A. One of the most notable examples of hospitality is found in Gen. 18, and it is a case

where Abraham actually entertained angels.

1. Note the actions that he performed.

a. He invited the strangers in (v. 3).

b. Provided rest (support) (v. 4).

c. He gave them bread, beef, curds, and milk (vs. 6-8).

d. He invited them to recreate (refresh) themselves (v. 5).

e. When they were ready to leave he walked with them (v. 16).

2. They blessed Abraham by promising him a son (v. 10).

3. The closeness that was felt between Abraham and these messengers of God was

revealed in their desire to communicate to him about what was going to happen in

Sodom and Gomorrah (vs. 16-21). Abraham’s closeness with them resulted in his

appeal for leniency if there were ten righteous there (vs. 22-32).

B. This example is extended by Gen. 19 and Lot’s hospitality to the angels.

1. He invited them into his house (v. 2).

2. In the same way as Abraham Lot demonstrated hospitality (v. 3).

3. His hospitality extended into protecting them from the men of the city (vs. 4ff).

4. The angels responded by blessing Lot and his family, sparing their lives by telling

them to flee the city (vs. 12-22).

5. Lot recognized that they had blessed him by showing their lovingkindness (v. 19).

6. He was able to communicate with them about escaping to Zoar.

C. There are other examples of those who practiced hospitality in Scripture.

1. Rahab helped the spies sent into Canaan by lodging them and hiding them (Josh.

2).

2. They responded by granting her and her household life when Jericho was

destroyed (Josh. 6:22-25). Being hospitable to the agents of God results in good

things for you.

III. There are some other passages that may give us further insight into how to practice hospitality.

A. Matt. 10:40-42 refers to giving a cup of cold water.

1. It is a statement made to Jesus’ disciples regarding people receiving them as His

agents. The one who received them was receiving Jesus and the one who sent

Him.

2. The word “angel” signifies “one sent,” particularly one sent by God.

3. Prophets are certainly those “sent by God.”

4. Disciples are sent out by God in His service.

5. The one who responds positively to God’s disciples will not loose their reward, even

if it is nothing more than a cup of cold water.

B. This principle is seen again in the judgment scene of Matt. 25:31-46.

1. “When you have done it to one of the least of these you have done it to Me,” (v. 40).

2. This of their feeding the hungry, inviting strangers in, clothing the naked, giving

drink to the thirsty.

3. These are all elements of hospitality.

4. Notice their unawareness. “When did we . . . ?”

C. Already in the texts we have considered we are enlarging on our understanding of

“angels.”

1. We usually think of “angels” as special spirit beings sent out from heaven by God.

2. But sometimes “angels” are human beings sent out by God. Sometimes disciples

(Matt. 10:40ff). Sometimes “the least of these, brothers of Mine” (Matt. 25:40).

IV. Who are the angels in Heb. 13:2?

A. By the very nature of the language they are not specifically identified.

1. Some entertained angels without knowing it.

2. They were strangers. Prisoners(?) (v.3). Spouses (?) (v. 4).

B. In Heb. 1:1; 2:2 they were those who spoke the word.

C. In Matt. 22:1ff those who invited people to the wedding feast were agents sent out by

the King.

D. Gal. 6:6-10 commends sharing good things (practicing hospitality?) with those who

teach the word. Note that the sowing is to the teacher. There is blessing of eternal life

to those who sow to the Spirit.

E. 3 John 5-8 speak of acting faithfully to brethren, especially when they are strangers. It

is a manifestation of love to support them and be fellow workers with them. Isn’t this at

least one manifestation of hospitality when we send them on their way in a manner

worthy of God? Cf. Acts 13:3; Lk. 10:3-16.

Conclusion:

1. Biblical hospitality is not just having your friends over for coffee.

2. It is about encouraging those sent to you by God.

3. Have you entertained angels unaware? Have you entertained the Lord unaware? Jesus said, “When you have done it to the least of these you have done it to Me.”