

Can We Still Be Entertaining Angels?

By David Lee Burris

To properly answer this question we have to examine what Hebrews 13:2 cannot mean before we can examine what the passage most likely means.

Most Commentators Make Connection to Abraham(Genesis 18) & Lot(Genesis 19) Both Being “Aware” Entertaining Angels.

Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible

for thereby some have entertained angels unawares; as Abraham, [Genesis 18:1](#), he knew them not to be angels at first; they appeared as men, and he treated them as such; but they were angels, yea, one of them was Jehovah himself; and hereby he received many favours, [Genesis 18:10](#), and Lot, [Genesis 19:1](#) who knew not that they were angels he took into his house; but they were, and he was delivered by them from the burning of Sodom; **yea, some have unawares, this way, entertained Christ himself, [Luke 24:15](#) and indeed, entertaining of his members is entertaining him, [Matthew 25:38](#).** It is an observation of a Jewish writer (r) upon the first of these instances;

"from hence we learn (says he) how great is the strength (or virtue) of the reception of travellers (or hospitality), as the Rabbins of blessed memory say, greater is, "hospitality", than the reception of the face of the Shechinah."

Matthew Poole's Commentary

For thereby some have entertained angels unawares; the advantage that accrues to such hosts of the Christian church and its members is great; for in the exercise of this duty, Abraham and Lot, being strangers, and waiting to entertain such, received angels into their tabernacle and house, [Genesis 18:2,3](#), and had sweet discoveries of God in the Messiah made to them; were delivered by them from judgment, as Lot, [Genesis 19:10,15-17](#). And now the general guard of angels goeth along with the saints, and are entertained in them, who never come without a blessing, they attending them in their way, defending them against evil spirits, and offensive ones and places where they are, though their ministry be little observed or acknowledged as it ought, [Hebrews 1:14](#). Not only angels, but Christ himself accompanieth his pilgrim members, and is entertained, fed, comforted, and lodged in and with them, [Matthew 10:40-42 25:34-36](#); and for this will he reward them in both worlds.

Most Commentators Make Connection to the Old Testament Societal Laws of Hospitality.

Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible

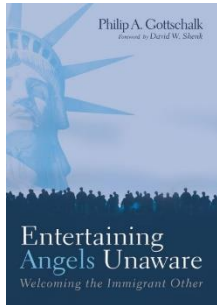
Be not forgetful to entertain strangers,.... By whom are meant, not unconverted men, who are strangers to God and Christ, and the covenants of promise; nor saints, who are as pilgrims and strangers in this world; but such as are of another country, and are unknown; and even though wicked men, they are not excluded; though such as are obliged to quit their own country for righteousness sake are chiefly designed; all strangers in distress are meant, and **hospitality** is to be exercised towards them; which lies negatively in doing nothing to distress them & positively in providing food, raiment, lodging, &c. for them, and in comforting, counselling, and directing them in all matters in which they may stand in need thereof: and that this is a duty, appears from the light of nature, and practices of the Heathens, [Acts 28:2](#), from the express law of God, [Deuteronomy 10:19](#) and many others made in favor of strangers, binding on the Jews; from the sundry exhortations to it in the New Testament, [Romans 12:13](#) and from the exhortation here not to forget it; and from the great regard which Christ will show to such as mind it, and his disregard to others at the last day: the persons who are to exercise it are not only the ministers of the Gospel, who should be given to hospitality; but all the saints, even the meaner sort are not exempted, but should use it according to their ability; though it is chiefly binding on those that are rich. And this should not be forgot, but pursued and followed after; it should be frequently performed; men should be given, and used to it; it should be done without grudging, and in a friendly and loving manner.

Matthew Poole's Commentary

The next duty suitable to Christ's kingdom, is **hospitality** to Christian strangers.

Be not forgetful to entertain strangers; be neither ignorant nor unmindful: by which charge they are bound strongly and always not to have this out of mind, though it may be out of hand; and the negative confirms the positive duty, removing hinderances, and enjoining it strictly, that they have a love and desire to the duty, bearing affection to the person of a Christian brother though a stranger, unknown and brought by Providence to them, [Matthew 22:39](#) [25:35](#); and to the work of being an host, of entertaining such Christians; xenov signifying an host as well as a stranger or guest. It is a love to be an hospitable person that is here required, [Titus 1:8](#); (such was Gaius to Paul and the church, [Romans 16:23](#)); importing a kind, courteous reception of Christians into their houses, being harbourless, which Christ promiseth them, [Luke 18:29](#) [1 Timothy 5:10](#); a free and cheerful provision for their necessary refreshing, [Genesis 18:4-6](#); with a careful furtherance and assistance of them in the work of God, and helping them to persevere in the same, [3Jo 1:6-8](#).

Liberal Theologians Extend the Rationale of the O.T. System Making Modern Application to Present Nation-States & Human Migration:



Book Synopsis. “The United States and many western European nations have grown by immigration. What sort of reception have immigrants been given by Christians? Are Christians today aware of the need of people suffering from war and/or persecution to immigrate to safe places?

In earlier times immigrants were generally "like us." Now many immigrants are often Muslims, who not only dress distinctively, but practice a different religious creed as well. Many fear that terrorists will enter our country under the guise of immigrants. Christians, however, belong to another kingdom, the kingdom of Jesus the Messiah. A Christian response to the needs of refugees and immigrants should reflect their commitment to Christ more than their fears or political allegiances.

Through stories of immigrants in the past and present, this book aims to show that not only is it safe to accept them, but our commitment to Christ compels us to help those less fortunate than ourselves.” - *Amazon*

Early Christians Made Merchandise Out Of Themselves By Over-Extending to Grifters.



The Death of Peregrinus

“You see, these misguided creatures start with the general conviction that they are immortal for all time, which explains the contempt of death and voluntary self-devotion which are so common among them; and when it was impressed on them by their original lawgiver that they are all brothers, from the moment they are converted, and deny the gods of Greece, and worship that crucified sage, and live after his laws. All this they take quite on trust, with the result that they despise all worldly goods alike, regarding them merely as common property. Now an adroit, unscrupulous fellow, who has seen the world, has only to get among these simple souls, and his fortune is pretty soon made; he plays with them.” - Lucian of Samosata,

Anabaptist Pacifists & Social Gospel Adherents Don't Distinguish Between Itinerant Preachers & Criminal Element in Open Home Hospitality.

In my opinion, early translations of Hebrews 13:2 contributed to this false emphasis:

“Be not forgetful to lodge strangers. For thereby have diverse received angels into their **houses** unawares,” (Tyndale New Testament, see also Coverdale, Matthew Bible, Great Bible).

“Be not forgetful to **lodge** strangers: For thereby some having lodged Angels, were unawares thereof,” (Bishops Bible).

NEW TESTAMENT WORD STUDY LINKS:

Hebrews 13:1-2

- *"Let brotherly love continue.*
- *Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares".*

There are a few things we should understand when searching for the true meaning of this verse. Number one, the word angel here is the Greek word [*aggelos*], meaning messenger. It is *not necessarily* divinely inspired as with an angel, that is the anglicized form of the Greek word meaning messenger.

Number two, the word translated "entertain strangers" is the Greek word [*philoxenox*], meaning to be friendly to those who you don't know. It's taken from the root words [*philos*] meaning friend, and [*xenos*] which here means someone with whom you are not acquainted. This is the only place where this is translated ***entertain strangers***, its normal translation is hospitality. This verse is declaring that we should always be hospitable or friendly to those who we do not know, because thereby some have entertained (or hosted) messengers. The hospitality that Christians show should be to all men, that the love of God will be illustrated in their good conduct. In fact, that Greek word [*xenos*] in certain contexts can mean any of three things. It can mean a stranger (*an alien or pilgrim*), or by implication it can mean a guest (*being a visitor in your household*), or by extension it can mean to be a host (*to entertain or be a host to a stranger to your household*).

We can use the understanding of this word as a goad for us, that in all we do, we show forth the [*agape*] love or charity which Christ has shown to us. For we do not know in which of these roles we may be at any time. Whether a guest, or a host, or a stranger ourselves, in any role we find ourselves we should show God's love by being neighborly and benevolent. This is what is so often difficult for many Christians to do in our day...

Romans 12:13

- "Distributing to the necessity of saints; **given to hospitality**".

That is the exact same word [*philox'enos*] that is translated as "entertain strangers" in Hebrews 13:2. God is exhorting us to be friendly to strangers. As faithful Christians we are to have a gracious disposition and remain hospitable to all men. He must be friendly to strangers, gracious to those who he is not really familiar with. He must have the selfless charity or love of Christ in showing hospitality to those who he may come upon such as wayfarers, visitors, travelers or strangers. As the prophets of old would treat pilgrims as honored guests.

1st Peter 4:8-10

- "And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.
- **Use hospitality** one to another without grudging.
- As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."

We are obliged to be good stewards (*caretakers*) of the Grace that God has laid upon us, by reflecting that grace onto others. Indeed, true hospitality necessarily requires generosity as it is the selfless giving of ourselves in a way that naturally the flesh doesn't want to give. It requires the love of God, which is the greatest of all Commandments, and is born of the Spirit. Likewise, the second commandment is part and parcel of it, namely to love your neighbor as yourself. – *Internet Site*

To properly answer this question we have to examine what Hebrews 13:2 cannot mean before we can examine what the passage most likely means.

Hebrews 13:1-2

- *"Let brotherly love continue.*
- *Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares".*

HEBREWS 13:1 PLACES VERSE TWO IN CONTEXT OF THE ASSEMBLED & HEBREWS 13:3 ADMONISHES TO KEEP IN MIND THOSE THAT CANNOT ATTEND. IT SEEMS TO REASON HEBREWS 13:2 REFERENCES THOSE THAT HAVE NOT PLACED MEMBERSHIP – STRANGERS TO THE LOCAL ASSEMBLY.

Linchpin For Understanding Hebrews 13:2 Admonishment Revelation's Angel Salutations

www.gotquestions.org

Are the “angels” of the churches in Revelation 1-3 real angels, or are they human messengers?

Scope & Focus Revelation 2nd & 3rd Chapters **Congregational Lampstands & Locus Angels**

New International Greek Testament Commentary – The Book of Revelation by G. K. Beale:

Verse 1:20b – “The lampstands now are clearly explained to be the ‘churches.’ The reference to ‘angels’ has been variously identified as (1) heavenly beings, (2) heavenly beings who are representatives of or guardians over the churches so that the churches are also in mind, (3) human leaders/representatives of the churches, (4) personifications of the prevailing spirit or character of the churches. The ‘angels’ in 1:20 include *both* heavenly beings & the earthly churches, according to the idea of corporate representation, which is suggested further by recognizing that angelic beings are corporately identified with Christians as their heavenly counterparts elsewhere in the book: the angel in 19:10 and 22:9 says, ‘I am a fellow servant of you and your brothers.’ In addition, the angel in Revelation 8:3-4 seems to represent saints, since he receives their prayers and presents them before God. **Consequently, the ‘angels’ in 1:20b refer to heavenly beings who also represent the church.**” (NIGTC, page 217)

SALUTATIONS TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES IN FIRST **THREE CHAPTERS OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION** **ADDRESS ANGELS MUCH MORE THAN MESSENGER**

IN SUMMATION, WE NEED NOT TO LINK HEBREWS
13:2 WITH THE FIRST BOOK GENESIS OF THE OLD
TESTAMENT BUT RATHER WITH REVELATION THE
LAST BOOK OF THE NEW TESTAMENT. MOREOVER,
HEBREWS 13:2 APPLIES TO VISITOR STRANGERS TO
THE CHRISTIAN ASSEMBLY. WE CAN LOOK TO THE
GOOD SAMARITAN PARABLE FOR GUIDANCE FROM
THE LORD REDEFINING IN GENERAL APPLICATION
PROXIMITY STRANGER AS NEXT DOOR NEIGHBOR.
IN CONCLUSION, THE ANSWER TO OUR QUESTION
OF WHETHER WE MIGHT ENTERTAIN ANGELS
TODAY IN OUR ASSEMBLIES IS A FIRM – MAYBE!

First Corinthians 11: 10 Confirms Angel Visitation Within Congregational Context

Erasmus paraphrases it well: "If a woman has arrived at that pitch of shamelessness that she does not fear the eyes of men, let her at least cover her head on account of the angels, who are present at your assemblies."

VINCENT'S WORD STUDIES - The holy angels, who were supposed by both the Jewish and the early Christian Church to be present in worshipping assemblies. More, however, seems to be meant than "to avoid exciting disapproval among them." The key-note of Paul's thought is subordination according to the original divine order. Woman best asserts her spiritual equality before God, not by unsexing herself, but by recognizing her true position and fulfilling its claims, even as do the angels, who are ministering as well as worshipping spirits ([Hebrews 1:4](#)). She is to fall in obediently with that divine economy of which she forms a part with the angels, and not to break the divine harmony, which especially asserts itself in worship, where the angelic ministers mingle with the earthly worshippers; nor to ignore the example of the holy ones who keep their first estate, and serve in the heavenly sanctuary.

POOLE'S COMMENTARY. The most and best interpreters understand here by *angels*, the good angels; for the apostle would hardly have spoken of devils under the notion of angels, especially speaking to deter persons from actions; and so it teaches us, that the good angels, who are ministering spirits for the good of God's elect, at all times have a special ministration, or at least are more particularly present, in the assemblies of people for religious worship, observing the persons, carriage, and demeanor; the sense of which ought to awe all persons attending those services, from any indecent and unworthy behavior.

ELLCOTT'S COMMENTARY. *Because of the angels*—Why should a woman have her head covered (either with her natural veil of hair, or with an artificial veil shrouding her face) because of the angels? The same objections which have been already stated to any alteration of the usual Greek text of the earlier clause of this verse apply equally here. The MS. evidence is unanimous in favor of the word "angels," nor can we accept any of the figurative meanings attached to the word angel as "the president" (see [Revelation 2:1](#)), or "messenger," sent by enemies to see what took place contrary to general custom in those assemblies. We must take the word "angel" in its ordinary and general sense.

That the angels were present in assemblies for worship was an idea prevalent among the Jews ([Psalm 138:1](#), in the LXX.), and regarded as they were by the Christian as "ministering spirits" ([Hebrews 1:14](#)), no doubt their presence would be realized in the meetings of Christians.

BARNES COMMENTARY. The obvious interpretation would be, that a woman should have a veil on her head because of the angels who were supposed to be present, observing them in their public worship; and it is generally agreed that the word "power" (ἐξουσίαν exousian) denotes a veil, or a covering for the head.

Because of the angels - Some have explained this of good angels, who were supposed to be present in their assemblies (see Doddridge); others refer it to evil angels; and others to messengers or spies who, it has been supposed, were present in their public assemblies, and who would report greatly to the disadvantage of the Christian assemblies if the women were seen to be unveiled. I do not know what it means; and I regard it as one of the very few passages in the Bible whose meaning as yet is wholly inexplicable. The most natural interpretation seems to me to be this: "A woman in the public assemblies, and in speaking in the presence of people, should wear a veil - the usual symbol of modesty and subordination - because the angels of God are witnesses of your public worship [Hebrews 1:13](#), and because they know and appreciate the propriety of subordination and order in public assemblies."

According to this, it would mean that the simple reason would be that the angels were witnesses of their worship; and that they were the friends of propriety, due subordination, and order; and that they ought to observe these in all assemblies convened for the worship of God - I do not know that this sense has been proposed by any commentator; but it is one which strikes me as the most obvious and natural, and consistent with the context.

IN MY OPINION, THE INSPIRED HEBREW WRITER IS SHARING HIS OWN EXPERIENCE & ASSUMPTION OF ANGELS PHYSICALLY PERSONIFIED AS STRANGER ADVISING THE ADOPTION OF THIS OUTLOOK FOR USHERS/GREETERS AS AN OPERATIVE PRINCIPLE!

Hebrews 13:1-2 Let love of the brethren continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels unawares.

The Hebrew writer begins by saying that the love of the brethren needs to continue. When I read this verse, the first thing that comes to mind is that for brotherly love to continue it first must exist. Hospitality is one of the lost arts of the Christian Age. The need for help that was necessary in the early days of the church may not be the same today, but at least the thought should still be there. We need to understand that the opportunities for hospitality may have changed but the need for it still very much exists. Have you ever thought, "Well, I'm too good to help that person" or perhaps, "Why should I help that person?" We may not actually bring these phrases to our tongues but in our minds we are shouting these thoughts from the mountaintops. We can say that we care and we want to help, but be honest, ask yourself, "What have I done lately?" Scriptures tell us to show hospitality to strangers, but we even have a hard time expressing it to those that we see on a regular basis.



The Bible says that by showing hospitality to strangers some have entertained angels without even knowing it. Hospitality is a little bit of a selfish act. You are thinking what is he talking about? What I am trying to say is that by not being hospitable we are in fact robbing ourselves of a blessing. Not only can we help those in need, but the one showing hospitality actually feels better about themselves. In fact, we then fulfill another passage of scripture that tells us *to bear one another's burdens*. Try helping someone

you know and also help someone you do not know. Remember angels do not always appear as we think they should, many times they appear just as ordinary people we could serve if we only had the mind to be hospitable. – Harlan Indiana Church of Christ

Angels Unaware

BELLA VISTA CHURCH OF CHRIST

Angels Unaware

**"Be not forgetful to entertain strangers:
for thereby some have entertained angels unawares"
(Hebrews 13.2)**

I have often wondered about that possibility. I have wondered if angels quit coming to earth after the resurrection of Jesus, or, if they may still occasionally join our human ranks.

Entertaining angels unaware? This fact is used to encourage us to be hospitable toward others. Some who showed kindness in the past were actually showing kindness to angels.

Throughout Scripture we are reminded that...

- ❖ Angels are involved in ordaining God's plan (Galatians 3:19),
- ❖ Will hear Jesus confess our name in heaven (Luke 12:8,9),
- ❖ Serve as agents on behalf of children (Matthew 18:10),
- ❖ Rejoice when a sinner repents (Luke 15:10),
- ❖ Are currently ministering to those who will inherit salvation (Hebrew 1:14),
- ❖ Will return with Jesus when He comes again (Matthew 25:31).

While angels are real beings who perform real service to God and man, the focus of our service is not to entertain angels, but to follow in the steps of Jesus. We serve the Master they serve, and glorify the One they glorify. The apostle Paul reminds us to reject any message which differs from the teachings of Jesus, even if that message comes through an angel from heaven: *"Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed"* (Galatians 1:8).

Still, we remain aware that God sends special people into our lives and commissions us to treat them as we would an angel from His presence. There, in that moment, we may meet God.

