

STUDY TWELVE – ANGELS IN THE BOOK OF ACTS!

“For there stood by me this night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve, saying, ‘Do not be afraid, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar; and indeed, God has granted you all those who sail with you.’ Therefore, take heart, men, for I believe God that it will be just as it was told me.” (Acts 27:23-25)

INTRODUCTION

Some people claim that the ministry of angels on earth ceased after the coming of the Holy Spirit, an event which is recorded in Acts 2. The book of Acts refutes this. The Holy Spirit is not a substitute for angels.

This study summarizes the ministry of angels during the time of the early church as recorded in the book of Acts.

ANGELIC ACTIVITY IN ACTS

- **Angels announce the return of Jesus after His ascension.**

“Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.” (Acts 1:9-11)

These were two angels in white apparel appeared as men announcing to the disciples of Jesus that just as Jesus was taken to heaven, so He will come back in like manner.

- **An angel delivered the disciples from prison.**

“And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, so that they brought the sick out into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them. Also, a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed. Then the high priest rose up, and all those who were with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with indignation, and laid their hands on the apostles and put them in the common prison. But at night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said, “Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life.” And when they heard that, they entered the temple early in the morning and taught. But the high priest and those with him came and called the council together, with all the elders of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought.” (Acts 5:14-21)

The angel delivered the disciples from prison and gave them a new mandate for ministry: “Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life.” The disciples obeyed, were subsequently called before the council and the high priest and gave a powerful witness to the Gospel.

- **An angel directed Philip’s evangelistic ministry.**

“Now an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, “Arise and go toward the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” This is desert. So, he arose and went. And behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace the queen of the Ethiopians, who had charge of all her treasury,

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and had come to Jerusalem to worship, was returning. And sitting in his chariot, he was reading Isaiah the prophet. Then the Spirit said to Philip, “Go near and overtake this chariot.”” (Acts 8:26-29)

The angel directed Philip to go into the desert, then the Holy Spirit told him to join himself to the Ethiopian. This reveals how angels and the Holy Spirit function together in accomplishing God’s purposes. As a result of this encounter, the seeking Ethiopian was saved and baptized in water. It is believed that he is responsible to taking the Gospel to the continent of Africa upon his return home.

- **An angel directed Cornelius to send for Peter.**

There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian Regiment, a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always. About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God coming in and saying to him, “Cornelius!” And when he observed him, he was afraid, and said, “What is it, lord?” So, he said to him, “Your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before God. Now send men to Joppa and send for Simon whose surname is Peter. He is lodging with Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea. He will tell you what you must do.” And when the angel who spoke to him had departed, Cornelius called two of his household servants and a devout soldier from among those who waited on him continually. So, when he had explained all these things to them, he sent them to Joppa.” (Acts 10:1-8)

Cornelius was a productive man, a good man, a religious man, and a generous man—but he did not know Jesus as Lord as Savior. You may be a good, productive, religious and generous person and even live a moral life, but you still need salvation through Jesus!

While Cornelius was talking with the angel and dispatching his servants, Peter had a vision preparing him to go to minister to these Gentiles. Note that in Peter’s message to the household of Cornelius there was no call for response, no soft music, no strong appeal—none of the things we sometimes think necessary in order for people to respond to the Gospel. The Word of God was sufficient. The entire household was saved, baptized in water, and filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:9-48). When you are God-directed, Spirit-empowered, and have the assistance of angels, you do not have to strive to “make things happen” in ministry. Whenever you have a “divine appointment” like this one, it very well may have been orchestrated by angels even though you were unaware of their activity.

- **An angel delivered Peter from prison.**

“Peter was therefore kept in prison, but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church. And when Herod was about to bring him out, that night Peter was sleeping, bound with two chains between two soldiers; and the guards before the door were keeping the prison. Now behold, an angel of the Lord stood by him, and a light shone in the prison; and he struck Peter on the side and raised him up, saying, “Arise quickly!” And his chains fell off his hands. Then the angel said to him, “Gird yourself and tie on your sandals”; and so, he did. And he said to him, “Put on your garment and follow me.” So, he went out and followed him and did not know that what was done by the angel was real but thought he was seeing a vision. When they were past the first and the second guard posts, they came to the iron gate that leads to the city, which opened to them of its own accord; and they went out and went down one street, and immediately the angel departed from him. And when Peter had come to himself, he said, “Now I know for certain that the Lord has sent His angel and has delivered me from the hand of Herod and from all the expectation of the Jewish people.”” (Acts 12:5-11)

James died in prison. Peter was delivered. What made the difference? James’ ministry was concluded while Peter’s was just beginning. This incident also confirms the power of prayer to God which results in the release of ministering angels.

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- **An angel brought judgment on wicked Herod.**

“Now Herod had been very angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon; but they came to him with one accord, and having made Blastus the king’s personal aide their friend, they asked for peace, because their country was supplied with food by the king’s country. So, on a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat on his throne and gave an oration to them. And the people kept shouting, “The voice of a god and not of a man!” Then immediately an angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give glory to God. And he was eaten by worms and died. But the word of God grew and multiplied.” (Acts 12:20-24)

This angel was used to bring judgment. As we will learn in latter studies on this topic of angels, angels will play a major role in the execution of God’s judgment in the end-times (Revelation).

- **An angel encouraged Paul during the storm.**

The Apostle Paul was on a ship being tossed around in the sea by a ferocious storm. Despite the crew’s best attempts, it seemed as if the vessel was doomed...

“But after long abstinence from food, then Paul stood in the midst of them and said, “Men, you should have listened to me and not have sailed from Crete and incurred this disaster and loss. And now I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. For there stood by me this night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve, saying, ‘Do not be afraid, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar; and indeed, God has granted you all those who sail with you.’ Therefore, take heart, men, for I believe God that it will be just as it was told me.” (Acts 27:21-25)

Paul was encouraged by an angel, shared that encouragement with others, and every person on board the ship was saved.

THE BOOK OF ACTS CONTINUES

The Acts of the Holy Spirit through the disciples did not cease with the final pages of the book of Acts. The Trinity of God continues to work in and through Believers. And part of that miraculous work is the ministry of angels to and through His people.