

WHEN THE ANGELS HAD GONE AWAY

Luke 2:8-15 records angels appearing to shepherds in the field. Of course, on that occasion they were announcing the birth of Jesus to shepherds in the field. It is a wondrous scene recorded by Luke as an angel of the Lord proclaimed, "I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people..." He then proclaimed that in "the city of David" a Savior had been born. The shepherds see a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward all men." This is but one example of angels appearing to mankind. An interesting study would be to consider how various individuals responded after angels appeared and then left. What did they do when the angel has gone away?

I. When the Angels Had Gone away

- a. Concerning our text: After the angels left, we read in vs. 15, "When the angels had gone away from them..." How did the shepherds respond? They said to each other, "Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us." So with haste, they to Bethlehem and find Jesus lying in the manger. After this, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning the child. **NOTICE how after they saw this, they went and investigated.**
- b. On another occasion, we find angels appearing after Jesus arose – Luke 24:1-9ff. As certain women went to the tomb, the body of Jesus was gone, but "two men stood by them in shining garments..." (Matthew 28:5 calls them angels). They proclaimed that Jesus was not there. What did the women do? Vs. 8-9 tells us that they returned from the tomb and told what they had seen to the 11.
- c. Acts 10:3-8. Cornelius, a just man, has a vision in which he CLEARLY sees an angel who tells him his prayers have been heard and instructs him to send for Peter. What did Cornelius do? He quickly called to of his servants and a soldier and sent them to Joppa to find Peter.
- d. It is interesting to observe that in these and other Biblical instances, after they saw an angel, they did not keep it to themselves. Instead they responded based on the instructions they had been given and most went and told others about what they had been told.
- e. This lesson today is not about angels. It is about responding to what they had heard. It is interesting to note that the word for angel in the NT ἄγγελος (angelos) actually means a messenger. The word is found ~180 times in the NT, and most of our versions do a good job of only using the word angel when it is reference to a messenger sent directly from God. When the word "angel" is used, it is almost always a messenger of God (though at times it has reference to the angels of Satan). But a handful of times, the word has reference to a messenger. For example: Luke 7:27, Jesus quotes from Malachi 3:1 in reference to John the Baptist, "*Behold, I send My messenger before your face, who will prepare Your way before You.*" James 2:25 makes reference to the "messengers" that Rahab received prior to Jericho being destroyed. Luke 9:52, as Jesus was heading toward Jerusalem, He "sent messengers before His face" who went to a village of the Samaritans. Luke 7:24 mentions the "messengers of John" who came to Jesus.
- f. When a preacher preaches today, he is a messenger. If he has preached the truth, he is a messenger of God in that message. That's what preaching is about – cf. 2 Timothy 4:2. He is not inspired, but he has studied the word of God and is presenting that as his message. The QUESTION we ask: What happens when the message is complete?
- g. This past week, we invited JR Bronger to come and share the word of God with us. He presented the message of God's word on a number of subjects that are true to God's word. The question is, Now that the messenger is gone, how will we respond?

- II. The message that has been presented.
- a. **Let Not Man Separate** – beginning with Matthew 19:9, we began our meeting by discussing the traditional family.
 - i. In this lesson we noted some things that can make a marriage strong and “divorce proof”. We were encouraged to make a “prenuptial agreement”. NOT the type we read about in Hollywood that involves money, but an agreement that
 1. 1) Our marriage is to be a covenant – between one another and God;
 2. 2) That we will do whatever is necessary to make a marriage succeed, meaning we are willing to work at it;
 3. 3) We agree to fulfill our individual roles as defined by God.
 - ii. We need to strive to be wiser than Solomon. He was endowed with wisdom from heaven, yet in the end, he acted foolishly. He had 700 wives and 300 concubines (likely most of them were as a result of treaties and alliances with surrounding nations and kings). They brought with them their idols which resulted in Solomon turning away from YHWH.
 1. From God’s word we learn that it was His intent that there be One Man + One Woman for life (Genesis 2:18-24)
 2. Our marriage needs to be a resolve to a lifetime of companionship (cf. Malachi 2:14).
 3. We commit to leave our father and mother and be joined to one another (Matthew 19:5).
 - iii. Finally, it was recommended that as husbands and wives we learn to talk to one another. (Ephesians 4:25-29).
 1. We must resolve to always speak the truth to each other (Vs. 25)
 2. Do not let the sun set on your anger (vs. 26)
 3. Put away all corrupt words (vs. 29) – learn to “fight right” if you have to.
 - b. **When the Thorn is Not Removed** – Sunday, evening Paul’s thorn in the flesh from 2 Corinthians 12:7
 - i. The idea of a “thorn in the flesh” is something that persistently bothers you but you can’t seem to get rid of it. We are not told what Paul’s thorn in the flesh was – it could have been physical (eyesight, a speech impediment, his wounds, headaches, or some other ailment), emotional (his constant concern for the churches – 2 Cor. 11:28), adversarial (dealing with his persecuting enemies, or perhaps ungodly brethren), or even discouragement. Whatever it was, Paul pleaded with the Lord 3 times to remove it and was told, “My grace is sufficient for you...”
 - ii. Many (or all of us) may have a thorn in the flesh. Some things we were reminded of is that Satan is the source of all suffering. He will use to dig at your heart and that of every believer. And as Jesus stated in John 8:44, he is a liar. Any message that he delivers is a lie and deceitful. We need to beware of his exploitation (2 Corinthians 2:11, 1 Petr 5:8-9)
 - iii. “My grace is sufficient for you” was the answer the Lord gave Paul. It was not what he wanted to hear, but he accepted it (2 Corinthians 12:9-10) and determined that he would use his suffering to make him better. When we struggle with suffering and dealing with a “thorn in the flesh”, whatever that might be, let us resolve that we are going to use it to make us better (cf. James 1:2-4).
 - iv. So what can we do, “when the thorn is not removed”? 5 suggestions were given:
 1. Reject Satan’s lying message – he is not your friend and is NOT telling you what is best for you.
 2. Revive your daily prayer dependence – keep praying (James 5:13)
 3. Resist the urge to become bitter – bitterness and like qualities will never help you get where you need to be.

4. Reestablish your spiritual relationships – God has given us each other for strength in troubling times (cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:12 – warn, comfort, uphold and be patient). 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 – as we are comforted, we can comfort each other.
 5. Rely unconditionally upon God – cast your cares on Him (1 Peter 5:6-7).
- c. **Do you Want to Be Made Well?** Based on an account in John 5 where Jesus goes to the pool of Bethesda and find a man who had an infirmity for 38 years that kept him from being able to walk. Jesus asks him, “Do you want to be made well?” Rather than an obvious, “Yes”, he expressed his defeat and inability to do what he needed to do to be healed.
- i. The observation is made that many people deal with struggles of varying sorts. They want to overcome them and improve their lives. BUT, they are UNWILLING to take the necessary steps to free themselves of whatever that struggle is. Therefore, they remain bound which is the easier course. And thus they remain in miserable state and even get used to being there.
 - ii. Often they will make excuses, but the truth is deep down they do not want to get well. The consequences of their condition are not worse than the efforts to get out of that condition.
 1. Some enjoy being victims,
 2. Some blame others for their struggles
 3. Some are afraid of the changes and consequences that they might or will bring.
 4. Many just want “relief” instead of the cure.
 - iii. We can make this very personal as we examine our lives (cf. 2 Corinthians 13:5)
 1. Do you REALLY want your marriage to become better?
 2. Do you REALLY want to break your addiction or habits? Whether substance or behavioral. (And I might add – whether sinful or not. There are things that might not be sinful within themselves but we are brought under their power – various forms of entertainment, or social media, etc.
 3. Do you REALLY want to become more spiritual?
 4. Do you REALLY want your children to be more devout in serving the Lord?
 5. Do you REALLY want to be saved?
 - iv. The point of this lesson is: Until we MAKE UP OUR MIND to change, we will not do what needs to be done.
- d. **Nothing I Can do About It Now** – on Tuesday, a lesson was presented that deals with regrets. We look at our past, especially our failures. How do we handle these? The realization is: There is nothing you can do to change the past.
- i. 3 examples were given:
 1. Esau who sold his birthright for a bowl of stew;
 2. Moses at Kadesh struck the rock when told by YHWH to speak to it to give the Israelites water in the wilderness and was forbidden to enter the Promised Land of Canaan;
 3. When David committed adultery with Bathsheba and they conceived a child, that the LORD said would die. These were the consequences of the LORD, but there was nothing they could do about it after the fact.
 - ii. The point is that remorse is a heavy burden to carry. And we often do or say things we regret and there are consequences – adultery, addictions of all sorts, out of control anger, materialism, our failure to assemble and worship God, our failure to raise our children to be godly, broken relationships, unscriptural divorce, having an abortion, etc.
 - iii. So what is the solution?
 1. Seek the Lord’s forgiveness NOW! Repent!
 2. Forget about the past (Philippians 3:14) and press toward the goal. The whole point of this lesson – the past is the past. The future is ahead of you.
 3. Begin making better choices as you move forward

4. Don't blame God for the consequences you face. The consequences are there. You may not be able to change them, but you CAN determine HOW you will deal with them. NOTE: Your attitude has everything to do with how you will handle them.
- e. **The Story Continues** – In this lesson on Wednesday, JR spoke about how Acts, which tells the story of the growth and spread of the NT church, even without many of the conveniences we now have and often take for granted. The book ends rather abruptly with Paul in prison in Rome in Acts 28. In this lesson, he made reference to Acts 29 – a chapter that does not exist in the Bible, but his point was, “The story continues.” WHAT are we doing to keep the gospel going? 4 points were presented.
- i. Do we trust in His great power to save? Consider Romans 1:16 – the gospel is the power of God unto salvation.
 - ii. Are we willing to be bold in the face of opposition?
 - iii. Will we make dramatic changes in our lives – realizing that our example is our greatest tool at reaching others.
 - iv. Are we willing to reach out to ALL the lost, regardless of who they are? James 2:1-10 warns about showing partiality.
- The gospel that was preached in the first century is still needed today. Will we do our part to “go into all the world and make disciples of every nation”? Matthew 28:19-20
- f. **Saved to Serve** – our final lesson was a call to be servants. We are saved, not to just think about ourselves, but we need to be concerned about others. That is what the transforming gospel will do in our lives.
- i. Philippians 2:7 speaks of how Jesus left heaven and came to this earth as a bondservant. He came not to be served but to serve – Matthew 20:28.
 - ii. Jesus demonstrated service when He washed the disciples feet as recorded in John 13, esp. vs. 15-16. In so doing He has given us an example of service.
 - iii. We find examples in scripture of “The heart of a true servant”.
 1. Phoebe in Romans 16:1 – a woman described as “a servant of the church at Cenchrea”. NOTE: There is nothing in the text that implies she was a “deaconess”
 2. Paul – 1 Corinthians 9:19 – he became a servant to all, adapting without compromise so that he could win more.
 3. The “good Samaritan” – Luke 10:33-36, who stopped to help a man in need, and he did not care about his ethnicity, but simply saw a person in need.
 4. We are called to be servants to one another in love - Galatians 5:13.
 - iv. What does the heart of a servant look like?
 1. It is always reliable – can be counted upon – 2 Timothy 2:4
 2. It is constantly attentive – looking for opportunities – Galatians 6:10
 3. Is free from all excuses – Romans 12:9-10
 4. Is of a humble character – 1 Peter 5:5
 5. Is continually available – 1 Corinthians 4:2 – faithful
 - v. The lesson concluded by asking, “Do I have a servant’s heart?” When I look at my life: Does it show that I really care about my brethren and others. This is demonstrated by my willingness to teach the lost, encourage the hurting, visit the sick and dying, teaching and participating in the worship and work of the church, a willingness to sacrifice and ATTENDING when I am able. A servant WILL do these things.
 - vi. Matthew 25:41-46 paints a judgment scene where those who had opportunity to serve failed to do their. The result was eternal condemnation in hell. They did NOT have a servant’s heart.

And thus our gospel meeting was concluded. Back to our title. JR was invited to come and preach the gospel to us. He did his work. In my judgment, he is a worthy messenger of the gospel. But he has now gone back

to his home and we remain. What are we going to do now? Will we consider these lessons and if we see the need for change in our lives, will we change? Or will we just keep going as we have always done? Let us resolve that we are going to be the best Christians we can be. What are we going to do now? Think about it!