



WEST VALLEY CHURCH OF CHRIST

9:30 am Bible Class—all ages	Phone Number: (623) 695-5623
10:30 am Sunday Worship	Website: www.wvcochrist.com
5:00 pm Proverbs study (online)	Email: wvchurchofchrist@gmail.com
7:00 pm Wednesday Bible Class	Facebook: West Valley church of Christ

January 16, 2022

When God Called People to Become Angels

Jesus said, “The truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). The freedom He promised was definitely needed in Samaria. “For a long time” the people there had heeded “a certain man called Simon” who “had astonished them,” sinfully setting himself up as “the great power of God” (Acts 8:9-11). It’s terrible when people are enslaved through deception, but it’s then all the more wonderful when those same people are able to see the liberating light of the glorious Gospel like those people in Samaria did (Acts 8:12). Even “Simon himself also believed,” such was the power and persuasion of the truth (Acts 8:13).

You’d think that Philip, the preacher whom God had used to deliver the Gospel in Samaria, might have stayed there to ensure that the Samaritans’ newfound freedom was maintained. God had different plans though and chose instead to send an angel to Philip who told him, “Arise and go toward the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” Luke adds rather matter-of-factly, “This is desert” (Acts 8:26). Granted, there was one truth seeking Ethiopian man on that desert road who needed to be saved, but here’s a question: why didn’t God just send that angel to the Ethiopian instead of Philip?

This isn’t the only time that God sent an angel to ensure that someone found the truth he was seeking. A couple of chapters later in Acts, Luke records the story of how a truth seeker named Cornelius became a Christian. An angel actually appeared to Cornelius himself, but rather than teach him the Gospel, it told Cornelius to send men to find Peter. “He,” the angel said, “will tell you what you must do” (Acts 10:3-6).

While I have no doubt whatsoever that the beings who spoke to Philip and Cornelius are angels, heavenly beings that descend from the spiritual realm to do whatever God requires, the term that is used to describe them can also be translated “messenger.” Their name means messenger, and clearly, they are good at conveying messages. So why didn’t they convey the message of the Gospel to the Ethiopian or Cornelius?

In between these two accounts of conversion is the account of how Saul of Tarsus became a Christian. Saul’s conversion was unique, because God’s intention for Saul was for him to become an apostle, an eyewitness of the resurrected Lord and an ambassador for Him (1 Corinthians 15:3-9; 2 Corinthians 5:20; 2 Timothy 1:10-11). To make Saul an eyewitness, Jesus Himself appeared to him (Acts 9:3-5). However, even when Jesus, the author and focal point of the Gospel message itself, was right there in front of Saul, He still told him, “Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do” (Acts 9:6). The Lord would then send Ananias to guide Saul towards obeying the Gospel message he had so vividly witnessed (Acts 9:10-11) by encouraging Saul to be baptized (22:14-16).

In three cases of conversion, neither angels nor the Lord Himself answered the question for anyone, “What must I do to be saved?” In fact, as one backs up and considers all the recorded occasions of people becoming Christians in the New Testament, though angels, the Holy Spirit, and the Lord Himself might be involved in getting people together, it is always people who answer that question for other people. While I might not know all the reasons why, this simply must be by God’s design.

Remember, the term angel can also mean “messenger.” God has never asked anyone to try to become an angelic being, but, even during a time when He was using those beings to convey direct messages to people, He was still calling people to be the messengers through whom people were taught how to obey the Gospel. After reflecting on the potential of people being saved by the Lord, Paul asked, “How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?” (Romans 10:14 ESV). The answer is, they won’t – that is, unless we decide to become angels.