

Episode #1109 Acts 1 Part 4-The Lord's Departure...and Return

I. Acts is unique in the New Testament. Rather than the ministry of Jesus Christ on earth, it focuses on what came after, when the Lord had ascended back into heaven. The Lord left His disciples with many commands to carry out, and Acts tells us how they did them.

II. The Lord's departure. Acts 1:9-11.

- A. Verse 10. As the disciples looked up with rapt attention, they were visited by two heavenly messengers who appear like men. "Men" is the Greek *aner*, meaning an adult male person, and so is often used of a husband. These beings are adult, male, and personalities, yet we can be sure that these beings are not members of Adam's race, but a heavenly race of beings.

III. The meaning of "angel" in Greek.

- A. Strictly speaking, the word *angelos* in Greek is not the name of a certain race of beings, which is what we make it to be in English. This is simply a Greek word, and it means messenger. It is no more the name of a race of beings than our word *mailman* is the name of a race of beings. It seems in relationship to us, this particular kind of heavenly being is most often used as a messenger or agent of God to His people.
- B. They look much like us. There are other kinds of heavenly beings. One kind is a spirit, about whom Christ testified in Luke 24:39. This certainly does not describe these beings with the appearance of men, for they have solid, physical form as we do. Another kind of being is what is called a *cherub*. These bear no resemblance to our silly pictures of naked babies with wings. They have a fantastic appearance: four heads, six wings, and eyes covering their bodies. Compared to these, the beings we call angels look much like us. Adam's race was created in the image of God. If the earth is the home of a race of beings that were created to look like Jesus Christ, why would heaven not also be the habitation of a race of beings that carry the same image?
- C. At the same time, on earth we have many amazing and almost miraculous-seeming creatures. Why then would heaven not have creatures dwelling there that would seem quite spectacular to us on earth? The earth only has one order of beings that we would call "higher beings." Yet there is no reason why heaven could not have three orders of beings, all of which bear a higher intelligence.

II Continued. The Lord's departure. Acts 1:9-11.

- D. Verse 11. They questioned the disciples as to their motivation in gazing up into heaven. This does not mean the disciples were doing something wrong. This question was to get their attention, and to point out an important fact. The Lord Jesus, the One Who was going up, would come back the same way. This defines how the Lord will return. No man born into this world can truly claim to be Christ. Passages on His return: Matthew 24:30. The Lord promised His coming in the clouds of heaven. Probably literal clouds, for in Acts 1:9 it was a literal rain cloud that received Him from their sight. But also clouds of angels shall accompany Him as He returns, Matthew 24:31. The Lord will return to the same place from which He was taken up, Zechariah 14:4. From Luke 24:50, Acts 1:12, Mark 11:1, and Luke 19:29, it seems likely that the Lord departed from the Mount of Olives. He will return to Israel, the very place from which He left, and will enter to rule the Kingdom that is already established for Him. We do not know when this will take place. It could not be at any moment. The Lord stated that Elijah must come first in Matthew 17:11. The Lord

must remain on the right hand of God in heaven until His enemies are made His footstool in Psalm 110:1, quoted six times in the New Testament.

IV. The Return to Prayer. Acts 1:12-14.

- A. Acts 1:12. Olivet is the same as “the Mount of Olives.” This is the last mention of this mountain in Scripture. The Lord will return to this mountain. A Sabbath day’s journey is about a half-mile, a Jewish tradition not demanded by Scripture. They obey Acts 1:4 by returning to the city. They did not jump the gun by trying to start their work right away. We must be sure that we too do not try to start the Lord’s work without the Spirit. We need the power that comes from a knowledge of the Word!
- B. Verse 13. “Upper room” is the Greek *huperOon*, and meant the highest part of the house. Remember, the Lord had lived as an itinerant preacher, Matthew 8:20. Yet the eleven had been in Jerusalem for some time now, so they had found this place of lodging. This is the last we read of their accommodations, so we do not know if they dwelt here throughout the book of Acts. We have a list of the twelve, the last such list in Scripture. Appendix 141 of the *Companion Bible*, all the lists of the twelve follow a similar format. Each contains three groups of four disciples. Each disciple is always in the same group of four, although the order of the four is not always the same. The first disciple in each group of four is always the same. This case is unique, in that Judas has died and lost his place, so there is a “hole” at the end. This is filled in verse 26, where the twelfth name occurs.
- C. Verse 14. “Prayer” is the Greek *proseuche*, and is only used for prayer to the true God, and can be used for a place where prayer is made. “Supplication” is the Greek *deEsis*, and means entreaty in view of a need, although it can also be used for the need itself. They didn’t waste time while waiting, but used it for prayer. Not just the eleven praying, but also the women who were with them. This is the last time we have mention of Mary, and it is in prayer. We see her faithful at the end, yet she is just one of the group, in no way exalted. Mary was a blessed servant of the Lord. We should not imagine that she was anything more.

V. Conclusion: The angels announced the Lord’s return just after His ascension into heaven. This will not be a secret return or a reincarnation, but a return just as He went. It cannot be any time, but must follow the Biblical timetable. Elijah must come first. The twelve obeyed the Lord’s last commands to them and waited in prayer for His promise. Let us too await His promises to us in an attitude of prayer and anticipation.