

**ANGEL ADVICE**  
**Rev. Lawrence Baldrige**  
**March 30, 2008**

*The Holy Bible, New International Version.*

Ac 1:1 In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach  
Ac 1:2 until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen.

Ac 1:3 After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.

Ac 1:4 On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: *“Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about.*”

Ac 1:5 *For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”*

Ac 1:6 So when they met together, they asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?”

Ac 1:7 He said to them: *“It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority.*

Ac 1:8 *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”*

Ac 1:9 After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

Ac 1:10 They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them.

Ac 1:11 “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”

Ac 1:12 Then they returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day’s walk from the city.

Ac 1:13 When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. Those present were Peter, John, James and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James.

Ac 1:14 They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.

How amazed they must have been at the events of the forty days following Jesus’ Resurrection. He had appeared to them numerous times. He ate with them, spoke their names, showed them the nail prints in His hands and His wounded side, and gave them good news for the world about a new Kingdom that had come. When Luke speaks of these forty days of appearances, he calls them ‘infallible’ proofs that Jesus was indeed risen from the dead.

Now Luke speaks of the Ascension of our Lord that occurred on Mt. Olivet, a Sabbath day's journey from Jerusalem. Jesus' last words were, "Stay in Jerusalem until you receive the Promise of the Father that I have spoken about. For John baptized you with water, but you shall soon be baptized with the Holy Ghost." Then, immediately after saying this, Jesus ascended before their startled eyes, and a cloud, the Shekinah Cloud of Glory, no doubt, hid Him from their sight.

Obviously they clung to that vision of their Lord ascending into the air, and they must have strained their eyes for a good while to see Him, but they could not. Taken from them again! Their hearts broken again! Then, suddenly, they noticed the presence of two men dressed in white standing beside them. Then these men in white, these angels, said to the preoccupied disciples, "Why are you gazing into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen Him go into heaven."

This angel advice is good advice for us too. The Bible tells us that we should look toward the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. But we sometimes spend too much time concentrating on things we can do nothing about, when we should be about the things which we can do something. The angels said, "Quit gazing up. Jesus shall come again just as you saw him go."

**I. QUIT GAZING UPWARD; AND START LOOKING OUTWARD.** In fact, that is not just Angel Advice. That is the very word of the Lord Himself. The disciples had heard Him for the three years they had been with Him, and for the forty days following the Resurrection. They knew where He stood. Christ, during His ministry, was thoroughly inclusive in His acceptance of all others. He touched the leper though the law said one should stay a good distance away. The Rabbi's would even throw stones at them when they got too close. Jesus loved the leper and touched him and healed him. He spoke to the woman of Samaria who came to Jacob's well at midday because of the prejudice of those who hated her for her immoral lifestyle. He accepted the worship of Mary Magdalene who washed His feet with her tears. He said of the Roman Centurion, "I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel." Tax collectors were his friends; sinners were his followers; and the common people were his congregation. He had even said, "Many shall come from the East and from the West and sit down with Abraham and Isaac, but the children of the kingdom will be cast out."

Now the disciples, so narrow minded, so self-centered, so myopic, asked Jesus, "Will you at this time restore the Kingdom to Israel?" They wanted to look up and see the Millennial Kingdom coming down. Jesus told them that it was not for them to know when that Kingdom would come, but that they were to wait for the promise of the Father, and then to preach the Gospel in Jerusalem, and all Judea and in Samaria, and then to the uttermost parts of the earth. The disciples needed to look beyond their own selfish setting. They needed to look at the entire world before them and to realize that they must bring that Kingdom about by their preaching and teaching and witnessing.

Let us stop gazing upward at the ceilings of our own churches, or the blue skies of our own sunny little world, and start looking outward, and going outward into a world that really needs the Gospel. The Kingdom is not just for Israel. The Kingdom is not just for the New Israel. The Kingdom is for the entire world. The Gospel must be preached to all nations and to all cultures and to all people-groups throughout the entire world. When

that great task has been accomplished, only then should we think about the Millennial Reign of Jesus.

The Outward look was what motivated the shoe cobbler, William Carey. This young man, born in Paulerspury, England, a rural village of 800 inhabitants, who as a teenager got into frequent trouble swearing, lying, and running with an undesirable group, and was so rebellious that his father apprenticed him to a cobbler named John Warr. Warr witnessed to Carey as often as he could, and invited him to church one day where he was converted at 17 years of age and joined that local Baptist church. He later read a best seller in England—Captain Cook’s *Voyages*. That book made such an impression on this young man that it caused him to look outward to a real world out there, with real people who needed a real Savior: and if he was not willing to go, then who? He was so deeply disturbed by the lack of missionary interest that he published his book in 1792 with the long title, *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians, to use means for the Conversion of the Heathens in which the Religious State of the Different Nations of the World, the Success of Former Undertakings, and the Practicability of Further Undertakings, are Considered*. This book, which we call *An Enquiry*, is still a classic book on missions, and shows the relevance of the Great Commission to each of us. Carey’s outward look caused him to spend 41 years in India. He never returned to England, but died at 73 years of age in India; but, in those years, he had translated the complete Bible into six languages, and portions of the Bible into 29 others. He founded over one hundred rural schools for the people of India, and founded Serampore College for the training of ministers. He brought attention to the practice of Sati, the burning of widows on the pyre of their husbands, and helped destroy this practice. He started the modern science of missiology. One biographer wrote, “The number of actual conversions attributed to him is pathetically small; the number indirectly attributable to him must be legion.”

Quit gazing upward and start looking outward.

**II. QUIT GAZING UPWARD, AND START GAZING INWARD.** The angel advice is very relevant to us all. We find that when the angels gave them this advice they immediately went to Jerusalem, and to the upper room where they were united in prayer for at least one week. The Passover was on Thursday, Christ was in the tomb part of Friday, all day Saturday, and part of Sunday. Jesus stayed with the disciples for 40 days. Pentecost was 50 days after Passover. So then, subtracting three days from ten, they spent a week in prayer. What were they doing during that time of prayer? I believe they were gazing inward, for that is what prayer essentially is, looking at one’s own heart as one lifts that heart to God.

What these disciples were thinking about as they prayed? I do believe that all the men, with the possible exception of John, were asking God to give them more courage to stand up for the things that are right and true. In the Garden they all fled. In the courtyard of Caiaphas, Simon Peter had denied three times that he even knew Jesus, and that with very salty language. These men repented that they were victims of fear and anxiety. They must have searched their hearts thoroughly. There were other things in their lives, just as there are other things in our own lives. Their motives were wrong. They were filled with pride. They were full of lust. Their envy and jealousy showed through their actions. They were exceedingly selfish. They looked inwardly, and prayed

to God to cleanse them and to prepare them for the life that would be more godly in the future.

How about an inward look in your own life? Are you willing to look at your heart? Can you admit that your life has been filled with selfishness and egotism? Will you look at your jealousy, your envy, your pride? Dare you confess to God those secret sins that you hold so closely to your heart? God does not want part of you, He wants all of you. He wants both the good and the bad. The good He makes better, and the sinful He makes Righteous. When Augustine looked at his heart he called it “a cauldron of unholy vices.”

The Inward Look is essential, and it often comes in prayer. During our periods of looking within we see our sinfulness and our weaknesses. When we confess these things to God, “He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Years ago, a young man confessed Christ as Savior. Later he gave this testimony to the other college students who were in this church. He said, “Whenever I pray, I always confess my sins and my mistakes. God already knows my sins. He looks inside of me, at my heart. So since He already knows my sins, He wants me to confess my sins. I always feel better when I do that.”

In his book, How to Be Born Again, Billy Graham tells a well-known story from Scotland, about some fishermen speaking of their catches in an inn where they were being served their meal. One of them got excited, and casting his arms outward hit the tea tray being carried to them by the maid. It spilled all over the whitewashed wall, and began to turn an ugly looking brown. A guest at the inn pulled a pen from his pocket and started outlining the stain on the wall. Soon, he had sketched there on the wall a royal stag with his antlers spread wide. That artist was Sir Edwin Landseer, England’s foremost painter of animals. God takes the messes that we make and paints them into a beautiful scene in our lives. But we must be willing to confess our sins. He is a wise man who confesses his messes.

The disciples stopped gazing at the skies and started Looking Inward in Prayer. Don’t look Upward; look Inward.

### **III. QUIT GAZING UPWARD; START LOOKING OUTWARD; QUIT GAZING UPWARD, START LOOKING INWARD.**

#### **AGAIN, STOP GAZING UPWARD, START LOOKING FORWARD.**

Jesus had already told the disciples: *The Holy Bible, New International Version.*

Jn 14:15 **“If you love me, you will obey what I command.**

Jn 14:16 **And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—**

Jn 14:17 **the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.**

The Promise of the Holy Spirit was one of the truths that He had mentioned in John’s Gospel. John proclaimed this promise too. “He that cometh after me is mightier than I the latchets of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose. I baptize you with water; He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.” Jesus refers to John’s words, and says, “In a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit. Being promised power with which to live and to accomplish the mighty task of telling the world about the wonderful Son of God who died and rose again, they went forth and changed the world.

The disciples did not need to live in the past, but could indeed live with a forward look. He called what would happen to them: 1) The Gift my Father promised; 2) The Gift would be a Baptism of the Holy Spirit; 3) The Gift would be the reception of power; 4) The Gift would be the Holy Ghost coming upon you; 5) The Gift would make them Witnesses of Jesus in all the world.

We need not gaze upward. We need to Look Forward. God has promised his poor, weak, church that we would receive a Gift that God the Father had promised. God never reneges on His promises. "He is not slack concerning His promises as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." <sup>1 Pet.</sup>

Carey preached from Isaiah, "Lengthen your cords, and Strengthen your stakes." His sermon was entitled, "Expect Great Things from God; Attempt Great Things for God." When we look for the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, we are looking forward, and looking expectantly for great things from God. That Baptism gives faith that with God all things are possible. That Baptism conveys power to do all that Jesus commanded. That Gift was the very clothing of God upon human flesh that enabled them to do what they could never have done before. And we will see that Baptism in Chapter 2 of the Book of Acts. That is not as Paul Harvey says, "The rest of the story." That was only the first of the story. Those of us who are saved have been baptized by One Spirit into One body. We are His witnesses. As someone said, "Witnessing is not a spare-time occupation or a once-a-week activity. It must be a quality of life. You don't go witnessing, you are a witness."

We are taking Angel Advice. We Look Forward, not Upward. And we use every opportunity as an opportunity to be His witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and unto the Uttermost Part of the World. Someone once made a wrong telephone call and got Billy Graham on the line. "Is this room so and so," the person asked. "No it isn't," said Dr. Graham. The person said, "I hope you'll pardon me if I say you sound just like Billy Graham." Graham answered, "I am Billy Graham." As he talked to that person, the person accepted Christ as Savior and Lord. It really wasn't a wrong number after all.

Exciting things happen when you know Jesus as your Savior. You look Forward to every day. You look Forward to Life. You look Forward to the day when life ends and Real Life begins. You look forward to witnessing for Christ anywhere and everywhere. C. T. Shedd, the renowned athlete and missionary, once said, "Some wish to live within the sound of a church or chapel bell; I want to run a rescue shop within a yard of hell." If you are filled with the Spirit of God, if you are full of His power, you are not afraid of any task. You have power, and power makes you look Forward.

Can you imagine these weak disciples, cowering before the authorities, hovering together like a band of frightened animals, suddenly aflame with the Fire of God, Alive with the Holy Spirit, alight with the Word of God, having what Jesus promised, doing what Jesus commanded, Looking Forward and not gazing upward.

I hope you will take the Angels' Advice and live your life the way God intended. You don't have to look up. He wants you to Look Outward, to Look Inward, and to Look Forward. And, oh yes, to Go! Forward!