

14. Our Heavenly Allies

NOT only is the Christian assured of the constant presence of Christ to uphold, protect, and sustain him, but

he has the additional promise of the help and protection of an innumerable company of angels. Just as cherubim were placed at the gate of the garden of Eden to prevent sinful man from re-entering it, so angels of God are sent to guard and help those who are struggling to regain man's lost home. "For," said David, "He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways." Ps. 91: 11.

These angels are heavenly beings, created by God; and they are all busily engaged in helping to bring to fruition the plan to deliver man from the thralldom of sin. "Are they not all ministering spirits,- wrote the great apostle, as he referred to the heavenly angels, "sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation." Heb. 1: 14.

The exact number of these heavenly beings is not revealed in the Scriptures, although a number of attempts to estimate the number are made by some of its inspired writers who, finding the veil drawn aside, were permitted to gaze upon this heavenly host. For example, the prophet Daniel declared that he saw thousand thousands of these creatures ministering before God, and ten thousand times ten thousand standing before Him. (Dan. 7: 10.) This would make up a company of more than one hundred million, but, of course, this was but a small number compared with the vast hosts of these heavenly beings. The Apostle Paul, in fact, speaks of them as "an innumerable company of angels." Heb. 12: 22.

Jacob found, in his flight from Esau, that these angels formed a connecting link between earth and heaven. The record of his experience declares:

"And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took of the stones of that place, and put them for his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep. And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it." Gen. 28:11,12. When upon his return journey, many years later, Jacob again met these same messengers of God, he said, "This is God's host." Gen. 32:2.

Not Spirits of the Dead

Let us hasten to explain that these myriads of beings are not the immortal spirits of those who have died upon the earth. They are an entirely different order of beings from men. They were in existence before the earth upon which we live was created, and when man was placed upon the earth, he was "a little lower" in rank than were the angels.

Men will never become angels. God has made no such promise. The change brought about by and through the gospel does not change man into another form or order of being, but simply restores him to his original state-that of a perfect human being. But he will still be human in form and will again bear the image of God, as did Adam in the beginning. See Rev. 21: 3.

Angels All About

The angels of God are about us at all times, although we are unconscious of their presence. To men they are invisible, not because they are intangible, but because our eyes are holden. When the prophet Elisha and his servant were surrounded by the hosts of the Syrians, who were bent upon their destruction, and the heart of the servant was stricken with fear, Elisha encouraged him with these assuring words:

"Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them." Elisha then prayed: "Lord, I pray Thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha." 2 Kings 6: 16, 17.

It is just so with many a child of God. It may seem from all outward appearances that one or two are left alone to struggle against a powerful enemy, as was the case of Elisha and his servant; but it is not so. God never abandons His children. If only our eyes could be opened, we would see constantly about us these heavenly allies, and would find that they are far greater in number than are those who

seek to do us harm.

Near the end of World War II Germany put into the field a secret weapon known as the rocket bomb. These bombs were launched from the European coast and directed toward England. Tremendous havoc was wrought by them as they exploded. They were very real and tangible, made of real steel, and yet those who lived in England at the time say no one ever saw a rocket coming. When in flight, they were not visible to the human eye. Their speed was so great that the eye could not be focused upon them. They could be heard only after they had passed. The destruction caused by their explosions could be seen with clarity, but the bombs were invisible.

Knowing of this and similar experiences which have now become somewhat commonplace, it does not seem so incredible that the angels of God, too, can be all about, yet not be seen.

There is an Old Testament record that a false prophet called Balaam was met by an angel as he rode upon the back of an animal. The animal saw the angel and refused to pass. Balaam saw nothing. He punished his animal, until "the Lord opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand: and he bowed down his head, and fell flat on his face." Num. 22: 3 1.

Real Beings

The angels, though invisible, are real, tangible beings. Isaiah, in describing the seraphim (a high order of angels) that stand in the presence of God, declared they had wings, faces, and feet, and he heard them speak.

Abraham, "the friend of God," had the high honor at one time of entertaining at his table three of these heavenly visitors, and the record declares that they ate in his presence. (See Gen. 18: 1-8.) David, in speaking of the manna upon which Israel existed during their wilderness journey, declared that upon that occasion "man did eat angels' food." Ps. 78: 25.

Angels, therefore, are not myths. They are real beings, and they are in league with those who desire to follow God and regain their Paradise home. Jesus revealed the angels' interest in man's salvation by declaring: "Likewise, I say unto you there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents." Luke 15: 10.

Appear as Men

Angels have the power to transform themselves so as to appear in human form, and in this way they have often appeared to men upon earth. Men associate with them, although they are totally unaware of the fact that they are heavenly visitors. For this reason the Apostle Paul admonished the believers: "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." Heb. 13: 2.

It was in this manner that the Lord Himself appeared to Joshua, as he and the people of Israel were encamped against the walled city of Jericho.

"And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him with His sword drawn in His hand: and Joshua went unto Him, and said unto Him, Art Thou for us, or for our adversaries? And He said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto Him, What says my Lord unto His servant? And the captain of the Lord's host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou stands is holy. And Joshua did so." Joshua 5: 13-15.

Angels in human form appeared to Abraham on the plains of Mamre, and discussed with him God's plan to overthrow the wicked city of Sodom. (See Gen. 18: 1-33.) A little later two angels appeared at the home of Lot, whose dwelling was in Sodom, and warned him and his family to escape from the doomed city lest they perish with it. (Gen. 19: 1.) The prophet Daniel declared that it was an angel, sent from God, that had visited him in the den of lions and had shut the lions' mouths so that they had not hurt him.

On numerous occasions the disciples of Jesus, finding themselves imprisoned by their enemies, were liberated by angels of God. These angels smote the chains from their hands, removed their feet from the stocks, opened the prison doors, and led them forth to liberty and safety. After one such experience, Peter testified: "Now I know of a surety, that the Lord hath sent His angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews." Acts 12: 11.

Attending Angels

There are clear indications in the Scriptures that each human being upon earth has at least one special attending angel, who is constantly by his side from the cradle to the grave. Jesus alluded to this when He said to His disciples: "Take heed that you despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in heaven. Matt. 18:10. Again, when incredulous fellow believers were told that Peter, whom they thought to be in prison, stood at the gate and desired to enter, they refused to believe it was actually he, but said: "It is his angel." (Acts 12: 15.)

These attending angels serve not alone in constantly seeking to influence the individual for good and turn the heart to God, but they also keep an absolutely unerring record of the lives of their charges. Ezekiel was shown one of these heavenly attendants clothed in white linen, with a writer's ink horn by his side. (Eze. 9: 2.) The fact is that books of remembrance are kept in heaven, in which are found the records of the dwellers of earth. (Mat. 3: 16.) Because of this daily chronicle of the lives of all men, God, when the final judgment is set and the books are opened, will be able to bring to light all the hidden things of darkness and make manifest the counsels of the heart. (1 Cor. 4: 5.)

The angel recorders make no mistakes. Their records are unerring. Every act, whether good or bad, every spoken word, and even the thoughts of the heart are all written in the books of remembrance. Even the motives behind the words and deeds are recorded, so that in the final day of testing, when men's cases are brought into review, God can "bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." Eccl. 12: 14.

How comforting it is to know that these heavenly watchers are interested only and always in the welfare of human beings and are constantly seeking to protect and lead them heavenward! The Bible abounds with evidence of this fact and with stories of deliverances they have brought to men who were in trouble. Their watchfulness over God's children is so constant that King David in wonder and gratitude exclaimed: "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the Lord encamps round about them that fear Him, and delivers them." Ps. 34: 6, 7.

It is said that on the shores of the Adriatic the wives of fishermen, whose husbands have gone far out upon the deep, are in the habit at eventide of gathering on the seashore and singing the first stanza of some beautiful hymn. After they have sung it, they listen until they hear, borne by the wind across the sea, the second stanza sung by their gallant husbands, as they are tossed upon the waves. Though separated far from their loved ones, they are able to unite with them in worship and praise at the close of the day.

Just so the angels of God join in the songs of praise sung by the followers of Christ upon the earth. They are interested in all that pertains to the happiness and welfare of God's children. Angels are constantly working for men's salvation and happiness. "There is joy," said Jesus, "in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents."

What an inspiration it should be to every Christian to know that his songs of praise are echoed throughout the heavenly palaces as the angelic choir take up the strains and with voice and harp Join in ascribing honor and glory to the God of our salvation.

Let us thank God for these heavenly allies and be grateful that all heaven is interested in man's salvation and is seeking in every possible way to bring it about. Angels that excel in strength, yes, legions of them, are even now by our sides and are yearning for the privilege of assisting us on our way back to the Paradise of God.

Hark! hark! my soul, angelic songs are swelling
O'er earth's green fields and ocean's wave-beat shore;
How sweet the truth those blessed strains are telling,
Of that new life when sin shall be no more!

Onward we go, for still we hear them singing,
"Come ' weary souls, for Jesus bids you come";
And thro' the dark, its echoes sweetly ringing,
The music of the gospel leads us home.

Far, far away, like bells at evening pealing,
The voice of Jesus sounds o'er land and sea;

And laden souls by thousands meekly stealing,
Kind Shepherd, turn their weary steps to Thee.

Angels, sing on! your faithful watches keeping,
Sing us sweet fragments of the songs above,
Till morning's joy shall end the night of weeping,
And life's long shadows break in cloudless love.
-R W. FABER.