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celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differs from another star in glory.

“So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

“Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” [1 Corinthians 15:35-55]

From this scripture, it is plainly seen that there are spiritual beings with spiritual bodies - bodies unlike the material bodies we possess. Just as surely as there are earthly, or material bodies, just so surely are there spiritual bodies. “There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another.” “It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.” Man was created with a natural, or material body. He belongs to this earth; for he was made from the dust of the ground. But though man’s eyes are held from perceiving spiritual beings with his natural senses, still these are revealed to him through the word of God and by the influence of the Holy Spirit.

Nor is the word of God silent concerning the nature of angels. From it we have already learned that somewhere in the history of eternity, the Lord created them, and gave them a real being. We are also taught that they are a higher order of beings than man. This is very plainly shown in the words of the psalmist, who, speaking of the creation of man, uses this language: “When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which Thou has ordained; what is man, that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that Thou visited him? For Thou has made him a little lower than the angels, and has crowned him with glory and honor.” [Psalm 8:3-5]

Though angels had the priority of existence, God created man in His own image. Angels were not made a little higher than man, but man was-made “a little lower than the angels.” Spiritual beings are not lower than the material beings; but the earthly, natural, terrestrial beings are lower in order, are less exalted and noble in the sight of Jehovah, than are the celestial, spiritual beings the angels of heaven.

When Christ, the Son of God, came to earth, He divested Himself of the celestial glory that He had had with the Father from the foundation of the world, and came simply as -the Son of man. He was born of woman, and took upon Himself flesh and blood, in order that He might enter into man’s estate, and pay the penalty for sin. Of Him we read that “verily He took not on Him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham.” [Hebrews 2:16] And again, “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor.” [Hebrews 2:9] Thus when the Son of God, by whom man was created, came into the world, He came as a man. In form He was like His brethren. Those about Him saw nothing divine in His form or unnatural in His beauty. He was the Son of man, made in the image of man, and was lower than the angels, having taken upon Himself the nature of “the seed of Abraham.”

Again and again have the servants of God revealed their feelings of awe and respect for the angels, where these heavenly beings have appeared to them in vision, or when they have met them clothed in the form of man. John thus recites his feelings when he had seen an angel of God: “And I John saw these things, and

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heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which showed me these things. Then said he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.” [Revelation 22:8-9]

The power of angels over man is again shown in the case of the Roman soldiers set to guard the tomb of the crucified Savior: “And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men.” [Matthew 28:2-4]

The prophet Daniel gives a wonderful description of an angel that he saw in vision; and after speaking of his surpassing glory, he tells how the presence of the holy one affected him. He says: “There remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength.” [Daniel 10:8]

Search the Scriptures where we will, we find that the same feeling of reverence and awe fills the hearts of men whenever they meet one of these heavenly visitants and become conscious whom they have met. Thus we read of Gideon’s experience: “And when Gideon perceived that he was an angel of the Lord, Gideon said, Alas, O Lord God! For because I have seen an angel of the Lord face to face.” [Judges 6:22] Gideon was a mighty man of valor, and did great service in Israel; but when he realized that he had met an angel of God face to face, he was filled with fear, and thought his life must be forfeited.

Another instance showing the fear that takes hold of the hearts of men when they see an angel of God, is recorded in the case of Manoah and his wife, who lived in the days of the judges of Israel. Manoah’s wife had long desired a son; and on a certain occasion, she was visited by the angel of the Lord, who promised that she should bear a man child. Her husband earnestly prayed that the heavenly visitant might return, and teach them more fully how the child should be trained.

In answer to this request, “the angel of God came again unto the woman as she sat in the field: but Manoah her husband was not with her. And the woman made haste, and ran, and showed her husband, and said unto him, Behold, the man has appeared unto me, that came unto me the other day. And Manoah arose, and went after his wife, and came to the man, and said unto him; Art thou the man that spoke unto the woman? And he said, I am.

“And Manoah said, Now let thy words come to pass. How shall we order the child, and how shall we do unto him? And the angel of the Lord said unto Manoah, Of all that I said unto the woman let her beware. She may not eat of anything that cometh of the vine, neither let her drink wine or strong drink, nor eat any unclean thing: all that I commanded her let her observe.

“And Manoah said unto the angel of the Lord, I pray thee, let us detain thee, until we shall have made ready a kid for thee. And the angel of the Lord said unto Manoah, Though thou detain me, I will not eat of thy bread: and if thou wilt offer a burnt offering, thou must offer it unto the Lord. For Manoah knew not that he was an angel of the Lord.

“And Manoah said unto the angel of the Lord, What is thy name, that when thy sayings come to pass we may do thee honor? And the angel of the Lord said unto him, Why asked thou thus after my name, seeing it is secret?

“So Manoah took a kid with a meat offering, and offered it upon a rock unto the Lord: and the angel did wondrously; and Manoah and his wife looked on. For it came to pass, when the flame went up toward heaven from off the altar, that the angel of the Lord ascended in the flame of the altar.”

As Manoah and his wife beheld this miracle, they fell on their faces; and when they arose, their heavenly visitor had departed, neither did he again appear to them. “Then Manoah knew that he was an angel of the Lord. And Manoah said unto his wife, We shall surely die, because we have seen God. But his wife said unto him, If the Lord were pleased to kill us, He would not have received a burnt offering and a meat

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offering at our hands, neither would He have showed us all these things, nor would as at this time have told us such things as these.” [Judges 13:9-23]

Many instances might be added, showing the fear and reverence inspired in the heart of man by the presence of these holy beings. This feeling of awe is in itself an evidence that the angels are superior to man, and that they are a higher order of beings than he.

Let us not forget that the promise is never given to man that he will at any time become an angel. We are assured, however, that in one respect we shall be made equal to the angels -we shall not be subject to death. Of those who are accounted worthy to have a part in the first resurrection, Jesus Himself said, “Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels,” [Luke 20:36] At that long-desired and triumphant day, the saved of earth will be made “equal unto the angels.” Every longing of the heart will find complete satisfaction. The fear of death will be banished; and they will receive from the hand of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, the priceless gift of immortal life.

O, happy day, when the reign of death is ended, and eternal life, perfect health, and abundant happiness and peace are given to the children of God, to be theirs forever more! When that day comes -and come it surely will - man’s nature will be changed. All that is mortal here, will be made immortal in that bright morning. All that is subject to corruption now, will be made enduring then. All the ravages of death and decay and sin will be forever done away. We shall then be equal to the angels, having celestial bodies, and being no longer subject to death.

“They rest in hope. Their hallowed dust
Is watched, and from the grave shall rise.
Earth shall restore her sacred trust,
Made all immortal for the skies.”

THE NUMBER OF ANGELS

“But we are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels.” Hebrews 10:22.

THIS earth, with all its teeming millions of inhabitants, with all its varied activities, which seem so wonderful to finite man, is only an infinitesimal portion of God’s great universe. There was a time when men believed the earth to be flat, and were thus instructed by the philosophers of their day. Not only so, but they believed it to be the center of the universe, and that the heavenly bodies, sun, moon, and stars, revolved around this planet in regular courses, fulfilling their circuits at appointed times.

For many generations, this erroneous theory was regarded as a scientific truth. The church, indeed, went a step farther, and held the flat-earth theory as an article of faith. He who denied it, was ranked as a heretic, a blasphemer against God and the church, and therefore worthy of death. To the present generation, it seems almost Incredible not only that this belief should have been considered by the church as sacred, but that it should have gained credence at all; and we are astonished that our forefathers once held it as divine truth.

But knowledge increased. Daring explorers launched out upon uncharted seas, crossed trackless wildernesses, scaled mountain ranges hitherto untrodden by foot of man; and by the unfailing evidence of their discoveries, they proved to the world that its clearly cherished theories concerning the earth’s form and its position in the solar system were not founded on fact. The telescope and the spectroscope were invented, greatly extending the range of man’s horizon; and the once honored church dogmas, hoary with centuries of age, and boasting many generations of believers, were proved untrue. Science has opened to the vision of man such a view of the worlds above, such a knowledge of the infinities of space, that, overwhelmed with the magnitude of what is seen, the wisest cry, “Of Thy creative works, O God, there is no end!”

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When we come more fully to know the wonders of even this world about us; when we think of life and how it is sustained, from the lowest insect to the highest intelligences with which we are acquainted on earth; when we gaze into the vaulted sky, and see the countless myriads of worlds flying through space at a speed man has never been able to imitate, and his mind can scarcely grasp, each planet and star and sun pursuing its own appointed course for ages, without a moment's variation from century to century, then we can to some degree enter into the feeling of the prophet Isaiah when he wrote his exalted description of Him by whom the worlds were created, and who upholds all things by the word of His power:

“Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? Who has directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being His counselor has taught Him? With whom took He counsel, and who instructed Him, and taught Him in the path of judgment, and taught Him knowledge, and showed to Him the way of understanding? Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, He takes up the isles as a very little thing. And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering. All nations before Him are as nothing; and they are counted to Him less than nothing, and vanity.

“To whom then will you liken God? or what likeness will you compare unto Him? The workman melts a graven image, and the goldsmith spreads it over with gold, and casts silver chains. He that is so impoverished that he has no oblation chooses a tree that will not rot; he seeks unto him a cunning workman to prepare a graven image, that shall not be moved. Have you not known? have you not heard? has it not been told you from the beginning? have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?

“It is He that sits upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretches out the heavens as a curtain, and spreads them out as a tent to dwell in: that brings the princes to nothing; He makes the judges of the earth as vanity. Yea, they shall not be planted; yea, they shall not be sown: yea, their stock shall not take root in the earth: and He shall also blow upon them, and they shall wither, and the whirlwind shall take them away as stubble. To whom then will you liken Me, or shall I be equal? said the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who has created these things, that brings out their host by number: He calls them all by names by the greatness of His might, for that He is strong in power; not one fails.” [Isaiah 40:12-26]

In this wonderful description, we obtain a glimpse of how this earth and its people appear in the eyes of heaven. In God's sight the earth is but as a grain of sand, the waters He can measure in the hollow of His hand, and all the inhabitants of the earth are but as grasshoppers. Looking up to the starry heavens, man can see with the naked eye something of the magnitude of God's creation. He beholds, and marvels- but his unaided eye cannot number those glittering suns. Now let him bring to his aid the strongest telescope, and again gaze at some chosen spot in the heavens. What myriads of worlds, before unseen, are visible! Could he add to this telescope still greater magnifying power, there would be revealed still other worlds, worlds that have been hidden from the gaze of man during all the ages past. So great is the immensity of space into which we gaze, that man has never found the end. By the aid of photography, stars otherwise invisible have been distinguished; and astronomers tell us there are 18,000,000 worlds in a single system, and that the systems are beyond counting.

Even in our little stellar system, distances confuse the mind, and we fail to comprehend even what we can state in figures. We are told that the earth is 93,000,000 miles from the sun, and that Neptune is about 2,775,000,000 miles from the same luminary. Yet who can realize these distances? We say that this earth has a diameter of 7,912 miles, and that its sun has a diameter of 860,000 miles. The earth travels through its solar orbit in 365.2421 days; while it takes our sister planet Neptune 164.78 years to make one circuit through its orbit. “The sun has a volume equal to 1,245,000 earths; but being about a quarter as dense, it has a mass of only 326,800 earths.” The mind is appalled before even these distances and comparisons, yet they are “as the small dust of the balance” [Isaiah 40:15] in the infinite universe of Jehovah. As we pause for a moment, and think of God's handiwork, we can only cry out, in the language of another: “End is there none to the universe of God. Lo, also, there is no beginning.”

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All the wonders of the earth and of the heavenly bodies came into being by the word of God. "He spoke, and it was." [Psalm 33:9] He it was who made all things, both in heaven above and in the earth beneath. When we contemplate the greatness of God's created universe, realizing that what we know is but a mere speck compared with what is unknown, we can the better appreciate the infinity of Jehovah's creative power. The ages of time will never be long enough for man, to whom God gave the dominion of this world in the beginning, to understand the mysteries of even this one planet on which we live.

The air we breathe, the water we drink, the ground on which we walk and from which we obtain our daily food, are still full of hidden wonders, which, so far, have baffled man's highest knowledge. For nearly six thousand years man has lived upon the earth. He has dug far into its hidden depths, scaled its mountain peaks, sailed its wide seas, explored its rivers, penetrated its forests, traversed its plains; yet how little he knows concerning this one small planet!

From generation to generation, some forerunner of new truth appears, and astonishes the world with discoveries hidden from past ages. New chemical combinations are brought to light; new applications of natural laws are made; new inventions are placed in the hands of man as agencies of commerce or for the acquirement of knowledge. Remedial agencies, combating disease and preserving the life of man, are announced. Each succeeding decade opens a new era in man's existence, presenting new and fascinating truths from the great world book.

Notwithstanding all this, the very wisest of earth declare the known, as compared with the unknown, to be as but a drop of water to the great ocean. And if man has so little knowledge of the one world on which he has so long dwelt, and over which God gave him dominion ill the beginning, how infinitely beyond his comprehension must be the unspeakable greatness and glory of God and all His heavenly universe! If we know not the nature of man, nor understand the mystery of life, which we constantly see about us, how little must we know of beings hidden from our natural vision, and whose presence is a matter of revelation and faith!

The glory and majesty of earthly courts, and the might and power of the governments they represent, are usually judged by the retinue the ruler keeps about him. The number and efficiency of the men he can employ in defending his kingdom likewise enhance the honor and respect his name commands. The beautiful, the gifted, the wise, the strong, are called from all parts of his dominions, that their presence may add prestige and brilliancy to his court. When the queen of Sheba came into the royal courts of King Solomon, and saw the splendor and magnificence of his household and his throne, "the house that he had built, and the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel, and his cupbearers, and his ascent by which he went up unto the house of the Lord," [1 Kings 10:4-5] the record is that "there was no more spirit in her." In wonder and admiration she cried out, "Behold, the half was not told me." [1 Kings 10:17]

And if mortal man, raised to the fleeting dignity of an earthly throne, may find just delight in the extent and resources of his kingdom, in the beauty and magnificence of his palaces, in the number and loyalty of his subjects, in the peace and prosperity of his people, in the wise counselors he has gathered about him, and in the trained men ready at a word to defend his empire, is it unreasonable to suppose that the mighty Jehovah, infinite in wisdom and knowledge and power, should surround Himself with the most beautiful and intelligent and glorious beings in His vast creation to carry forward His plans and execute His decrees throughout His immeasurable universe?

But we are not left to human reasoning to know something of the number of the angelic host. Not only does unite judgment acknowledge that a being of such mighty power and greatness as Jehovah must have an unnumbered host of heavenly intelligences doing His will, but the Bible speaks again and again concerning the vast number of the angels surrounding the throne of God. Though man will not know till the future state the exact number of the angels, still enough is revealed to show that they are indeed a mighty throng.

To the prophet Daniel was revealed in vision a view of the great company of these heavenly beings about the throne of God. "I beheld till thrones were placed," he says, "and One that was ancient of days did sit: His raiment was white as snow, and the hair of His head like pure wool; His throne was fiery flames, and

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the wheels thereof burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him: thousands of thousands ministered unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened." [Daniel 7:9-10]

This language leaves us in a state of uncertainty concerning the precise number of the heavenly beings, "thousands of thousands ministered unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him." We know that "ten thousand times ten thousand" equals one hundred million, but we can form no idea of the number represented by "thousands of thousands." Nowhere in the word of God is given the exact number of the heavenly beings.

A statement similar to that of the prophet Daniel is recorded by John in the book of Revelation. Speaking of the throne of God and of the beings that surround it, he says: "And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands." [Revelation 5:11]

Here again it is seen that God does not reveal to man the number of the angels, only giving to him a grand, sweeping view of the infinitude of the heavenly host. The hundred million and thousands of thousands does not mean that there are no more, but that their number is beyond the comprehension of mortal man.

On the black night of Jesus' betrayal, when Peter, in his ardent but misguided zeal to defend his Master, had struck off the ear of one of the servants of the high priest, the Lord, turning a pitying look upon the disciple, said to him: "Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish by the sword. Think not that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He shall presently give Me more than twelve legions of angels?" [Matthew 26:52-53] This is not an enumeration of the heavenly host. Rather, it is a lesson of faith that in the darkest hour of trial, when forsaken by all the world, the Lord is able to provide all the help that is needed by His children. In Palestine and to the Jews, twelve legions would be a large army. Yet not only that number, but any number of angels required to help the Savior in His hour of trial, were waiting to minister to His needs.

Still another statement bearing on this same thought is made in the letter to the Hebrews. Speaking of the church militant, and of its sure triumph under the Christian dispensation, Paul says: "But you are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels." [Hebrews 12:22] Here we have the plain declaration that the angels are innumerable - no man can number them.

It is estimated that the inhabitants of this world number more than six thousand million. Not a few countries have tried, with the best agencies at their command, to enumerate accurately the population within their domain. Time and money have been spent almost without limit to make the count as exact as possible; yet who would dare assert that the enumeration is correct? Even in the most enlightened lands, the difficulties in the way of taking an exact census are so great that we despair of absolute accuracy; and when we add to these lands the heathen nations of the world, with populations so dense or scattered that no exact census has ever been tabulated, we can see how unreliable must be the most painstaking efforts of man to make an accurate count of the inhabitants of this little world.

But with Jehovah there is no lack of knowledge. He who numbers the very hairs of our heads, and who note, each fallen sparrow, knows to a mathematical certainty the number of the heavenly beings; but in His wisdom and love, He has never seen fit to reveal this number to His earthly children. Some day it will be the privilege of the redeemed to see the angelic host, and look into their faces. "When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him," [Matthew 25:31] the ransomed will behold with joy the mighty hosts of these heavenly beings. Till the dawning of that glad day, we may rest assured that the number of the angels is sufficient to do God's bidding throughout His universe, and be comforted by the knowledge that they are "all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation.

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GLORY OF THE ANGELS

“Then the woman came and told her husband, saying, A man of God came unto me, and his countenance was like the countenance of an angel of God, very terrible: but I asked him not whence he was, neither told he me his name.” Judges 13: 6.

THE glory of angels! On few themes does the devout Christian more love to dwell. To what subject, as he seeks to picture to himself the loveliness of the home of the saved, and the holy beings who dwell therein, do his thoughts; oftener turn? A glorious city, a glorious King, glorious angels about His throne -and one day to mingle with them the meek and lowly of earth - glorified and radiant, for they shall see Him as He is! But we are not left to the vain imaginings of our own hearts for a knowledge of the celestial brightness and beauty of these heavenly messengers: the word of God speaks plainly of their surpassing glory. That Word is our guide, and on it we must depend for all we know concerning these holy beings.

God created man “a little lower than the angels,” and crowned him with “glory and honor.”“ Of this glory and honor we have little real knowledge; but as we think of the length of days enjoyed by the men who lived before the flood, some of whom reached the advanced age of nearly a thousand years, the imagination is able to form some idea of the inherent strength and power of man at that time. Notice the wonderful record: “And all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years : and he died. . . . And all the days of Cainan were nine hundred and ten years : and he died. ... And all the days of Methuselah were nine hundred sixty and nine years: and he died.” [Genesis 5:5-27]

Far beyond the brief span of mortal life as we know it, stretched the lives of the patriarchs of old. The average length of life at the present time is variously estimated, but is usually fixed at between thirty and thirty-five years. As we compare these short years, filled with sickness and suffering, physical ailments almost beyond number, and mental maladies no less distressing, with the lives of the patriarchs before the flood, we realize something of the contrast between man’s condition now and at that time. Thus we also understand that when the record says that God made man a little lower than the angels, it is speaking of man as he was when he came from the hand of his Creator.

In our study of the angels, we must ever remember that they are spiritual beings, and belong to a higher order than do we. God has not given to man the power to discern spiritual beings with his natural senses. They may be with us in all their glory, yet they are hidden from our eyes. We do not understand their nature, save as the word of God reveals it to us, neither can we realize their glory without the same divine revelation.

The manifestation of the glory of angels has been one means used of God in making their presence known to man. When Adam and Eve were thrust out of Eden, cherubim with flaming sword that turned every way, guarded the entrance to the garden of the Lord. The flashing brightness of these celestial beings was an impassable barrier to that lost home. Though the curse of God rested upon man, and in weariness of body and anguish of spirit he ate his daily bread; though he longed with a desire unutterable, though he hungered and thirsted in an agony of remorse and sorrow, to stand once more beside the shining waters of the river of life, and to feast his eyes on the beauties of the garden that the Lord Himself had planted, nevertheless he dared not approach the glorious beings who stood sentry at the entrance to keep the way of the tree of life.

When the eyes of Elisha’s servant were opened, that he might see the protecting hosts about the prophet in Dothan, he beheld the mountain filled with “horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.” [2 Kings 6:17] Again, when Elijah was about to be taken from earth, and for one brief moment Elisha caught a glimpse of the livery of heaven, he saw “a chariot of fire, and horses of fire,” and cried out, “My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof.” [2 Kings 2:11-12]

We have already noted the case of the angel who appeared to the wife of Manoah, and of whom she said that “his countenance was like the countenance of an angel of God, very terrible.” [Judges 13:6] And when an offering was made to the Lord, and the heavenly visitor “ascended in the flame of the altar,” [Judges 13:20] what awe and reverence and worship filled the hearts of Manoah and his wife! No wonder he feared that they must die, when he realized that they had talked face to face with an angel of the Lord!

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It will be remembered that when Moses came down from Mount Sinai, it was necessary for him to veil his face before Israel could look upon him, so glorious was the light that shone from his countenance. Though Moses had been in the presence of God but a few days, his face reflected something of the glory of the Infinite. Is it any wonder that the holy angels, who worship continually before Jehovah, should radiate in some degree His matchless splendor?

The mighty angel who broke the seal of the Savior's tomb, and rolled back the stone at the door of that guarded sepulcher, and at the sight of whose dazzling brightness the Roman soldiers became as dead men, is thus described: "His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow." [Matthew 28:3] Glory such as this belongs to other beings than those who inhabit this sin-cursed earth. It is the attribute of the angelic hosts, who dwell in the presence of Him with whom is fullness of light, and in whom is no darkness at all. What unspeakable glory must fill heaven, where the angels continually dwell!

A graphic description of the glory of angels is found in the book of Daniel. The heart of the prophet was perplexed as he reflected upon a vision that had been given him; and for three full weeks he mourned and ate no pleasant bread, praying that the things he had seen might be more clearly revealed to his understanding. At the end of that time, he says, "as I was by the side of the great river, which is Hiddekel; then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz: his body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in color to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude." [Daniel 10:4-6]

A similar description of the Son of God is given in the first chapter of Revelation: "And in the midst of the seven candlesticks One like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the waste with a golden girdle. His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and His eyes were as a flame of fire; and His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and His voice as the sound of many waters. And He had in His right hand seven stars: and out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: and His countenance was as the sun shines in his strength." [Revelation 1:13-16]

The prophet Ezekiel also gives a description of the heavenly beings engaged in doing the bidding of Jehovah: "As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire, and like the appearance of lamps: it went up and down among the living creatures; and the fire was bright, and out of the fire went forth lightning. And the living creatures ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning." [Ezekiel 1:13-14]

From these scriptures, we can plainly see that the glory of the heavenly host was not only never possessed by man, but that it is beyond his comprehension. Man has no sense by which he can conceive of the glory of these heavenly beings, save as he compares them to the brightest and most blinding light he knows. Thus the Bible writers, striving to convey to our minds a faint idea of the glory of the angels, compare them to the lightning, whose flashing, brilliant, intense light is the most dazzling and terrible known to man. Repeatedly they express this impression of the heavenly hosts: "His countenance was like lightning;" [Matthew 28:3] "the living creatures ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning;" [Ezekiel 1:14] "his face as the appearance of lightning," [Daniel 10:6] etc.

We shall never know the full glory of the angelic host until we see them coming in the clouds of heaven with the Son of man, to gather the harvest of the earth. Then, our mortal bodies changed, we shall be able to look upon the Savior as He returns to earth to gather His ransomed children, clothed in His own glory and the glory of the Father and the glory of all the holy angels. Dazzling beyond our utmost conception will be that wonderful sight. And in some degree we, if faithful, shall share this glory, we shall be "equal unto the angels," [Luke 20:36] "we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." [1 John 3:2]

Texts of Scripture might be multiplied to illustrate the radiance, the brightness, and the indescribable beauty and majesty of these heavenly beings; but as we shall recite these scriptures in other connections, we will grow into the idea of the incomprehensible glory of the heavenly host.

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POWER OF THE ANGELS

“Bless the Lord, you His angels, that excel in strength, that do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word.” Psalm 103:20.

MAN is not left to the devising of his own imagination for his knowledge of the power of angels; for God has seen fit to reveal to us much concerning the work they have done at His bidding. The Bible does not speak in the abstract about the power of these heavenly visitants, but it does give many instances when they have manifested mighty power and done works almost beyond the comprehension of man.

In the fifth chapter of Acts is recorded an instance in which angelic power was shown in behalf of the servants of God. Peter and the other apostles, filled with the Holy Ghost, had borne valiant witness to the name of their risen Lord; and by their hands “were many signs and wonders wrought among the people.” [Acts 5:12] With great power they proclaimed everywhere that Jesus Christ, whom the high priest and the Jews had but a short time before condemned to death and caused to be crucified, had risen from the dead, had been seen, had talked with His disciples, and had ascended up into heaven in their sight.

Conviction was taking hold of the hearts of men. Already thousands had acknowledged that Jesus was the promised Messiah, and had been baptized in His name. The proclamation of the gospel by this little company of earnest, Spirit-filled men had stirred the ancient, comfortable, self satisfied city to its depths. Priests and rulers, elders and scribes, seeing in the unhindered promulgation of the doctrine of the Messiah ship of Jesus the end of their own power and influence, and the certain curtailment of the revenues by which they had been maintained, were greatly troubled. “What shall we do to these men?” they asked among themselves.

The impotent man, long a familiar sight at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, was a living witness to the power at tending these unlearned and ignorant men. As the high priest and the elders saw him standing with the disciples, they were compelled to acknowledge among themselves that a notable miracle had been done. For a time, fearing the displeasure of the people, they did no more than threaten the disciples, and command them not to speak at all in the name of Jesus; but as they continued their work of preaching and teaching, and as multitudes both of men and women were added to those who believed, the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him, ... and laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison.” [Acts 5:17-18]

There were other places where these men could have been imprisoned, but perhaps with more anxiety to the high priest and his accomplices. This prison was the ward where common criminals were kept, and the safety of the public depended in large measure on the thickness of its walls, the strength of its bolts and bars, and the vigilance and fidelity of its guards. Multitudes of evildoers had been securely locked behind its doors; and never since its walls were raised, never in all the years that it had stood sentry over the lives and destinies of men, had these doors been opened save by the keeper’s will.

But the disciples had done no wrong, committed no crime. Even their enemies could find nothing for which to punish them. Moreover, the Lord had need at that hour of men who would “with all boldness” speak the message of life to the people. That night, while the city slept, the angel of the Lord visited the prison. With no guide to direct, no guard to protect, no keeper to unbar the gates, he entered those dark halls, and laying hold of the servants of God, brought them forth, and laid the command of Heaven upon them: “Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life.” [Acts 5:20]

What foreboding, what startled and terrified thoughts, must have filled the minds of priests and Sadducees when, on the very morning they intended to bring to trial those whose teachings had filled them with indignation, and who they supposed were safely within their grasp, the news was passed from mouth to mouth that these men were again in the temple, teaching as before! God’s celestial messenger had unloosed the iron bars, unlocked the massive door, awakened the sleeping servants of God, and led them forth into the deserted streets of Jerusalem! In this instance is plainly shown the power of an angel of God. Stronger than a band of soldiers, mightier than iron doors and prison walls, was this messenger from heaven.

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In the history of the kings of Israel another instance of the work of an angel, commissioned to do the bidding of Jehovah, is related. The king of Assyria, a heathen monarch, had sent a mighty army against the city of Jerusalem in the reign of Hezekiah, king of Judah. The heathen generals leading this army of the Assyrian king sent defiance to Hezekiah, demanding that he open the gates of Jerusalem, turn the city over to the Assyrian army, and deliver the kingdom of Judah into the hands of Sennacherib.

Hezekiah knew that his people were without power of themselves to defend the city against the Assyrian host that had recently been so successful in conquering the nations of the west. With the meager forces at his command, he dared not engage in battle with the trained legions of this mighty king; for well he knew that without help he and his people would fall into the hands of the godless heathen monarch, and the kingdom of Judah become as the kingdom of Israel.

In terror and distress, Hezekiah “rent his clothes, and covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the Lord” [2 Kings 19:1] to lay before Jehovah his condition and the condition of his people. He also sent “Eliakim, which was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and the elders of the priests,” [2 Kings 19:2] to the prophet Isaiah with this sad message: “This day is a day of trouble, and of rebuke, and blasphemy : for the children are come to the birth, and there is not strength to bring forth. It may be the Lord thy God will hear all the words of Rabshakeh, whom the king of Assyria his master has sent to reproach the living God; and will reprove the words which the Lord thy God has heard: wherefore lift up thy prayer for the remnant that are left.” [2 Kings 19:3-4]

The God of heaven hears prayer. As Hezekiah humbles himself before the Lord, putting away his sins, a message of encouragement and hope is sent to him by the prophet: “Thus said the Lord, Be not afraid of the words which thou has heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed Me. Behold, I will send a blast upon him, and he shall hear a rumor, and shall return to his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.” [2 Kings 19:6-7]

Hezekiah’s faith is tested. Not immediately does the Lord accomplish what He has promised, nor does He tell Hezekiah how He will deliver His people. But the king rests on the word of God. He hopes for no help from Egypt. He asks no aid of men. He does not even plan possible ways of delivering the people with the handful of men at his command. He trusts in God, confident that deliverance will come.

Again, with increasing boldness and insolence, Sennacherib defies the God of heaven, and declares his purpose to destroy His people. By the hand of Rabshakeh he sends another message to Hezekiah: “Let not thy God in whom thou trusted deceive thee, saying, Jerusalem shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria. Behold, thou has heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands, by destroying them utterly: and shall thou be delivered?” [2 Kings 19:10-12]

When Hezekiah received this message, his heart was mightily stirred. Again he retired to the house of the Lord for prayer and encouragement. Spreading the letter of defiance before the Lord, he prayed: “O Lord God of Israel, which dwells between the cherubims, Thou art the God, even Thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; Thou has made heaven and earth. Lord, bow down Your ear, and hear: open, Lord, Your eyes, and see: and hear the words of Sennacherib, which has sent him to reproach the living God. Of a truth, Lord, the kings of Assyria have destroyed the nations and their lands, and have cast their gods into the fire: for they were no gods, but the work of men’s hands, wood and stone: therefore they have destroyed them. Now therefore, O Lord our God, I beseech Thee, save Thou us out of his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that Thou art the Lord God, even Thou only.” [2 Kings 19:15-19]

Again God heard the prayer of His servant, and sent Him an answer of assurance and comfort: “Therefore thus said the Lord concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shield, nor cast a bank against it. By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and shall not come into this city, said the Lord. For I will defend this city, to save it, for Mine own sake, and for My servant David’s sake.” [2 Kings 19:32-34]

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But how will God defend Jerusalem and fulfill His promise to Hezekiah? Will He send the Egyptians against the army of Sennacherib? Will He command the Philistines or some other strong nation to come to the defense of His people, and drive the Assyrians from before the walls of Jerusalem? No; God chose another way to deliver the people of Judah. "And it came to pass that night, that the angel of the Lord went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred fourscore and five thousand: and when they ["men," A. R. V.] arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses. So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh." [2 Kings 19:35-36]

What a thrilling tale of deliverance from captivity wrought by God through the agency of an angel! Where, now, is the boasting of that proud, blasphemous monarch, who defied the Lord of heaven, and said He was not able to deliver out of his hand? Before the Assyrians can shoot an arrow or throw a javelin, the God of heaven sends an angel to smite their sleeping hosts. In a single night, one hundred eighty-five thousand of Sennacherib's warriors are slain, not on the field of battle, but by this silent messenger from heaven.

Was ever such victory won before, in the history of nations? - a whole army gone down into the jaws of death, not in battle, not on the field of campaign and strife, but while they lay sleeping, dreaming perchance of the morrow, when they hoped to scale the walls of Jerusalem, and satisfy their lust and appetite and greed in the plunder and spoils of a conquered city. From a study of this record, we must admit that the power of angels is limited only by the work which God designs they shall accomplish.

Let us notice another case to show the power of the angels. It will be remembered that when Darius, king of Medo-Persia, signed the decree forbidding any subject in his kingdom to make any prayer or petition to God or man, except to the king, for the space of thirty days, and declaring that any who should disobey would be cast alive into the den of lions, Daniel, familiar though he was with the command and the penalty, entered into his chamber, and, as formerly, made his supplications to Jehovah. "Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime." [Daniel 6:10]

Those who had schemed to compass the destruction of this godly man were at hand to witness his devotions. Carrying out the next step in their wicked plot, they hastened to the palace, and sought an interview with the monarch. With well simulated surprise and horror that any should dare so to dishonor the king, they related the open and flagrant violation of the royal edict by the first and most honored minister of the realm. "That Daniel," said they, "which is of the children of the captivity of Judah, regards not thee, O king, nor the decree that thou hast signed, but makes his petition three times a day." [Daniel 6:13]

As when a heavy curtain is removed from a window, the illuminating sunshine reveals what has before been hidden, so these words opened the eyes of King Darius, and in a flash he saw why the decree had been suggested to him, and just what these men had hoped to accomplish by obtaining his signature to it. He had been a tool in cunning hands. He had been duped by men who had not hesitated to involve their sovereign in their nefarious toils, hoping by flattery and servile homage to turn his head and blind his eyes to their real purpose. The revelation filled him with anger - first of all at himself, that through an appeal to his vanity and pride these evil men had compassed the destruction of one whom he not only revered but tenderly loved. With all the training gained as the head of a great kingdom, with a full knowledge of his kingly power, and with every material resource at his command, the king "set his heart on Daniel to deliver him: and he labored till the going down of the sun to deliver him." [Daniel 6:14]

But in vain. The enemies of Daniel had foreseen just this emergency, and with a subtlety inspired by the arch conspirator, they had so arranged their plan that Daniel should, by a simple, everyday act, violate the fundamental law of the kingdom. From that law the king himself could not appeal. No decree nor statute, as the enemies of Daniel were not slow to remind Darius, in pretended sympathy for his distress, could be changed. Seeing that there was no hope, the king gave command that the penalty fixed should be carried out. But in this hour of anguish, he was led to think of the God of heaven. As Daniel was cast into the den, and human hope was lost, Darius spoke with comforting assurance: "Thy God whom thou serves continually, He will deliver thee." [Daniel 6:16] To show his faith in the power of Jehovah to deliver Daniel, the king had a stone "laid upon the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet, and

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with the signet of his lords; that the purpose might not be changed concerning Daniel. Then the king went to his palace, and passed the night fasting: neither were instruments of music brought before him: and his sleep went from him.

For the honor of His name, the Lord delivered His servant. Very early in the morning the king arose, “and went in haste unto the den of lions. And when he came to the den, he cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel: and the king spoke and said to Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou serves continually, able to deliver thee from the lions? Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live forever. My God has sent His angel, and has shut the lions’ mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before Him innocence was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt. Then was the king exceeding glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God.

“And the king commanded, and they brought those men which had accused Daniel, and they cast them into the den of lions, them, their children, and their wives; and the lions had the mastery of them, and brake all their bones in pieces or ever they came at the bottom of the den.” [Daniel 6:19-24]

No human power delivered Daniel in this time of trial. Alone, without armor, with none to protect his life, helpless, he was cast into the den of these half starved beasts. Yet the angel of the Lord shut the mouths of the lions, and they did the man of God no harm.

Other illustrations could be drawn from the Bible showing the power manifested by heavenly angels. By the hand of angels the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed, and made a sign of the final punishment of all sinners. It was an angel of the Lord who led Israel from Egyptian bondage to the land of Canaan, driving them from the heathen nations, and giving to Israel the land promised to Abraham. It was an angel who rolled the stone from the sepulcher of Christ. It was an angel who delivered Peter from prison, and brought him to the little company who were spending the night in prayer in his behalf. All through the ages, these holy messengers have performed mighty miracles for God’s people. There is no work they are not willing to do, no task is too small or too great for them to undertake, when in so doing they are obeying the commands of Jehovah. Indeed, these heavenly messengers seem to have power to accomplish whatever is pleasing to God. Their power is equal to His commands, and is limited only by His requirements.

RAPIDITY OF ANGELS MOVEMENTS

“And the living creatures ran and returned as the appearance of a flesh of lightning.” Ezekiel 1:14.

As we proceed with our study of angels, we are more and more impressed with their exalted dignity of character, their wisdom and power. Not only are they infinitely superior to man, but the highest claims ever made by those who believe in the ministry of the spirits of the dead in behalf of the living sink into insignificance when compared with what the word of God reveals concerning the works, the glory, the majesty, and the activity of the angels of heaven. Continually these holy beings surround the throne of Jehovah, ready to do His bidding. Not only are they ever willing to obey His commands, to execute His commissions, but in the carrying out of His plans they exceed in swiftness of movement anything that man controls or has ever been able to attain.

For ages mankind was limited in locomotion to the slow process of wind by sea and of animals by land. Then the power of steam was discovered, and applied in the steam engine. Soon the railway train and the steamboat came to man’s aid, and added rapidity to his movements. Invention quickly followed invention, all tending to give man celerity in his activities, and to convey him from place to place with greater swiftness and security. The telegraph and the telephone have been so perfected that man is pleased to say that time and space have been practically annihilated. Science tells us that were it possible to coil a copper wire seven times around the earth at the equator, and install sufficiently powerful batteries at each end, an electric current could be sent the whole length of this wire in a second of time.

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Light travels 186,000 miles a second; yet in God's great universe there are distances so vast, worlds so far removed from this planet on which we live, that since creation's morning the light from them has not yet reached the earth. But as light moves with the greatest velocity of all earthly things, the prophet Ezekiel, wishing to describe the angels' swiftness of movement, says, "And the living creatures ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning." [Ezekiel 1:14] These holy messengers from the throne of God are not only mighty in power and wisdom, but in the rapidity of their movements in carrying out His will they transcend the highest flights of imagination that the mind of man can compass. They seem untrammelled by the law of gravitation. They meet no hindrances such as man experiences in passing through space. More rapid than the passage of light, swifter than the lightning's flash, these holy creatures go and return, bearing the messages of God in heaven to His children on earth.

It is true that man has little knowledge of the location of heaven. Poets have sung of its beauties, and the word of God has given us some idea of its surpassing loveliness; but while we are told on divine authority that "eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love Him," [2 Corinthians 2:9] the Lord has not seen fit to draw aside the veil which hides that happy land from our eyes. Both Revelation and science leave us in ignorance concerning the location of heaven and its distance from the earth.

By generations of study, and by the invention and perfection of delicate instruments of measurement, man has been able to ascertain with comparative accuracy the distances of earth and sea. Going still further, he has essayed to compute the distances of the heavenly bodies from this little planet and from one another. But no human being, however daring, has ever ventured to estimate the distance from the earth to the throne of Jehovah. But wherever that throne may be, we know that the angels are about it, for we read: "I beheld till . . . the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head like the pure wool: His throne was like the fiery flame, and His wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him: thousand thousands ministered unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him." [Daniel 7:9-10] Wherever, then, the throne of God is found, about it the angels are gathered, singing His praises, "hearkening unto the voice of His word," [Psalm 103:20] and ever holding themselves in readiness to do His will.

In the ninth chapter of Daniel, an interesting experience in the history of that prophet is recorded. Humbling his heart by fasting and prayer, confessing his sin and the sin of his people, he was seeking light concerning God's purpose toward Israel. Daniel's prayer on this occasion was not long. It can easily be read in a few moments. Yet he says: "Whiles I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the Lord my God for the holy mountain of my God; yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about, the time of the evening oblation. And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding. For thou art greatly beloved: therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision." [Daniel 9:20-23]

Here a messenger from heaven, standing before the throne of God when Daniel began to pray, was commanded to come to the prophet, and to give him skill and understanding concerning the revelations of Jehovah. While the prayer was still on his lips, before he had closed his petition, a messenger from the throne of God was at Daniel's side, announcing, "At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to show thee." [Daniel 9:23] Surely one could not ask for a more speedy response to his supplication than this.

Notice the expression "being caused to fly swiftly." Our Father knows the need of immediate help for His children, and when the occasion demands, He causes His more than lightning-swift messengers to quicken their flight. The angel did not have to search from place to place in Babylon to find Daniel. He did not have to look for him in the palace of the king, or in the council halls of the wise men, or among the throngs in the streets, but he came direct from the throne of God to Daniel's side. No earthly monarch ever sent so swift a messenger to bear tidings of good or ill as Jehovah sent to this prophet in prayer. No heart of love, bound by the strongest cords of devotion, ever yet sent so quick an answer to the object of his affections as God sends through His holy angels to those who trust in Him. For our Lord is no respecter of persons: what He

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did for Daniel, He will do for the humblest of His children who serve Him in sincerity and offer their petitions to Him in faith.

Another instance of the swiftness with which the messengers of God bring help to His children is found in the record of the second deliverance of the apostle-Peter from prison. Herod Agrippa, governor of Judea under the Roman emperor, was very anxious to gain the favor of the Jews. Not only did he persecute the believers in Jesus, but he had already killed James the brother of John with the sword; and hoping still further to please the people, he planned in his evil heart to kill Peter also. But fearing the effect of Peter's eloquence upon the multitude gathered in Jerusalem at that time to celebrate the Passover, Herod dared not immediately lead him forth for public trial and condemnation, but cast him into prison.

Mindful, however, of the apostle's former deliverance, the king took every precaution that malice and self-interest could devise, to insure his safe-keeping at this time. Sixteen armed soldiers guarded him night and day, one watch relieving another at set intervals. Not only so, but he was bound with chains to two soldiers, who would feel his slightest movement should he attempt to flee. Before the door the keepers, realizing well the fate in store for them if they allowed the prisoner to escape, kept vigilant guard. So the days of the Passover were ended, the multitudes dispersed, and on the morrow the faithful apostle was to be led forth to death.

But a power greater than that of the cruel Herod or the fanatical Jews was engaged in Peter's behalf. "Prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him." [Acts 12:5] Earnestly and fervently, with no other power to aid them, the little company of believers called on the God of heaven to deliver His servant. And the response of heaven was not delayed. A mighty angel was sent to deliver Peter. "And a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise tip quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands. And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals. And so he did. And he said unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me. And he went out, and followed him; and knew not that it was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision.

"When they were past the first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leads unto the city; which opened to them of his own accord: and they went out, and passed on through one street; and forthwith the angel departed from him. And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety, that the Lord has sent His angel, and has delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews. And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying." [Acts 12:7-12]

This remarkable deliverance was wrought by an angel sent from God while the church was still engaged in prayer in Peter's behalf. So speedily had the Lord answered the petition through the ministry of the angel, that the friends of Peter, though they had been praying for his release, could not believe, when he knocked at the gate, that it was really the apostle himself who sought admittance.

How often has this part of the experience of these believers been repeated in the history of the people of God! When they have received definite answers to their prayers, they have been unable to realize that God has heard them pray, either forgetting the petitions they have made, or attributing the answer to some other source. The enemy of our souls is ever sowing the seeds of unbelief, causing us to think that our gracious heavenly Father does not hear us when we call upon Him; but the Christian should be faithful to acknowledge the evidences in his own experience showing that God does answer prayers, and to offer to Him the sweet incense of praise and thanksgiving.

On the night of the Savior's betrayal, Jesus reminded Peter of the angels whom He might call to His aid at a word of prayer to His Father. Immediate help - if such help was to be invoked-was needed. About Jesus and His disciples was a furious mob, assaulting and insulting the divine Son of God, and clamoring for His life. The priests, in the robes of their office, were inciting the rabble to violence. As the disciples beheld their Master derided, mocked, and treated with every indignity that wicked men could devise, Peter, in his zeal and indignation, drew his sword, and began to fight. To the disciple, this seemed the only means of rescue.

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Not so with Jesus. He knew that about His Father's throne were multitudes of the heavenly host, and that should He but ask deliverance, the armies of heaven were ready to save Him speedily from the wrath of the multitude. "Put up again thy sword," He said to Peter; "for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Think thou that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He shall presently give Me more than twelve legions of angels?" [Matthew 26:52-53] Instantly, quick as a flash of lightning, the Father would send a cohort of angels to protect His Son. Well did Jesus know that the infuriated throng about Him had no strength with which to withstand the power of the angels of heaven. No hand in all that company was so quick that it could strike down the Son of God before an angel could come, at His call, from the presence of His Father, and shield the Savior. Jesus believed in the immediate deliverance which God can bring to His children through the ministry of the angels; and one with such a faith needs not to look to man for help.

When Nebuchadnezzar, in his wrath, cast the three worthies into the fiery furnace, there was with them in those burning flames a fourth personage, whose visage was like the form of the Son of God, and in his presence the fiery flame had no power to destroy these faithful men. When Daniel was cast into the lions' den, his deliverance was wrought by an angel. Before ever the lions, maddened with hunger, could do the least harm to the servant of God, an angel from heaven tamed their wild spirits and shut their hungry mouths. When Elisha was surrounded by the Syrian army, determined to take his life, a host of angels filled the mount where he was, and shielded him from the vengeance of his enemies, a living exemplification of the promise, "The angel of the Lord encamps round about them that fear Him, and delivers them." [psalm 34:7]

The children of God do not have to fight the battles against the enemy of their souls in their own feeble strength. Not alone are they left to wrestle with the powers of darkness. All heaven is interested in the warfare carried on by them against the hosts of evil. And as in the lives of the faithful men of old, whose experiences are recorded for our encouragement, so now the earnest, fervent prayer of faith will call the angels of heaven to deliver God's people, or to comfort and strengthen them for the fiery ordeal before them. The angels of the Lord are our watchers and helpers. Countless millions of these mighty, swift-winged beings are ever in readiness to come to the aid of the humble, believing children of God. Swifter than the lightning, these holy messengers carry our petitions to the throne of Jehovah, offer them upon the golden altar before the throne, and return with the answer to our requests. Darkness cannot hinder them. Storm and tempest, fire and desolation, are no barriers to their flight. It does not take months or weeks or even days for God to send the answer to our cry for help; but fresh from His hand we may receive daily and hourly the blessing and strength and courage we need and desire.

Thus the people of God are continually in touch with Heaven. Wherever they may be, however remote from loved ones of earth, they are, through the ministry of the holy angels, ever in the presence of Jehovah; and whatever petition is sent to Him in faith, will be answered according to infinite wisdom, for the best good of His people. Before these heavenly beings, occupying so exalted and honorable a place in the work for our salvation, we should ever walk in humility and all sincerity.

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"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." Matthew 18:10.

THROUGH the fall of man, the world passed under the control of Satan. Not only did man lose his innocence by his disobedience, but with it also the other gifts so freely bestowed upon him by his Maker, liberty, dominion over the world and all creatures therein, the enjoyment of communion with his Creator, perfect health, endless life. By one act of transgression he had not only forfeited his right to this perfect state, but he had sold himself and his descendants into the bondage of Satan, and brought upon himself and them the penalty of sin, which is death.

No longer was Adam God's holy man. From this time, he was the bond servant of his worst enemy, with no power to redeem himself from the slavery into which by his own act he had fallen. His birthright to peace and happiness and life was forever lost. Henceforth he must become more and more alienated from the

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service of God, more and more involved in the entanglements and snares of the service of the evil one. Time would increase the weakness and guilt of the human race. Succeeding generations could not rise above the blight entailed on moral character by his transgression. The seeds of rebellion against God and His government, planted in man's heart by one act of disobedience, would grow and develop, and each succeeding generation would be farther removed from the holy estate that man enjoyed when he came from the hands of his Maker. More and more would mankind become changed into the similitude of Satan. More and more fully would they be committed to his service and work. Only time was needed for man, created in the glory and image of the Father, to have obliterated from his mind all knowledge of God and all desire for godlikeness.

Satan, the deceiver of man, and now his master, was known in heaven. He had stood in the very presence of Jehovah, and had occupied an exalted and honorable position in His service. But pride and envy entered his heart, and developed into a force so strong that he sought to overthrow the government of God. Frustrated in this plan, he had still succeeded in thwarting the purpose of God concerning the man whom He had created and to whom He had given dominion over the earth.

But the Infinite One, whose heart is full of compassion and love, did not abandon man to eternal ruin and destruction. Had not the man been deceived by Satan, led into sin by the arch deceiver? The responsibility was not alone man's. Satan was also an important factor in his fall. In the councils of heaven it was determined that the price of sin should be paid, in order that man might be bought back from the dominion of Satan. Death had been declared to be the penalty of transgression - the penalty that God Himself had placed upon it when He put Adam and Eve in Eden, and commanded them not to eat of the forbidden tree, saying, "In the day that thou eats thereof thou shall surely die." [Genesis 2:17]

The Son of God, the only-begotten of the Father, offered to suffer the penalty of sin, and to bring to man the opportunity of entering again the service of his Creator. Freely did Christ volunteer to enter Satan's domain, take upon Himself man's nature, and by a life of obedience and sacrifice, and finally by laying down His life, work out man's salvation. It was a sacrifice- never before witnessed in the eternal ages.

Not only was Christ to give His life as the penalty for sin, to taste death for every man, that man might thus be restored through faith to son ship with God, but all heaven was called upon to join in working out man's redemption. The angels were to give their service of ministry and love to aid man in leading a life of righteousness and obedience. They were to become ministering spirits, sent forth by Heaven to minister to those who should be heirs of salvation. Before the assembled host, God presented the ages of watchful care and untiring ministry that this service would impose. Faithfully He showed them how they must leave the courts of heaven for the sin-cursed, fallen world, and unselfishly minister to man till the end of time.

Angels were not ignorant of Satan and his devices. They had seen his courtly steppings in the presence of Jehovah, and knew his subtle power, his art and deception, his pride, his hatred of all that was good. Had they not met his temptations? Had he not invited them to join the ranks under his banner, and overthrow the government of heaven? Had they not heard his specious promises, his boastful glorying against God? And had they not seen a third part of the heavenly beings flock under his black standard, and rebel against their Maker?

With unspeakable joy, the angelic host expressed their willingness to cooperate with the Lord in bringing back to obedience the world now under the influence of Satan and his evil angels. With Christ as their leader, who was to give His life as a sacrifice for sin, the angels pledged their loyal service to minister to man's needs, and do their part in winning back his love and obedience to God.

The angels could not at first comprehend the full depths of love that dwelt in the great heart of Jehovah. It was a mystery to them that Jesus, the Son of God, should willingly die for a race of rebels. So far as we know, the angels had never seen death. Everywhere in the universe of God was life. Well might they question concerning this mystery, What does the Father mean when He says that Christ will die for sinners? Then, when it was explained - how was it possible for the glorious, immortal Son of God to die? Had not God declared that Jesus was equal with Himself? How, then, could He taste death?

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Doubtless, also, the angels could not see all that the Father saw in man's redemption. Time alone would unfold to them the depths of love dwelling in the heart of God. But what was now hidden and mysterious would be revealed as the ages passed, and little by little they would come to understand and appreciate His wonderful love.

In his weakness and failure and discouragement, man must not be left to follow his own devices, harassed and beset as he would be by the fallen angels under the leadership of Satan. About him must be thrown every uplifting influence possible to devise, to win his heart from sin and selfish desires, and to plant therein aspirations for purity and uprightness. It was the purpose of the Father to create in man a desire for holiness, and to impress upon him his utter helplessness, in and of himself, to do the will of God. Continually were the angels to work with men, inspiring them with right desires, cooperating with the Holy Spirit in leading them to love righteousness and to hate sin. And when a heart, looking away from itself and its own weakness, should cry to heaven for help, the angels were to fly to the side of that person, and work his deliverance.

How little could the angels have known, in the beginning, of this great work, and of the long-continued warfare that would be waged by Satan and his followers for the souls of men! How little could they have appreciated the cost of man's redemption! There must come to every man to be born into the world a power outside of himself, that would lift him from the depths to which he had fallen, and hedge him in with influences other than those of Satan and his legions. All who would accept the salvation provided by God in the gift of His Son would enjoy a special ministry of holy angels. These angels, by their hallowed presence, would protect the children of God in danger, strengthen them in temptation, and comfort and sustain them in the hour of sorrow.

Jesus Himself gave utterance to this truth when He said, speaking of the children of God: "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." [Matthew 18:10] Here the Master is speaking of one of the little ones of earth. Not to the strong and courageous alone are these angels sent; but reaching down to the lowest depths, Jesus takes the smallest, the weakest, the humblest, the one that is counted least of all, one of the little ones, and says of the class that such a one represents, "Their angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in heaven."

What a comfort to know that the great heart of the Father of all has not only given to the very humblest of His children a guardian angel, but in times of special temptation, as many angels as may be needed to protect him from the assaults of the enemy are sent to his aid! These divine messengers are ever in touch with the throne of God. Thus the child of God, through the ministry of these holy beings, is ever in touch with the Father. No hour of temptation, no weakness, no trial, however great and seemingly unbearable, but the least of God's children can reach His throne by prayer, through the ministry of these divine agents. The guardian angels can always come into the presence of God without delay, and there present the needs of His children. There are no barred doors, no guarded gateways, to hinder the entrance of the angels. To the messengers sent forth to minister to God's children,) the presence chamber is ever open.

Through this ministry, heaven is brought very near to the daily life of God's earthly children. It matters not where duty may lead, whether in the crowded marts of the world, where men are madly chasing after wealth, or whether among the lowly, retired haunts of men, where poverty and toil and suffering are the lot of God's children; whether in the halls of learning, in the palace of the rich and great, or in hovels where want and penury abound amid all these scenes, wherever the child of faith is found, there these heavenly beings are present to guard the lives and hearts of those who truly love God, and to minister to their needs.

Angels do not call God's children from the earth, and take them to some planet where sin has never entered; nor do they lead them to forsake the habitations of men, and isolate themselves from the company of their fellows. No; they come to us where duty calls, where we are, amid the busy scenes of life. They come to us in our homes, surrounded by our companions and children, fretted by daily cares and trials, wrestling with sickness and suffering and sorrow, that they may there minister to our needs, and help us to endure patiently what God permits, and thus be refined, purified, and fitted for the world to come. When the temptation is strong, and the flesh is weak, these heavenly beings drive back the fallen angels, and,

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lifting our souls above earthly longings and desires, cause our hearts to cry out for God, and for His presence to come and dwell within us.

The angels themselves have passed through the fiery furnace of temptation, standing true to Jehovah against the snares of the prince of evil at the time of the great rebellion in heaven. Well do they know the experience that comes from seeing companions false to their trust, severing sacred ties, and joining the ranks of those who are in rebellion against their Maker. By loyalty and obedience, the angels triumphed over the delusions of Satan, and each one worked out an experience that makes him strong in imparting faith and courage to those under temptation.

When the apostle Peter had been cast into prison, where he was bound with chains and guarded night and day by four quaternions of soldiers, the church prayed earnestly in his behalf. In answer to these prayers, and for the glory of His name, the Lord sent an angel from heaven and miraculously wrought Peter's deliverance. Going at once to the house where the brethren were praying, Peter knocked at the door of the gate. A young girl named Rhoda came to listen; and "when she knew Peter's voice, she opened not the gate for gladness, but ran in, and told how Peter stood before the gate. And they said unto her, Thou art mad. But she constantly affirmed that it was even so. Then said they, It is his angel." [Acts 12:14-15]

In this incident we have another proof that the early Christians believed in guardian angels; for if they did not believe that Peter had a guardian angel, why should they affirm that it was his angel who stood at the gate, knocking for admittance? Though they were praying for Peter's deliverance from prison, yet their faith was not strong enough to believe that the Lord had answered their prayer. To that company of praying men and women, it was not an unthinkable thing that while Peter was in prison, suffering all that ancient methods of imprisonment could inflict, his guardian angel could come from the prison cell with a message from the Lord concerning him. It was easier for them to believe that it was Peter's angel at the gate than that God had answered their prayers and delivered His servant. Nor did this little company of Christians think the presence at the gate to be some disembodied spirit. They did not suggest that it was the spirit of some beloved friend that was asking admission. No; to them it was plainly the presence of the guardian angel of the imprisoned apostle.

The Jewish people believed in the existence and ministry of heavenly angels. Their whole national literature was rich in the history of the visits of these holy beings to the earth, bringing messages of love and comfort to the servants of the Lord. Centuries before this time, the psalmist had declared: "For He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone." [Psalm 91:11-12] And again, "The angel of the Lord encamps round about them that fear Him, and delivers them." [Psalm 34:7]

So familiar were these texts to the church in the days of Christ, that Satan himself quoted one of them when attempting to lead the Savior into committing an act of presumptuous sin. Did not Satan know full well that these holy beings guarded the persons of the children of faith, so that he and his fallen angels could not force them into disobedience and rebellion? Again and again, in many a hard fought struggle for the souls of men, had Satan and his host met these angels, fresh from glory, face to face. Well he knew that the Lord guarded His people with faithful love and jealous care, so hedging them about that often he could find no place to begin his attack, nor any way to continue it should he succeed in making a beginning.

No fond mother could watch more tenderly over the child by her side than the Lord watches over His children. When they go out, and when they come in, by sea and by land, in sickness and in health, in prosperity and in adversity, the Lord of hosts keeps His children in all their ways. He has promised to lead His people beside still waters, to be their rock and fortress, to give His angels charge over them, and to bear them up in the everlasting arms. What a wonderful ministry is that of the holy angels in behalf of the people of God! They were not to pay the price of sin, for it was not in their power to atone for the transgression of God's holy law; but they were to join with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in breaking the power of Satan over the children of faith.

In the recital of the conversation between Satan and the Lord concerning Job, we read: "Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them.

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And the Lord said unto Satan, Has thou considered My servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that fears God, and eschews evil? Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, Doth job fear God for naught? Has Thou not made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he has on every side? Thou has blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth You hand now, and touch all that he has, and he will curse Thee to Thy face. And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, all that he has is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth your hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord.” [Job 6:6-12]

Here Satan directly charged the Lord with making a hedge about Job and about all he had, so that the powers of evil were not able to touch him or his possessions. His property, his children, his life, all that he had, were so completely hedged in that Satan could find no way to destroy and overcome this man of God. Before the Father, the evil one complained that the protection afforded Job was so complete that temptation could not be brought to bear upon him; and he declared that if he could only have access to Job, he would be able to prove that the patriarch did not fear God for naught. But Job trusted in the Lord, and served Him with a perfect heart. There was no alliance between him and Satan. About this man of God the holy angels encamped, delivering him from the temptations of the enemy, and all the devices of Satan failed to reach him. This illustrates how the Lord protects His children, and fulfills His promise, “The angel of the Lord encamps round about them that fear Him, and delivers them.”

Another illustration of this promise is given in the life of Elisha. In the days of this prophet, the king of Syria was waging destructive warfare against the people of God. His army was invading the territory of Israel, yet it seemed impossible for the hosts of the heathen king to overtake the army of Israel and engage in -definite battle. When the generals of the Syrian host decided to camp in a certain place, the angel of God made it known to Elisha, who passed the information on to the king of Israel, saying, Avoid such and such places, for there the armies of Syria are encamped. Thus were the people of Israel delivered from their enemies. But the king of Syria believed there was treachery in his camp, and that some one was betraying his plans. A council was called, and the king asked, “Will you not show me which of us is for the king of Israel? And one of his servants said, None, my lord, O king: but Elisha, the prophet that is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the words that thou speaks in thy bed chamber.” [2 Kings 6:11-12]

Promptly then the Syrian king determined upon the destruction of the prophet. “And he said, Go and spy where he is, that I may send and fetch him. And it was told him, saying, Behold, he is in Dothan. Therefore sent he thither horses, and chariots, and a great host: and they came by night, and compassed the city about. And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! How shall we do? And he answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. And Elisha prayed, and said, 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 6:13-17]

Here are two lonely men sought by a wicked and powerful king. From a human viewpoint their situation is desperate. The king has sent his soldiers in great numbers to surround this man of God, that he may not escape. All the gates are barred, every highway leading outward is guarded by armed sentinels, and a mighty host-is encamped round about, so that apparently no one can either enter the city or flee from it. As far as human wisdom can foresee, there is no way to escape the snare that is laid for Elisha. Viewing the troops of Syria, the servant of the prophet gave up in utter despair. “Alas, my master!” he cried, “how shall we do?” But Elisha well knew the God whom he served, and he had the assurance that the angels of the Lord were about them. To the young man’s despairing inquiry he said, “Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them.”

Elisha and his faint-hearted servant were not alone in that small village. Though the army of Israel was far away, and could not give him succor, he still believed in God. Resting on the promises of Jehovah, he saw by the eye of faith the hosts of heaven encamping round about them, and was unafraid. But when he observed the fear of his trembling servant, his heart was moved with pity, and in compassion he prayed for the young man, that his eyes might be opened, that he might see. “And the Lord opened the eyes of the

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young man; and he saw and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.”

In this beautiful illustration of God’s protecting care, we learn that not simply one angel was sent to guard Elisha, but legions of holy beings were encamped round about him. There were more angels about this man of God than there were soldiers in the camp of Syria. What could weak, puny man do to harm this prophet about whom was such a retinue of holy beings? Could all the armies of Syria capture the man of God, and make him their prisoner? Never. At the prayer of the prophet, the Syrian hosts were smitten with blindness, and Elisha went unharmed into the camp, and led the men of war from Dothan to Samaria. Powerless to do him harm, these armed soldiers meekly followed the leadership of the prophet.

When the Lord was to take the prophet Elijah from the earth, and translate him into glory without his seeing death, He did this great work through the power and ministry of holy angels. Led by the Holy Spirit, Elijah was communing with Elisha. “And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. And Elisha saw it, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof.” [2 Kings 2:11-12] These holy angels, messengers from God’s throne, were fulfilling the promises of Jehovah in surrounding His children. What the Father wills, it is in their power to accomplish.

These angels are God’s ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation. The presence of these holy ones cannot be bought with money, nor conjured by priest, nor materialized by mystical performances. Not in the dimly lighted chamber of some professed necromancer do these heavenly messengers make their presence known. They are sent by God, fresh from the throne of glory, to minister to the child of faith in the hour of need. In the desolate chamber where sickness and sin and death have done their work, these holy watchers are present. In the daily activities of life, when the body cringes with pain and the heart is sad because of failure and human weaknesses, the angel of His presence may be found. In the halls of legislation, in the marts of commerce, in the pulpit of the consecrated pastor, these angels carry on their work of ministry in behalf of those who fear God. How often, could the scales but be lifted from our eyes as they were lifted from the eyes of the servant of Elisha, would we be able to see these heavenly beings about us! But though our eyes are held, that we cannot see, yet it is our privilege to believe, and wait, and trust.

Each child of God has a guardian angel, a ministering spirit, always attendant upon him, impressing on his heart desires for purity and holiness, and carrying his prayers to the Father’s throne in glory. The ministry of these holy beings in behalf of man is not in proportion to his merit, but according to his need. “As thy days,” thus reads the blessed promise, “so shall thy strength be.” [Deuteronomy 32:25] When temptation so presses upon the soul that we feel utterly helpless and desolate; when our hearts are bowed beneath the powers of darkness; when we have no strength; when hope and faith are almost gone, then it is our privilege to believe that the angels are near at hand to comfort, guide, and guard us. Surely it is the duty as well as the precious privilege of the Christian to live in the consciousness of this divine protection, and to believe that “the angel of the Lord encamps round about them that fear Him, and delivers them.”

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“Then they that feared the Lord spoke often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name.” Malachi 3:16.

THE plan of salvation is not of man’s design, and in its conception and execution it is far above finite comprehension. The Author of the plan of redemption is He who laid the foundation of the earth, and created all things therein. The Creator of man is also his Redeemer. He who in the beginning gave life to all animate things is the One who laid down His life in order that mankind “might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.” [John 10:10] Eternal life - the life more abundant - is the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord. This being so, it is fitting and just that He who gives life shall also fix the conditions on which it is received.

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In saving man, God has ever had a definite plan. From the day when He made known to Adam in the garden of Eden the awful consequences that must follow transgression, it has been the purpose of Jehovah that man should live. So also from the day when He opened a door of hope for a lost world in the promise that the Seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head, the Lord has exhausted the resources of heaven to secure man's salvation.

In our study thus far, we have learned that the Bible teaches that heavenly angels are associated with men in a variety of ways, and that in the carrying out of His plans in man's behalf, God works through the agency of these holy beings. Has He messages of warning for His people, He makes known His plan through the ministry of His angels. Does He wish to reveal to His servant the impending doom of the cities of the plain, these heavenly beings inform Abraham of the threatened wrath of Jehovah. Would He comfort Daniel locked in the den of lions, an angel is sent to the imprisoned prophet to protect him from the ravenous fury of the wild beasts. Ever in the history of God's people the angels have acted as His agents, sent forth from the %courts above to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation.

According to the Scriptures, there is to be a time when the Lord will judge the people of the earth, and call all men to account for the deeds done in the body. Again and again the word of God reveals the fact that at an appointed time the Lord will examine into the character of men, and judge them according to their works. Says the wise man, "God shall judge the righteous and the wicked: for there is a time there for every purpose and for every work." [Ecclesiastes 3:17]

In the working out of God's plans, nothing miscarries. All is perfected beforehand. Wicked men and evil angels may delay the accomplishment of the plan of the Eternal, but all things must work out according to design, and ultimately the will of God must triumph. In His purpose there is a time for all things. The Judgment of Jehovah has a definite time, and some day it will take place. While this text gives us no clew to the time of the judgment, it does plainly declare that the Lord will judge both classes; and in other scriptures the time of this event is clearly revealed.

The apostle Paul realized the solemnity and the certainty of the judgment. On trial for his life before the corrupt and cruel helix, Roman governor of Judea, Paul pleaded his cause with such fearlessness and in so convincing a manner that the interest of the governor was awakened, and "he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ." [Acts 24:24] Boldly, yet with courtesy and dignity, Paul set before Felix the character of God, the binding obligations of His law, and the gift of eternal life made possible by the death of His Son. It was plain preaching indeed that the apostle did before this proud ruler-no cringing, no sycophancy, no flattery, no praise undeserved to influence a favorable decision in his own behalf. His theme was noble and lofty, and compelled attention.

Doubtless it was the first time in his whole career that Felix had listened to such truths as Paul presented on this occasion - truths pressed home to an unwilling heart by the influence of the Holy Spirit. The record declares that as Paul "reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled." [Acts 24:25]

Note the expression "judgment to come." It was not a judgment that had already passed; nor was it a judgment then present, though men were dying then, as now, continually. No; the judgment preached to Felix was a Judgment that in Paul's day was still in the future. It was not taking place; it had not passed; it was yet to come. This view is further strengthened by an expression from the wonderful sermon given by the apostle on Mars' Hill, in Athens. The occasion was all that any man could ask. "Away from the noise and bustle of crowded thoroughfares, and the tumult of promiscuous discussion, the apostle could be heard without interruption. Around him gathered poets, artists, and philosophers, the scholars and sages of Athens, who thus addressed him: May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speaks is? For thou brings certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore what these things mean." [Acts of the Apostles, page 236]

As he observed the superstition of his hearers, the idolatry on every hand, and the desire the Greeks had expressed to please all deities, Paul expounded to them the knowledge of the true God. But the climax of

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his discourse was reached in the declaration, startling indeed to his pagan listeners, God “has appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness.” [Acts 17:31] The fixing of that important event is not left to man, nor to angels. God Himself, the righteous judge, has set the day when He will try the cases of men. He has appointed the hour in which He will judge the world. It matters not whether we wish it to be so or not - the judgment is certain. Nothing that we can do will hinder the coming of that day, fixed by God Himself.

In another place in the writings of this same apostle, we are taught that the judgment comes after death: “It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the Judgment.” [Hebrews 9:27] Note that the text does not say the judgment comes as soon as men die, but that “it is appointed unto men once to die,” and “after this the judgment.” Therefore as all men must die, so must all men be judged one day at the bar of God. We must never lose sight of the fact that man is a responsible being, responsible not only to the government of earth under which he lives, and whose protection he enjoys, but responsible also to that higher tribunal from which there is no escape.

The necessity of the judgment appeals to our own reason and sense of justice. For nearly six thousand years, men have been born into the world, lived their brief day, and died. Some have recognized the claims of God’s law, and have accepted the atonement provided for them by the life and death of Jesus Christ. Others, rejecting this priceless gift, have plunged headlong into sin and rebellion. A countless multitude, evil and good, just and unjust, sleep in the dust of the earth. We have already learned that even the righteous dead do not receive their reward at death, but are held in the grave till the first resurrection, when they will receive new life through the Son of God. Now as truly as eternal life is promised through Jesus Christ, so truly are wrath and damnation to be meted out to the impenitent. We know that at the second coming of Christ to this earth, the righteous dead will be raised to life and immortality; but how will it be known who are counted worthy to receive this priceless gift, and who are reserved to receive the unmixed wrath of God at the second resurrection? Is it to be a matter of guesswork? or is God’s plan, His purpose, set forth in ‘His word? What part, if any, do the angels act on this solemn occasion?

Clearly, if a distinction is made between the two classes who have lived on the earth, if some are taken to heaven at the first resurrection, and others are left in their graves till the second resurrection, there must be a time when the case of each one is decided. And this is true. The destiny of all mankind will be determined at the judgment, when the cases of all will pass in review before Jehovah. The decisions are not left to man’s judgment. They are settled by Him who is infinitely “merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin,” but who also is infinitely just, and “will by no means clear the guilty.” [Exodus 34:6-7]

Only the pure in heart will enter the home prepared for the saints of God. Nothing evil, nothing that defiles, can have any part therein. All will admit that this is just and right. None would dare assert that all who have lived on the earth should enter the home of the saved. Even in this wicked world, where sin is so common, we often blush at its manifestations, and are horrified at its openness. We are shocked when we see men, created in the image of God, reeling in the streets, and making themselves lower than the beasts about them. We say to the saloon and the gambling den: “Hide your chambers from the passers by. Drop the curtain before the windows and doors where you ply your wickedness, that our wives and children, our mothers and sisters, may not see your debauchery and shame.” We say to the brothels and the dens of vice, “Beyond this line you cannot pass.” We hedge in these places of evil repute by statutes and police regulations. Even men who are vile sinners, do not wish their wives and children to come in contact with those things which corrupt and pollute. How blessed is the hope and promise of a country, a home, from which sin and all its evil effects will be forever banished!

Some may ask: “What will be the nature of the Judgment? What will be considered in that great day? Will God call man to account for all the acts of his life? Will he be examined for all the little things, as well as for greater sins?” We are not left in ignorance concerning what will be brought into judgment. In unmistakable language the matter is set before us in these words: “God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.” [Ecclesiastes 12:14] Taking this plain statement as our guide, therefore, we know that before the bar of God our every deed committed in the flesh will be brought, “whether it be good, or whether it be evil.” Not only will the works wrought

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openly be brought into judgment, but every secret thing also will be called into account in that day. Nothing that man has ever done will fail to be revealed. No man can deceive the Lord. Here on earth, we can cover up our faults, and oftentimes escape punishment for our transgressions; but in that great day, all the defenses of pretense and secrecy will be torn from our lives. Nothing that we have ever done, nothing that we have ever said, can be hidden then. Even our very thoughts will be revealed to the judge of all the earth.

Again, we read from the wise man these words: "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of your heart, and in the sight of your eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment. Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh: for childhood and youth are vanity." [Ecclesiastes 11:9-10] It is not difficult to tell what Solomon expected a young man to answer for at the bar of God. Plainly he tells him that while he may walk in his own ways, in the sight of his own eyes, and in the lust of the flesh, one thing he must not forget, that "for all these things" God will bring him into judgment.

None could be more capable of speaking correctly concerning the judgment than the Savior, who said, referring to this very event: "But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shall be justified, and by thy words thou shall be condemned." [Matthew 12:36-37] In this statement, there is no hint that man is regarded by Heaven as an irresponsible creature, entrapped in a net from which he has no way of setting himself free. No; his responsibility is clearly set forth in the declaration that for every idle word that passes his lips, he shall give account in the day of judgment. Nor will he then be his own interpreter of his acts and words. A correct and impartial record is kept of man's life; and in that day, he must answer to Jehovah for his course on earth.

In earthly courts, men are arraigned and tried upon some specific charge; but in the great Judgment day, the whole life is examined. Nothing is hidden from the eye of God. Every injustice, every deceit, every dishonest act, every secret sin, as well as all noble thoughts, unselfish, loving acts, and worthy endeavors, will be brought into account. Saint and sinner alike must appear before the Judgment seat of Christ, and account for the use they have made of this earthly life. In that day, neither gold nor silver nor precious stones, neither prestige nor learning nor even service in the cause of God, will give a man favor with the Lord. "For," says Paul, "we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he has done, whether it be good or bad." [2 Corinthians 5:10] Surely such a declaration should awaken within every soul a strong desire to have his case well in hand when that solemn hour shall come.

Again, the apostle says: "But why dost thou judge thy brother? Or why dost thou set at naught thy brother? For we shall all stand before the Judgment seat of Christ." [Romans 14:10] If we must all stand before this judgment bar, nothing can be of greater personal interest to each of us than the Judgment day.

A man called to appear even in an earthly court is deeply interested in the outcome, and puts forth his earnest efforts to secure a favorable verdict. The best advocate that he can command is hired to plead his cause, every detail is carefully examined and weighed in regard to its bearing on the result, and an attempt is made to secure such testimony as will strengthen his case and fortify it against the attacks of the opposing counsel.

Consider, too, that in these earthly courts, man has only his reputation, a temporal, brief life, or money, at stake. Their decisions do not affect the eternal future of those who are called to appear before them. But in the great day of Judgment, how much is at stake! Not simply a brief, passing life. Not the loss of worldly gain. Not the staining of a dearly prized reputation.

No, no! In this solemn day, our eternal destiny is at stake. Life, eternal life, with all it means, with all it brings to the receiver, is to be gained or lost. The event is the most momentous in the history of every individual.

"But," some one says, "if all the wicked are to be there, we cannot feel our loss as if we were to suffer alone." Let none deceive themselves with this false hope. When the awful sentence is passed upon the lost,

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there will be little consolation for any in knowing that others with themselves are to go down to eternal ruin. The loss will be personal. As eternal life is a great gain to those who receive it, so the loss of eternal life is an awful calamity to those who suffer it. The punishment of the wicked consists in suffering the wrath of God when mercy has been withdrawn from the earth. .

Jesus Christ now offers to become the sinner's advocate, and promises to take each case entrusted to Him before the Father, and to pay the price of all sin and uncleanness at the bar of God. Those who feel that they are helpless and without hope in that day, are invited to make Jesus their portion. They are urged to commit their ways to Him who gave His life to redeem them. It is true that the penalty for sin must be met. It is true that "the wages of sin is death," [Romans 6:23] and "the soul that sins, it shall die." [Ezekiel 18:4] But in His great love and compassion, Jesus Christ came into the world to taste death for every man. He has borne our sins and carried our sorrows. On Him has been laid the iniquity of us all. He was made to be sin for us, though He Himself was the Sinless One.

And now, having tasted death for every man, He offers to all men life and immortality, on condition that they believe in Him as the Son of God. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." [John 3:16] As man's advocate, it is the great desire of the Savior that a favorable judgment be secured for those whose cases He is asked to plead. Not only has He the longing desire to secure such a judgment, but by virtue of His sinless life and His death to pay the penalty for sin, He also possesses the power to secure such a judgment for those who will forsake sin, and will commit themselves fully to Him. Who would not gladly place his case in the hands of such an advocate?

Those who fail to accept Christ as their portion, must answer for their own sins. Guilty, alone, without an intercessor, they must meet their life record, and pay the price of their transgression. The rule of judgment in that day is the law of Jehovah; for "as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law." [Romans 2:12] The law of God, the Ten Commandments, is the rule of righteousness by which every man's life is to be tried. It is the rule by which all must be measured; "for by the law is the knowledge of sin," [Romans 3:20] and "where no law is, there is no transgression." [Romans 4:15]

But let none be discouraged because of this high standard. Every sinner in the world who has come short of keeping that law - and that includes all mankind - may find justification in Jesus Christ. Upon the Lamb, the sinless Lamb of God, may be laid the sins of every transgressor. In order that they may find mercy at the bar of God, they are invited to come to Jesus Christ, and receive cleansing through His blood. A way of escape has been provided for every one who will accept it; but for those who despise the riches of God's goodness and forbearance and long-suffering, there remains only the "certain fearful looking for of judgment." [Hebrews 10:27] Not realizing that the goodness of God would lead them to repentance, they stumble blindly on, in their hard and impenitent hearts treasuring up for themselves "wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; who will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life: but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; but glory, honor, and peace, to every man that works good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: for there is no respect of persons with God. For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law." [Romans 2:5-12]

It may be asked, How is the Lord able to call into account every act and word and thought of man's heart? With all the countless millions of human beings who have lived and died, filling vast varieties of conditions in life, how is it possible for the Lord to call up the life record of each one? From a human viewpoint these questions are natural. But God is infinite. He who created the worlds and upholds them by His power, who notes the sparrow's fall, and declares, "The very hairs of your head are all numbered," must be familiar with the life history of each one of the children of men. Not only does He know the acts of their lives, but the very thoughts and intents of the heart are open before Him. However, in order that all may acknowledge the righteousness of His judgments, He has ordained that the life record of each person should be written out. The Bible speaks plainly of these records, or books, that are kept in heaven. This brings us to a consideration of the books used in the work of the judgment.

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In the twentieth chapter of Revelation we find this statement: “And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before - God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.” [Revelation 20:12] In this scripture we learn that books of record are kept in heaven, in which are written the lives of men. In addition to “the books,” which are spoken of as being opened, another book is also mentioned, called the book of life. Again, in Malachi, we find still another book noted --”the book of remembrance,” which is written before the Lord. “Then they that feared the Lord spoke often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name.” [Malachi 3:16]

To some it may seem strange that in heaven there should be kept a record of men’s lives; yet nothing is more plainly taught in the word of God than this, and that in the great Judgment day, men will be judged according to the things written in these books. The book of remembrance is especially mentioned among these books of record, perhaps for the reason that of all the graces, that of gratitude seems most often absent from the natural heart, untouched by the influence of the Spirit of God. Of Jesus it is recorded that as He entered into a certain village, He met ten lepers, who besought Him to have mercy upon them. Looking upon their wretched condition with compassion, Jesus sent them to the priest; “and it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed.” [Luke 17:14] A marvelous miracle - saved from a loathsome and terrible disease, a living death! Yet only one returned to give thanks and glorify God. In sadness Jesus looked upon him, and asked, “Where are the nine?” [Luke 17:17] Like many who have tasted the Lord’s forgiveness, His healing for the wounds of sin, they had gone their ways, forgetful, heedless, unconcerned. The inquiry of Jesus on this occasion shows that the Lord is not indifferent to the spoken words of praise and thanksgiving of those whom He has redeemed. A book of special remembrance is written for those who love Him, and who speak often to one another of His saving grace.

While men are judged from the books of record, it appears all-essential that one who is to pass the judgment with success shall have his name written in the book of life. This book of life, finally, alone contains the names of those who have passed the judgment and have had all their sins washed away in the blood of Christ. This we know from the statement in Revelation: “He that overcomes, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels.” [Revelation 3:5] We also read in one of the prayers of David, “Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous.” [Psalm 69:28] Again, in Paul’s letter to the brethren at Philippi, “And I entreat thee also, true yoke fellow, help those women which labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellow laborers, whose names are in the book of life.” [Philippians 4:3]

When the seventy returned from their work of preparing the way for the coming of the Lord Jesus to the cities and towns of Galilee, and gave a glowing and ardent account of the work they had been able to accomplish in His name, Jesus, looking into the faces of these earnest men, knew that they had greater reason for rejoicing than because the evil spirits were cast out by their word. Very gently He directed their minds away from themselves to the things of eternal value and importance. “Rejoice not,” He said, “that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because Your names are written in heaven.” [Luke 10:20] Again we read in Revelation, “And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defiles, neither whatsoever works abomination, or makes a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life.” [Revelation 21:27] Thus it will be seen that the names of those who are to be saved are written in a special book - the Lamb’s book of life.

The books of record that have been kept in heaven are to be opened in the great Judgment day, and men are to be judged according to their deeds. Of this solemn event we have a description by the prophet Daniel: “I beheld till thrones were placed, and One that was ancient of days did sit: His raiment was white as snow, and the hair of His head like pure wool; His throne was fiery flames, and the wheels thereof burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him: thousands of thousands ministered unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him: the Judgment was set, and the books were opened.” [Daniel 7:9-10] Here we have the judgment scene described. The fact is plainly stated that the judgment was set, and the books were opened.

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Who has kept the records of men's lives? There is no direct statement in the Scriptures declaring that the angels have kept these record books; but as they are the guardians of men's lives, and are sent forth to minister to those who are heirs of salvation, is it not reasonable to believe that they have written the history of those whom they as ministering spirits have guarded? That angels are continually cognizant of all our acts, and know all our doings, we are certain; for we read: "Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the angel, that it was an error: wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of your hands?" [Ecclesiastes 5:6] And again, "For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels." [1 Corinthians 11:10] Thus it will be seen that angels are ever with the people of God, and know every act of mankind. There can therefore be no doubt that they record the lives of men, and that these records are kept in the books above.

AGENTS IN DIVINE REVELATION

"The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him, to show unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass; and He sent and signified it by His angel unto His servant John." Revelation 1:1.

IN the past, God has revealed to man many of His plans and purposes. Again and again, in different ages, He has spoken to men in various ways, through His Holy Spirit, by vision, and by sending angels to bring His messages to those through whom He would reveal His will. Almost from the earliest records of God's dealings with His chosen people, to the closing book in the Bible, we find that God has repeatedly spoken to His prophets and His people through the agency of angels. When the Lord commanded Abraham to offer Isaac as a sacrifice on Mount Moriah, and Abraham was about to execute the command, "the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham, lay not your hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him: for now I know that thou fears God, seeing thou has not withheld thy son, your only son from Me." [Genesis 22:11-12]

In this instance a direct message from heaven was given to Abraham through the agency of a heavenly being. The angel spoke in a language Abraham understood, giving him a message that greatly cheered his heart, and that revealed to him God's acceptance of his sacrifice. When the Lord had thus tested His servant, He also revealed His purpose toward him and toward his seed. "And the angel of the Lord called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, and said, By Myself have I sworn, said the Lord, for because thou has done this thing, and has not withheld thy son, your only son: that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the seashore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou has obeyed My voice. So Abraham returned unto his young men, and they rose up and went together to Beersheba; and Abraham dwelt at Beersheba." [Genesis 22:15-19] In this prophecy was outlined to Abraham, through the ministry of an angel the future of Israel, their great national growth, their possession of the land of Canaan, and the promise that in his seed all the nations of earth would receive a blessing.

When God wished to deliver His people from the hands of the Midianites, He sent an angel to reveal His purpose to Gideon. "And there came an angel of the Lord, and sat under an oak which was in Ophrah, that pertained unto Joash the Abiezrite: and his son Gideon threshed wheat by the wine press, to hide it from the Midianites. And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him, and said unto him, The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valor. . . . And the angel of God said unto him, Take the flesh and the unleavened cakes, and lay them upon this rock, and pour out the broth. And he did so. Then the angel of the Lord put forth the end of the staff that was in his hand, and touched the flesh and the unleavened cakes; and there rose up fire out of the rock, and consumed the flesh and the unleavened cakes. Then the angel of the Lord departed out of his sight. And when Gideon perceived that he was an angel of the Lord, Gideon said, Alas, O Lord God! For because I have seen an angel of the Lord face to face." [Judges 6:11-22]

Through the revelation and ministry of a heavenly being, the Lord called Gideon from obscurity to become a leader among his people, and a man mightily used for the deliverance of Israel from the oppression of the Midianites.

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Again, when the Lord was about to speak through the prophet Daniel, revealing to him an outline of future events, he used an angel to make known to the prophet His purposes and plans. We read: "Yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation. And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding." [Hebrews 9:21-22] In these words is introduced one of the most important prophetic periods mentioned in the Scriptures - a period that marked to a certainty the first advent of our Savior, and the rejection and cutting off of the Jewish people. And this wonderful revelation was made to Daniel through the ministry of a heavenly angel.

On another occasion, through the ministry and revelation of the "man Gabriel," a powerful angel from heaven, there was revealed to Daniel one of the most detailed prophetic histories found in the Bible, giving a bird's-eye view of the world's history from the days of the Persian kings down to the establishment of God's everlasting kingdom. Daniel records this visit and its effect upon him in these words: "In those days I Daniel was mourning three full weeks. I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled. And in the four and twentieth day of the first month, as I was by the side of the great river, which is Hiddekel; then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz: his body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in color to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude.

"Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set your heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, and I remained there with the kings of Persia. Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days: for yet the vision is for many days.

"And when he had spoken such words unto me, I set my face toward the ground, and I became dumb. And, behold, one like the similitude of the sons of men touched my lips: then I opened my mouth, and spoke, and said unto him that stood before me, O my lord, by the vision my sorrows are turned upon me, and I have retained no strength. For how can the servant of this my lord talk with this my lord? For as for me, straightway there remained no strength in me, neither is there breath left in me. Then there came again and touched me one like the appearance of a man, and he strengthened me, and said, O man greatly beloved, fear not: peace be unto thee, be strong, yea, be strong. And when he had spoken unto me, I was strengthened, and said, Let my lord speak; for thou has strengthened me. Then said he, Know thou wherefore I come unto thee? And now will I return to fight with the prince of Persia: and when I am gone forth, lo, the prince of Greece shall come. But I will show thee that which is noted in the Scripture of truth: and there is none that holds with me in these things, but Michael your Prince. Also I in the first year of Darius the Mede, even I, stood to confirm and to strengthen him. And now will I show thee the truth." [Daniel 10:2-21, Daniel 11:1-2]

Another instance of an angel's speaking to a prophet is recorded in the prophecy of Zechariah. Concerning the part acted by this angel in controlling, directing, and instructing the prophet, we read: "Then said I, O my lord, what are these? And the angel that talked with me said unto me, I will show thee what these be. And the man that stood among the myrtle trees answered and said, These are they whom the Lord has sent to walk to and fro through the earth. And they answered the angel of the Lord that stood among the myrtle trees, and said, We have walked to and fro through the earth, and, behold, all the earth sits still, and is at rest. Then the angel of the Lord answered and said, O Lord of hosts, how long wilt Thou not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which Thou has had indignation these threescore and ten years? And the Lord answered the angel that talked with me with good words and comfortable words. So the angel that communed with me said unto me, Cry thou, saying, Thus said the Lord of hosts; I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy. And I said unto the angel that talked with me, What be these? And he answered me, These are the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem." [Zechariah 1:9-19]

From these texts it is clearly seen that Zechariah not only saw an angel in vision, but that this angel revealed to the Lord's servant the meaning of many of the things which - were shown to him, and gave to

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him instruction from Jehovah. Again and again has God used these heavenly beings as His mouthpiece to deliver His messages to the prophets, unveiling futurity before their minds, and revealing to them what would take place in the ages to come. Through the ministry of angelic beings, nations unborn were made to appear to these men of God; kingdoms that would succeed others were shown taking their places in history; and future events and their relation to the work of God in the earth were revealed to their understanding.

When John the Baptist was to be sent as a forerunner of Christ, his birth was announced to Zacharias through the ministry of an angel. "And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias : for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shall call his name John. And thou shall have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before Him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years. And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to show thee these glad tidings. And, behold, thou shall be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believes not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season." [Luke 1:11-20]

When the time had fully come that Christ should be born, and appear among men as their Savior and Redeemer, - His advent to the world was announced by an angel. "And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou has found favor with God. And, behold, thou shall conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end. Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she has also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. For with God nothing shall be impossible." [Luke 1:26-37]

What a wonderful revelation was this to Mary, that to her should be born a Son, Jesus, who would save His people from their sins! No message was ever more sweet, more dear, more precious to humanity, than this announcement of the birth of our blessed Lord and Redeemer. And when the time came that Jesus was born, these heavenly messengers proclaimed His birth to the shepherds of Judea. Concerning this wonderful night, we read: "And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her first-born Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; You shall find the Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord has made known unto us." [Luke 2:4-15]

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Surely the Lord must greatly honor these ministering spirits, to entrust to them a message of such import as they bore concerning the advent of our Lord to this earth. When the Son of God lay a helpless Babe in the manger of Bethlehem, unwatched and unadored by man, a company of the heavenly host was sent to earth, and with songs of triumph and rejoicing celebrated His birth. In all the ages, there has been heard on earth no chorus so beautiful, so thrilling, so filled with rapture and adoration, as this song of the angels.

Not only was the birth of Christ foretold by an angel of God, and not only was that event gloriously celebrated by the heavenly hosts, but His resurrection from the dead was also announced to His followers by one of these holy beings. Concerning this wonderful event, we read: "And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men. And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not you: for I know that you seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly, and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead; and, behold, He goes before you into Galilee; there shall you see Him: lo, I have told you." [Matthew 28:2-7]

Again, in the last book of the Bible, written almost a hundred years after the birth of Christ, we find these same heavenly beings used by God in revealing the future to mankind. When John had been chosen by the Lord as His mouthpiece concerning the great events which were to take place in after years, and which directly involved the lives of millions of His followers, the knowledge of these events, and of the growth and prosperity of the kingdom of God throughout the ages to the close of time, was given to the prophet through the ministry of an angel. In the very first verse of the book of Revelation, we read: "The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him, to show unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass; and He sent and signified it by His angel unto His servant John." [Revelation 1:1]

As the Lord revealed to John the condition of His work and people down to the close of time, He presented it under the symbol of messages sent to the seven churches. Under the figure of "the angel of the church," God gave to His people an outline of their dangers and temptations, their persecutions and trials, their zeal and their indifference. Each generation could know how Heaven viewed their backsliding and worldliness, or how precious in God's sight was their piety and faith and love. His messages of compassion and tender mercy, His warnings against apostasy and sin, are all represented as being sent to the people through "the angel of the church."

Throughout the book of Revelation - in war and strife, and in all conditions of growth and progress and development - the work of God is apparently placed under the charge and control of the angels of heaven. In the seventh chapter, the great sealing work is represented as being under the direct control of the angels; not only so, but it appears that to certain angels is given the important trust of restraining the influences of evil till the work of God is accomplished in the earth. We read: "And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads." [Revelation 7:1-3]

When God would reveal to John the great political events that were to take place in the world, He presented these outlines under the seven trumpets, and represented all this work as taking place through the agency of the angels. We read: "And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets. And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand. And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thundering, and lightning, and an earthquake. And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound. The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt tip. And the second angel sounded. And the third angel

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sounded.” [Revelation 8:2-10]

Thus it can be plainly seen that the Lord has placed in charge of these angels the events of the world’s history; and when He desired to reveal them to John, and through him to His people, He represented these angels as having direct charge of these great world events, showing that long after the death and resurrection of Christ, later than the days of the apostle Paul, the Lord still used these heavenly intelligences in controlling events on this little world, and in revealing His will to His people.

In the tenth to the fifteenth chapters of Revelation, a number of world-wide messages are presented. The announcement of the Judgment, the preaching of the fall of Babylon, and the third angel’s message, all this great work is represented as being under the control and direction of the angels of God. “And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, hear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come: and worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.

“And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication “And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of His indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: and the smoke of their torment ascends up forever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receives the mark of his name. Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, said the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them.

“And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in Thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for Thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And He that sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped.

“And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire ; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe. And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great wine press of the wrath of God. And the wine press was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the wine press, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.” [Revelation 14:6-20]

This is wonderful language, and of solemn import to the inhabitants of the world. When God sees that a message is of sufficient importance to place it under the direction and control of an angel, announcing that he cries with a loud voice, and attaching such importance to the acceptance or the rejection of the message as is indicated in these scriptures, it surely becomes the people of God to inquire, What does this mean?

Again, when the Lord would reveal the seven last plagues, that dreadful outpouring of the unmingled wrath of God, the like of which is to be found nowhere else revealed in the Bible, He presents these punishments as sent upon the inhabitants of the world through the ministry of heavenly angels. “And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth.” [Revelation 16:1]

And in the very last chapter of the Bible, when John is about to close up his record of all that God had revealed to him, we find these words: “I Jesus have sent Mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.” [Revelation 22:16]

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From this brief summary, many of whose incidents are considered more at length elsewhere in these pages, we see that from the very earliest days, and under nearly all conditions, from the days of Abraham to the last chapter in the Bible, heavenly angels have been used as the agents of God in revealing His plans and purposes to men.

ANGEL MINISTRY TO ABRAHAM

“Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.” 1 Corinthians 10:11.

MANY illustrations of the ministry of holy angels in behalf of man are given in the Bible. The word of God is full of the biographies of men called by Him to do a specific work, and of others who have acted an important part in the working out of His plans for mankind. Often these men have been in very close relationship with Jehovah, their lives being completely surrendered to Him, and their work under the immediate direction and supervision of the Holy Spirit.

What has been written in the Bible concerning these men is, we are told by the apostle, for the learning and admonition of the people of God at this time, “that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.” [Romans 15:4] Again, speaking of the children of Israel, Paul says: “Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.” [1 Corinthians 10:11]

A study of the lives of these men rekindles our faith, renews our zeal, and gives us a better understanding of the love and power of our God, and of the ministry of holy angels in man’s behalf. Their experiences are not written simply that we may look at them in wonder and admiration, but that we, by following their example, and by the exercise of faith such as they manifested, may receive from Heaven such comfort and help and ministry as they received.

ABRAHAM ENTERTAINS ANGELS

Abraham is called “the father of the faithful.” Of him it is written that he “believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” [Galatians 3:6] Called from a heathen land to become the founder of a people whom God would greatly bless and honor, and through whom the Messiah would be manifest in succeeding ages, by faith Abraham left his father’s house, “to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” [Hebrews 11:8-10]

As a pilgrim, a stranger, Abraham entered the fruitful land of Canaan, abiding in tents, guiding his flocks from place to place for pasture and water, and leaving, wherever he encamped in that heathen land, an altar erected to the worship of Jehovah. While on several occasions he had received a renewal of the promises of God concerning his future and the future of his race, almost twenty-five years passed, and the son on whom hung the patriarch’s hopes for the fulfillment of these promises was not given. His own heart doubting because of the long delay, Abraham yielded to the counsel of Sarah, and sought to bring about a fulfillment of God’s word ; but it was not long until he saw the mistake of his course, for this plan of human devising quickly gave promise of bitter reaping in the future.

The camp of the patriarch was pitched in a pleasant and peaceful plain, with abundant water, verdant pastures, and delightful shade. About his own tent were the tents of his servants. Near and far grazed his flocks and herds, or rested in the cooling shadows of the ancient oaks. In all temporal matters, he had been richly blessed since leaving the home of his fathers and following the call of God to this new land.

But the promise! Daily the thought of Abraham dwelt on the future of his race as the Lord had revealed it to him in the night season, when He had brought him forth abroad, and said, “Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: so shall thy seed be.” [Genesis 15:5] He had yielded to doubt

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of God's power to redeem His pledge. He had failed to meet the test of his faith. Would the wonderful promise concerning his son yet be fulfilled? Meditating on these things, Abraham sought refuge, one summer day, from the burning heat of the Eastern sun, in the welcome coolness of his tent door, shaded by the wide-spreading branches of the great tree under which it was pitched. Lifting his eyes to gaze at the peaceful scene before him, "lo, three men stood by him,"- strangers, and by their appearance warm and weary as if with a long journey.

In these days of commercialism and greed, when every benefit bestowed is weighed by what it will cost and what it will return to the giver, how many would have found it convenient to turn the head -to let the eyes seek some other object in the landscape, and thus avoid, if possible, a request for entertainment! And if, undaunted, the strangers had preferred their petition, how grudging had been the response, how lacking in the true spirit of hospitality the dole of food and drink!

Not so Abraham. Quickly rousing from his meditations, he ran to meet the strangers, and urged them to turn aside and rest a while from the glowing heat. Bowing himself toward the ground, he said: "My lord, if now I have found favor in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant: let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree: and I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort you your hearts; after that you shall pass on: for therefore are you come to your servant. And they said, So do, as thou has said. And Abraham hastened into the tent unto Sarah, and said, Make ready quickly three measures of fine meal, knead it, and make cakes upon the hearth. And Abraham ran unto the herd, and fetched a calf tender and good, and gave it unto a young man; and he hastened to dress it. And he took butter, and milk, and the calf which he had dressed, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree, and they did eat." [Genesis 18:3-8]

An important lesson for those who count themselves the children of Abraham is contained in this simple narrative - so important that almost two thousand years later the Lord thought well to use again the incident for those who should live in the latter days, in the following exhortation: "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." [Hebrews 13:2]

Until now, the divine nature of his guests had been withheld from Abraham's eyes. He had seen in them only three weary travelers; and to them he had unselfishly, with no thought of reward, offered the very best his home afforded. None can do more than this. But now, the meal concluded, the men speak to Abraham of the matter that absorbs his profoundest interest -the matter that concerns the future of his name and house, and the working out also of the plan of salvation as revealed to Abraham by the Most High Himself. Immediately the scales fall from his eyes, and he sees in these strangers messengers from heaven, one of them the Lord of light and glory. "And they said unto him, Where is Sarah thy wife? And he said, Behold, in the tent." Then spoke the One whose uttered word was in itself creative power: "And He said, I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life; and, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son." [Genesis 18:9-10]

Long years had passed since this promise, so full of joy to the heart of Sarah, was first given. And long before that, since the days of her early wifehood, had she longed for that crowning blessing in that age and land - a son to bear his father's name, to inherit his estates, to perpetuate the family, and increase in power and influence with the passing of time. How many springs had passed, seasons of nest-building and sowing; of budding leaves, and tender grain, and sweet, delicate flowers; of baby lambs bleating on the hillsides, and baby birds making soft, twittering sounds in the nests in the thickets, but still to her was denied the happiness of motherhood! Hope had sprung up in her heart - how often! Only to wither before its blossom time.

Then, in her old age came the promise, and for a time hope was renewed. But Sarah had a practical mind. Hers was no largeness of faith that could wait patiently for the outworking of the purposes of God. She must see the plan accomplished. She must devise a way. She must set wheels in motion. All this she did; and before her eyes she saw the fulfillment of her plan-not God's - a fulfillment that was iron in her soul, a knife in her heart. Her handmaid, her servant, a bond woman of Egypt, held Abraham's son in her arms, and felt the sweetness of his infant kisses.

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No wonder that as Sarah, lacking faith, and torn with jealousy and regret, heard the words of the Stranger without, but failed to recognize the authority with which He spoke, she felt rising within her breast the old bitter scorn that had troubled her so often. Hope was dead; and in her heart was this growing, this intolerable sorrow. "Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also? And the Lord said unto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old? Is anything too hard for the Lord? At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son." [Genesis 18:12-14]

All things are possible with God. Nothing is too hard for Him. He is not dependent upon nature, or upon man's will or devising, to accomplish His purposes; but in His own appointed time He will carry out His designs. So in due time the promise of the angels was fulfilled, and a son - the child of promise indeed - was laid in Sarah's arms.

These angels came not in their glory to Abraham. Laying aside their beauty and brightness, they assumed the form and garb of men; they spoke like men; they ate like men; and in the form of men, they renewed to Abraham the promise concerning the son that should be given to him. Though they were sent from heaven on an errand of wrath and destruction, they stopped for a time to bring a blessing to the Lord's servant. Then, having turned aside to rest at Abraham's request, having partaken of his hospitality, and reassured him concerning the promise whose fulfillment had been delayed as a test of his faith, the three men "rose up, . . . and looked toward Sodom: and Abraham went with them to bring them on the way." As they walked along together, "the Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?" [Genesis 18:16-18]

The road over which Abraham and the three men were passing led presently to an elevation from whose height lay spread out before them the lovely valley of the Jordan, the rays of the western sun touching the gilded towers of its proud cities with an added splendor. Here the travelers paused to gaze for a moment on the scene, a sense of sorrow filling Abraham's heart, now as always, as he thought of one who had grown up almost as a younger brother by his side, but had yet chosen to plant his home in a place of such beauty and such vileness, a sense of sorrow that changed, as the Lord revealed His purpose, to the deepest anxiety and concern. "And the Lord said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous; I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto Me; and if not, I will know." [Genesis 18:20-21]

Leaving Abraham, the two men went on their way toward Sodom; but Abraham, in the same spirit of humility and determination that in after years characterized one of his descendants in his hour of darkness, "stood yet before the Lord." Abraham was acquainted with these cities. Well he knew the iniquity of the people inhabiting them; for his nephew Lot, brought up in his own home, had chosen the plain for his inheritance. Some of his daughters had married men of Sodom; and his extensive possessions, increasing year by year, were uniting his interests ever more closely with this corrupt people. Full well Abraham realized the solemn import of the communication made to him by the One whom he recognized as the great "Judge of all the earth," and his heart was moved with pity and longing, not only for those who were dear to him by the ties of blood, but for some possibly innocent ones who would suffer the fate of the guilty.

In agony of soul he sought to avert the impending destruction, importuning for mercy in behalf of the cities of the plain. The record of that plea is the most remarkable to be found in all literature - a symbol, also, of the pleading of the divine Redeemer of men in behalf of those who believe on Him. "Wilt Thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?" Abraham asked. "Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt Thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein? That be far from Thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from Thee: shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" [Genesis 18:23-25]

Anxiously the Lord's chosen servant, honored by a revelation of the divine purpose, yet feeling himself to be "but dust and ashes," awaited the reply to his request. And when the answer of assent was given, "If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes," [Genesis 18:26] How fearful was he that he had placed the number too high! Again he spoke to the Lord, pleading for a

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smaller number; and so again, and yet again, until finally he had the assurance that if ten righteous persons were found in those cities, they should not be destroyed. With this promise of mercy, the Lord went on His way; and Abraham, gazing long on the cities of the plain, set his face at last toward the tents of Mamre.

What wonderful meditations were his on his homeward walk in the cool of the evening! He had seen angels of God, and talked with them face to face. They had eaten at his table. They had told him of the plans of Jehovah. They had renewed to him a great and precious promise, which extended down through the ages to the closing days of time, and on into that new inheritance where time shall become eternity. The Lord Himself had conversed with him, as a man converses with a friend, and had honored him with a revelation of His purpose. Not only so, but the Mighty One had heard his plea in behalf of the cities of the plain, and had granted him all that he had had the faith to ask.

Surely Abraham's heart must have thrilled with love and gratitude as his mind was opened to a new comprehension of the purpose of God toward him. And may not we too draw hope and courage from this experience, which has been written indeed for our comfort, knowing that what the Lord did in answer to Abraham's importunity, He is ready and willing to do for every one who as truly believes on Him?

LOT AND THE ANGELS

In all the land of Canaan there was no region that compared in beauty and fertility with the valley of the Jordan. Well watered, productive, blessed with a rich soil, and a growing season that lasted all the year round, the plain had seemed to selfish and shortsighted Lot greatly to be desired as a place of residence. In his mind he compared it to the rich valley of the Nile, so lately visited, and even to the lost garden of Eden, planted by the hand of the Creator Himself for the home of the children of men. The prosperous cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, great in size and in commercial importance, great also in wealth and idleness and luxury and sin, far famed for their treasures and beauty, likewise seemed to possess a fascination for the nephew of Abraham; for very early in his sojourn we are told that he "pitched his tent toward Sodom," and later we know that he took up his abode within its walls.

But the Lord sees not as man sees. Beneath the attractive exterior of these cities, beneath their glitter and pomp and show, He saw a race of men given over to evildoing, unutterably depraved and corrupt, a black, iniquitous blot on His fair creation, and one that, unchecked, would spread its contaminating influence through all the world. Long had Jehovah looked in sorrow upon the cities of the plain. Long had He suffered them to continue their evil course, withdrawing not His mercies from them. Summer and winter, springtime and harvest, day and night, sunshine and rain - all these common blessings were theirs to enjoy. By His servant Abraham He had caused their attention to be called to the worship and service of the true God; but they heeded it not, and continued on their evil way till they became a byword and a rebuke among the nations. Now the cup of their iniquity was full; the day of their probation was fast closing; the hour of their destruction was at hand.

"And there came two angels to Sodom at even." [Genesis 19:1] These were the angels who, in the guise of men, with a third, had stopped in Mamre in the heat of the day, at Abraham's invitation, rested in the shade of the tree near his tent, and eaten the food that he had caused to be prepared for them. Later, when the Lord stopped to make known to His servant His purpose concerning the cities of the plain, these two men "went toward Sodom." It was evening when they reached the city; and Lot, seeing them, and recognizing them as strangers, urged upon them the hospitality of his home. "Tarry all night," he said, "and wash your feet, and you shall rise up early, and go on your ways. And he pressed upon them greatly; and they turned in unto him, and entered into his house; and he made them a feast, and did bake unleavened bread, and they did eat. But before they lay down, the men of the city, even the men of Sodom, compassed the house round, both old and young, all the people from every quarter: and they called unto Lot, and said unto him, Where are the men which came in to thee this night? Bring them out unto us." [Genesis 19:2-5] So gross had the wicked inhabitants of Sodom become, that it was not safe for strangers of pure life and upright purpose to enter the gates of their city. Lost to every feeling of honor and chastity, vile, depraved, with every evil desire aflame, they assaulted the house of Lot, and demanded that these strangers, whose lofty character they had failed to recognize, be delivered into their hands.

With every argument at his command Lot sought to turn their minds from this purpose, appealing finally to

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the law of hospitality so sacred in that age and land, but without avail. As he would have spoken further, they commanded him, "Stand back." Lot was a preacher of righteousness. Long had he lived in Sodom, warning the people against their sins and evil practices; but they would not hear him. They had tolerated his presence among them; but now in rage and fury they turned against him. The memory of his godly life, his care for the poor, his hospitality to strangers, all the virtues that were manifest among them day by day, only served now to rebuke them and awaken hatred against him in their hearts. "This one fellow came in to sojourn," they said among themselves, "and he will needs be a judge: now will we deal worse with thee, than with them. And they pressed sore upon the man, even Lot, and came near to break the door." Only by the interposition of divine power was Lot saved from the vengeance of the angry mob. "The men put forth their hand, and pulled Lot into the house to them, and shut to the door. And they smote the men that were at the door of the house with blindness, both small and great: so that they wearied themselves to find the door." Even then the wicked inhabitants of the city did not repent, nor did they perceive that more than mortal man was among them.

The angels now made known to Lot the purpose of their visit. "We will destroy this place," they said, "because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the Lord; and the Lord has sent us to destroy it." But opportunity was given for all to flee from the city who would believe the warning of the angels. "Has thou here any besides," they asked Lot, "son-in-law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, and whatsoever thou has in the city, bring them out of this place." In haste and fear Lot went to give the warning. But when he "spoke unto his sons-in-law, which married his daughters, and said, Up, get you out of this place; for the Lord will destroy this city, he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons-in-law." [Genesis 19:9-14]

One would think that the family of Lot, surrounded by such vile and wicked men, would have listened to the warning of the angels, and fled in haste from the doomed city. But like many of our own day, they loved the ease, the pleasures, the associations and entertainments, of city life. Broad plains, sunny hill slopes, and rich pasture lands were on every hand, inviting them to live where they could be free from the evil influences of Sodom. They chose, however, the society of these wicked men, with their pleasures and social relations, to the retired and quiet life they could easily have found elsewhere. No wonder that when Lot made known to his children the warning of the angels, he seemed to them "as one that mocked." They gave no heed to his entreaties, nor did they express any intention of leaving the city.

Perplexed and bewildered, dazed and uncomprehending, Lot returned to his home. A few short hours before, all his little world had been at peace; his plans looked long into the future; there had been no thought of danger. Now he was already in mind an outcast, a wanderer, his home would be lost, his property swept away in the wrath of God that would be poured out upon Sodom.

Slowly the long hours of the night were numbered; and when the first faint gray of dawn was seen above the eastern hills, the last day ever to break over the cities of the plain, the angels urged Lot and his family to depart. It was no time now to linger in Sodom, no time to gaze with regret on the treasures gathered during a lifetime, no time to count the cost of the destruction that would come to his home. But so deadened to the sins of Sodom, so unbelieving of possible danger, were the members of Lot's household who still dwelt beneath his roof, that it seemed impossible for them to realize the meaning of the angels' words. Even Lot himself showed no disposition to depart. He respected these holy beings; he feared a fulfillment of the threatened wrath of Jehovah; still he was loath to leave the city of his adoption, his children, and the treasures accumulated during a lifetime.

But the Lord was merciful to His tempted servant; and "while he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters; . . . and they brought him forth, and set him without the city." Forcibly aiding him in his flight, they urged upon him in most emphatic language the need for haste. "Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed," was the warning given by the angels.

But even as the angels, with all the solemn power and authority with which they were invested, commanded Lot to escape to the mountain, he hesitated, and begged for permission to enter another city near - a little one. Great indeed and beyond comprehension is the Lord's mercy. The request of Lot was granted; yet again the command was given for haste. "Haste thee, escape thither; for I cannot do anything

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till thou be come thither.” Even the wrath of Jehovah stayed till this hesitating, doubting, bewildered man could find shelter. The sun had risen when at last Lot entered the little city for which he had pleaded. “Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven; and He overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground.” [Genesis 19:16-25]

Had it not been for the great mercy of God, Lot and his family would have been destroyed with the wicked inhabitants of these cities. As it was, one of his family, who had heard the warning of the angels, and had started in the path of obedience, perished. His wife, stopping to look once more at the home so well beloved but so soon to perish, lost her opportunity of escape, and became a warning to all who start in the service of God and then look back with desire and regret to the beggarly elements of the world.

We wonder at the patience of the Lord with this man who had chosen to cast his lot in Sodom, and who seemed so slow to heed the warnings sent of Heaven; yet how often, in the experiences that come to the people of God, does He hedge them up by unseen providences, in order to lead them to do what He has commanded ! All this He does because of His love and compassion. Being merciful to us, as to Lot, He brings about unseen, often misunderstood providences, to lead us into paths of obedience and service.

HAGAR AND THE ANGEL

God had promised to Abraham and Sarai a son through whom, in years to come, the Messiah would appear. After ten long years of anxious waiting, convinced that by the laws of nature she could never become the mother of this promised son, Sarai persuaded Abraham to take as his wife her handmaid, Hagar, and thus help the Lord fulfill His covenant. This proposal on the part of Sarai, and its acceptance by Abraham, showed a great lack of faith on their part in the power of the Lord to redeem His pledge. The time of waiting was a time of test; and the failure of Abraham and Sarai to meet this test, and the way in which they took the matter into their own hands, brought perplexity and trouble into their family life.

While still the servant of Sarai, the position of Hagar had been raised by her marriage; and soon, as the hope sprang up in her heart of becoming the mother of the promised heir, the inheritor of the great wealth and commanding position of his father, Hagar became arrogant and proud, She despised her mistress, openly expressing her contempt in ways that Sarai, herself a proud and beautiful woman, could not brook. Bitter envy and jealousy grew up between them. On the one hand was the power to oppress, on the other to scorn and torment; and in the home where peace and love and harmony had reigned, an intolerable situation soon existed.

But with Sarai was the power, and more and more arbitrarily did she exercise it. At last, matters came to a crisis; and Sarai dealt so hardly with her handmaid that Hagar “fled from her face.” [Genesis 16:6] Anger and relief lent wings to her feet for a time; but at last, Weary and exhausted, she sank down by a fountain in the wilderness to rest. In this quiet retreat, wrath died away, and sober reflection came in its place. Had she done wisely to exult over her mistress, to taunt her openly, to provoke her wrath in a hundred subtle and hidden ways? What could she do - a stranger in a strange land, of alien race and tongue, a prey to evil men and wild beasts, without the shelter and protection and support from which she had separated herself in her blind rage and fury? Where could she go? Where find a refuge? As she thought of her helpless and forlorn condition, hopeless discouragement settled upon her.

But though she had fled from her mistress, and thus separated herself from those who would at least have sheltered and cared for her, Hagar was not alone. We are told that “the angel of the Lord found her.” Most comforting thought! Hagar was a woman, frail, tempted, sinning-yet not forsaken by Heaven! A powerful and mighty angel from the courts of glory was sent to minister to this erring creature in her extremity, to direct her course, and to give her hope for the future. Addressing her as “Hagar, Sarai’s maid,” thus assuring her that she was known by name by the family in heaven, and also reminding her of her position in the house of Abraham, and thus of the humility and reserve that should have marked her conduct, the angel said, “Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands.” This was her first duty, and in its performance she would receive a blessing.

“And the angel of the Lord said unto her, I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered

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for multitude. Behold, thou art with child, and shall bear a son, and shall call his name Ishmael; because the Lord has heard thy affliction. And he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren." [Genesis 16:7-12]

Hagar was troubled and humbled before that mighty messenger from heaven. In the white light that shone into the darkened chambers of her heart from that holy presence, how base and contemptible seemed the emotions that had so lately swayed her will and dominated her actions, how evil her life, how insubordinate and rebellious her conduct! Yet with the rebuke came comfort and peace and hope. Solemnly she acknowledged the power and omnipotence of Jehovah. "And she called the name of the Lord that spoke unto her, Thou God sees me: for she said, Have I also here looked after Him that sees me?" [Genesis 16:13]

Sobered and submissive, Hagar returned to her mistress, and for a time the memory of this solemn experience restrained her from pride and self-assertion. But as she saw her little son growing in beauty and grace, and her mother love noted Abraham's pride and delight in the lovely boy, her heart was again lifted up; and when the true child of promise was born, the old rebellion and jealousy burned anew. Bitterly she resented the honors and attentions, the love and caresses, that were bestowed on the son of Sarah. Ishmael, too, partook of the same spirit; and when the child Isaac was weaned, and a feast given in his honor, that there might be no mistake among his father's retainers as to his position, Ishmael stood apart, mocking and making sport.

At first thought, the demand of Sarah on that occasion, that the bondwoman and her son be cast out, seems cruel and unnecessary. And so no doubt it seemed to Abraham; for we are told that "the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight because of his son." [Genesis 21:11] But years of strife and unpleasantness, years of bickering, jealousy, and heartache, had come to the family of Abraham and Sarah because of their lack of faith in the promise of God. Now He who had made this promise, who had fulfilled it, and who had sent His angel to Hagar in the wilderness, bidding her return to the tents of her mistress, spoke again to Abraham, and told him to hearken to the counsel of Sarah his wife.

"And. God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman; in all that Sarah has said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called. And also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation, because he is thy seed. And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and took bread, and a bottle of water, and gave it unto Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, and the child, and sent her away: and she departed, and wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba." [Genesis 21:12-14] Cast out to become wanderers, with food and water but for a day, not knowing whither they were to go, dependent entirely upon the mercy of God for support, Hagar and Ishmael left their home. All too soon "the water was spent in the bottle, and she cast the child under one of the shrubs. And she went, and sat her down over against him a good way off, as it were a bowshot: for she said, Let me not see the death of the child. And she sat over against him, and lift up her voice, and wept."

The faintest cry, the weakest prayer, the feeblest hand outstretched to Heaven for help, is never unnoticed by our Father. What a precious assurance of the readiness of God to help His earthly children in trial and need is the story of Hagar's experience! For as she sat away from her son, that she might not see his suffering, "God heard the voice of the lad; and the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said unto her, What ails thee, Hagar? Fear not; for God has heard the voice of the lad where he is. Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in your hand; for I will make him a great nation. And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; and she went, and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad drink. And God was with the lad; and he grew, and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer. And he dwelt in the wilderness of Paran: and his mother took him a wife out of the land of Egypt." [Genesis 21:15-21]

Thus it is that Heaven ministers to man's needs. These poor exiles were hopeless and friendless. No more could they return to the abundance of Abraham's house. Moreover, He to whom the future is as an open book, knew that Ishmael would not choose to walk in the paths of righteousness; yet notwithstanding all this, He sent an angel from heaven to this sorrowing mother and her suffering child to supply their needs.

In this dark world, there is many a mother whose heart aches as did Hagar's; many a one who, like the outcast Egyptian, knows not what to do. Often her heart is too full for utterance. There may be no true

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human friend to whom she can tell her sorrows. None from whom she may seek counsel. In utter hopelessness, she may feel that life is too bitter to be borne, and long for the time when she may rest from her troubles. But there is not one such who may not find comfort and help in God.

Could any be in a more forlorn condition than was Hagar? She was an outcast from the home of Abraham. All his property was to go to another. She had no means of support. Despised by her mistress, rejected by the father of her child, abandoned and apparently forsaken, she went into the wilderness, and laid her child down to die, hiding herself from his cries. But God in His great mercy sent an angel from heaven to minister to Hagar in her extremity. In the hour of her utter desolation and helplessness, when all earthly prospects had failed, an angel called her by name, and gave her immediate help. God intends that His children, who believe in His word, shall find comfort and succor in their weakness and helplessness as they read what He has done for other souls as tempted and tried and desolate as themselves.

“LAY NOT THINE HAND UPON THE LAD”

On one other occasion at least, Abraham was visited by an angel, whose words brought overwhelming relief and joy to his heart. Isaac, the long-promised son, had grown into youthful comeliness and vigor, the light and happiness of his father’s eyes. It was no ordinary affection that bound the heart of Abraham to this child. Not only was the attachment cemented by the strong ties of nature, but it was rendered far more precious and enduring by the still stronger bonds of the promises of God.

Daily, during all the young life of this tenderly cherished son, had these promises passed in review before Abraham - a rainbow of hope spanning the gulf between this dark land of earthly dwelling and that inheritance, “incorruptible and undefiled,” which Abraham saw with the eye of faith, and which would be received when the purpose of God had been fully worked out. The patriarch had been greatly blessed. His possessions formed a princely legacy for his time. His servants were men of tested fidelity. Surely Isaac would take up his life work, when the time came, in peace and prosperity. All the aged father’s dreams for the future of this beloved son were serene and untroubled.

But in the glowing promise of Isaac’s early manhood, at the very time when a father’s heart is most keenly alive to his son’s future, and most filled with plans for his happiness and success, came the command of Jehovah, unforeseen, uncomprehended, a blasting calamity, so far as human wisdom could discern, to every hope for which Abraham had forsaken the lands of his fathers, and lived the life of a pilgrim and stranger: “Take now thy son, your only son Isaac, whom thou loves, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.” [Genesis 22:2]

Could a severer test of Abraham’s faith and obedience be imagined than was involved in this command? Yet he who had so unselfishly, so loyally, so unswervingly obeyed the voice that had called him from the land of Ur of the Chaldees, did not falter now. In the night watches came the message that wrung his heart; and “early in the morning,” without excuse or delay, the broken-hearted father wakened his son, saddled his ass, and taking two of his young men with him, with wood and fire for the burnt offering, set out for the place appointed for the sacrifice.

Two days the little procession journeyed - the unthinking servants, the sorrowful father, the eager, wondering boy. Two nights the camp was pitched, the weary lad enjoying the dreamless, refreshing repose of youth and health, the father watching beside him in an agony of love and longing, or turning aside to plead for the life of his son. What days of test were these for Abraham - prayer apparently unanswered, a thousand specious temptations whispered to his heart, unceasing mental turmoil - yet withal the feet set steadily, unflinching, in the path that led to the mount of sacrifice ! The second night was past, and “as they were about to begin the journey of the third day, the patriarch, looking northward, saw the promised sign, a cloud of glory hovering over Mount Moriah, and he knew that the voice which had spoken to him was from heaven.” [“Patriarchs and Prophets,” page 151]

In this moment, the clouds lifted; doubt cleared away; and looking beyond the immediate pain and surrender, the faith of the Lord’s chosen servant shone forth bright and clear. God, who had miraculously given this son, could also raise him from the dead. This was the hope in his heart; for we are told that “by faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac; ... accounting that God was able to raise him up, even

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from the dead.” [Hebrews 11:17-19] Commanding his servants to remain behind, Abraham said, “I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.” What confidence in God, what assurance in His love, breathes in every word of this command of the master to his servants!

“And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together.” As they ascended the mount, Isaac ventured to break the heavy silence. “My father,” he said, “behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?” How vividly the whole scene is brought before our eyes in this natural, boyish question, the grief-bent, sorrow-stricken father; the alert, agile lad, so confident in that father’s affection and protection, so unthinking of possible harm. It was a moment of test for the patriarch, yet he met it with an answer of faith. “My son” - how tender, yet how grave and sad, the voice that answered “My son, God will provide Himself a lamb.” Recognizing though not understanding the solemnity of the few words spoken, Isaac was henceforth silent; “so they went both of them together.” [Genesis 22:5-8]

Soon the appointed place was reached - “they came to the place which God had told him of,” and which by a sign He had further made known to His servant. Our hearts turn away from the contemplation of that most holy and sacred hour - the father’s anguish, the surprise and terror of the happy-hearted boy, the last solemn, tender embrace. “And Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.” [Genesis 22:9-10]

In this act of obedience, Abraham demonstrated that there was nothing he would withhold from God. Whatever Jehovah commanded, he would perform. Whatever sacrifice He asked, he would cheerfully render. The last shadow of doubt was banished. His heart was fixed, his confidence in the love and wisdom of God unshaken. But even as he raised his hand, he heard the voice of a heavenly messenger. An Angel of God called his name “Abraham, Abraham.” The patriarch recognized the presence of holy beings, and instant was his response: “Here am I.” Again came the voice of the angel: “Lay not your hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him: for now I know that thou fears God, seeing thou has not withheld thy son, your only son from Me.” [Genesis 22:11-12]

Only in the degree in which we enter into the agony of Abraham can we realize the joy and relief that flooded his being as he heard the command, “Lay not your hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him.” His son - child of his old age, child of hope and promise - his beloved son, who was as dead, was alive again! As one lost, he was found! But even in that hour, of still deeper import to the heart of the patriarch was the assurance, “Now I know that thou fears God, seeing thou has not withheld thy son, your only son from Me.” Abraham’s act of obedience and faith crowned him father of the faithful of all ages. Repeatedly are we exhorted to walk in the faith of our father Abraham; and he is held forth by all Bible students as one whose example is worthy of imitation.

“And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son.” [Genesis 22:13] God had indeed provided Himself a lamb; and as Abraham recalled his answer to his son’s question, and saw the provision that had been made, he called the name of the place “Jehovah-Jireh,” which means, “The Lord will provide.”

Nor was the patriarch left so distant from home without another manifestation of the love of his heavenly Father - that Father whose heart of love had suffered with the suffering of His human child. “And the angel of the Lord called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, and said, By Myself have I sworn, said the Lord, for because thou has done this thing, and has not withheld thy son, your only son: that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the seashore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou has obeyed My voice.” [Genesis 22:15-18]

God never gives any command, obedience to which will not bring a chain of blessings to the one who obeys. Every good gift, every perfect gift, comes from Him; and whatever He requires of His children is for their benefit. Obedience to His law spoken from Mount Sinai brings life, health, and every blessing that the

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heart of man can desire; while disobedience brings sickness, sorrow, and death. We may not always be able to see the blessing in God's requirements; but it is there, and those who in faith obey His voice and walk in His ways will share in the inheritance of our father Abraham.

This trial of Abraham's faith was of the deepest significance. Not only was it a personal test, not only was its influence to encourage the faltering children of obedience to the end of the ages, but most important of all, it as a demonstration before the heavenly beings of the loyalty and obedience of the man whom God had chosen to be the father of His redeemed people.

"Heavenly beings were witnesses of the scene as the faith of Abraham and the submission of Isaac were tested. The trial was far more severe than that which had been brought upon Adam. Compliance with the prohibition laid upon our first parents involved no suffering; but the command to Abraham demanded the most agonizing sacrifice. It had been difficult even for the angels to grasp the mystery of redemption, to comprehend that the Commander of heaven, the Son of God, must die for guilty man. When the command was given to Abraham to offer up his son, the interest of all heavenly beings was enlisted. With intense earnestness they watched each step in the fulfillment of this command. When to Isaac's question, 'Where is the lamb for a burnt offering?' Abraham made answer, 'God will provide Himself a lamb,' and when the father's hand was stayed as he was about to slay his son, and the ram which God had provided was offered in the place of Isaac, then light was shed upon the mystery of redemption, and even the angels understood more clearly the wonderful provision that God had made for man's salvation." ["Patriarchs and Prophets," page 155]

ANGEL MINISTRY TO JACOB

"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." Genesis 28:12.

THE patriarch Jacob knew the blessedness of angel ministry. While still a young man, he had defrauded his brother Esau, purchasing from him his birthright. In the birthright were included not only the inheritance of the family estates, but also its spiritual honors; for in the line of those possessing the birthright, the promised Messiah was to come. When he learned that Jacob had actually secured his father's blessing, his pride was deeply wounded, and jealousy and hatred against his brother burned in his heart. Brooding over his grievous wrongs, he determined that he would kill Jacob, and thus prevent the results of the bad bargain he had made, willingly enough, in the hour of weakness. But the mother of the brothers hindered this plan from being carried into effect. Becoming aware of Esau's designs, she persuaded Isaac to send Jacob into her brother's country, that he might find a refuge there until the wrath of Esau had passed.

In haste and fear Jacob fled, keeping his going secret, lest Esau overtake and slay him. Though his father had renewed to him the blessings of the covenant before he left home, doubt and questioning filled Jacob's mind. He had been a frugal man, thrifty and prudent, and under his care the family fortunes had prospered. Not only so, but he was of a more devout nature than his brother; he desired the birthright not alone for hope of worldly gain, but because he prized the spiritual privileges that were associated with it. Seeing his brother's carelessness and irresponsibility, his neglect of sacred things, his hatred of restraint, Jacob had thought it would be not only sound wisdom on his own part, but would also be pleasing in the sight of Heaven, if he should secure the birthright, and thus insure its possession by one who would rightly value and appreciate it. Now, as he pursued his lonely journey, and reflected on the apparent failure of years of effort, he deemed himself not only an outcast from home, but forsaken by the God of his fathers.

But the Lord had not cast off His servant, even though he had made a mistake, and undertaken to carry into effect what God would have brought about in His own way and time if Jacob had but waited patiently. Weary with his long day's journey, desolate, friendless, alone, Jacob lay down under the open canopy of heaven, with a stone for a pillow, to sleep. Of his experience on that night of wonder we read:

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BETHEL

“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. And, behold, the Lord stood above it, and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou lies, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shall spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south : and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goes, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of. And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven. And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillows, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it. And he called the name of that place Bethel.” [Genesis 28:11-19]

Because of this beautiful incident, the name “Bethel” has become a household word in countless homes. How often, in hours of sorrow and loneliness, or of hope and triumphant joy, has the Christian sung,

“Then with my waking thoughts Bright with Thy praise,
Out of my stony griefs Bethel I’ll raise.”

Many a sanctuary, too, has been dedicated to the worship and praise of Jehovah under this name, and has become indeed to trusting hearts what this city in the wilderness was to Jacob - the house of God, the gate of heaven.

That night’s experience was one that Jacob could never forget. Often had he heard his father relate incidents showing Abraham’s unflinching faith in Jehovah, and his unquestioning obedience to His commands. The promises made to Abraham concerning the greatness of his posterity were handed down from father to son, and were the foundation for the hope that the kingdom which would ultimately develop from the seed of Abraham would be great and prosperous. The vision of angels made vivid and clear to Jacob’s mind the care of the Lord of hosts over the children of men, and was a pledge, on the part of Heaven, that the presence and ministry of holy beings would be his portion in exile.

Nor were the faithful teachings of Abraham and Isaac concerning the true God and His worship lost on the heart of this man journeying to a far country. Comparatively young in years, about to sojourn for a time in a land where wickedness and idolatry prevailed, and where he would be surrounded by heathen on every side, Jacob entered into solemn covenant relationship with God. Often had he seen his father offer a lamb or a goat as a sacrifice, and bowing in worship, renew his covenant with Jehovah. Though Jacob had no lamb to offer, he set up an altar, and taking the cruse of oil which his mother, in her thoughtful preparation for his journey, had placed on his shoulder, he poured out a liberal portion thereon, bowed his head in worship and thanksgiving to the God of his fathers, and made this solemn vow: “If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father’s house in peace; then shall the Lord be my God.” In these words he deliberately chose God to be his portion. Furthermore, he declared, “Of all that Thou shall give me I will surely give the tenth unto Thee,” [Genesis 28:20-22] thus honoring the divine plan of returning to God a tenth of His bounties, a custom which many in all the ages since that day have been glad to follow, and which has ever been the Bible plan for supporting the work of God.

A GUARD OF ANGELS

Twenty years Jacob spent in Padan-aram, dwelling with Laban his uncle, years in which he learned many lessons of trust and confidence in God. In hours of doubt and discouragement, when he was defrauded and his hopes were overthrown, he remembered the vision of angels, and the assurance of the Lord that He would not forsake him; and his heart was comforted. At last, in obedience to heavenly direction, he took his family and his servants, his flocks and herds, and set out on his homeward journey. In his exile, Jacob had learned the sorrow that can come to the human heart through deception; and now, as he neared his native

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land, he remembered with humility and repentance his sin against his father, and the advantage he had taken of his brother's weakness. As he thought about his course, and the wrath of Esau, he was perplexed and troubled. He knew the skill of his brother as a huntsman, and had every reason to fear that unless his wrath could be averted, destruction awaited himself and his family. With an armed company, Esau could easily fall upon his brother, and secure possession of the inheritance to which, in a moment of reckless self-indulgence, he had forfeited his right.

Again He to whom Jacob had dedicated his life gave him a token of his acceptance with Heaven. As he went on his way, "the angels of God met him." For a brief time, the returning exile's eyes were opened. He saw two bands of heavenly beings, one advancing before his little company, to guide them in the way; the other following after them, to protect and guard them on their journey. "And when Jacob saw them, he said, This is God's host: and he called the name of that place Mahanaim," which means, "two hosts, or camps."

His confidence renewed by this token of divine favor, Jacob sent messengers to Esau, saying: "Thy servant Jacob said thus, I have sojourned with Laban, and stayed there until now: and I have oxen, and asses, flocks, and menservants, and women servants: and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find grace in thy sight." [Genesis 32:1-5] By this attitude of humility, calling himself "thy servant Jacob," and by recounting his material possessions, Jacob hoped to convince Esau that he was not coming back to wrest the inheritance from him. But Esau deigned no reply to this friendly message; and the terrified servants of Jacob fled back to their master with the news that Esau, with four hundred armed men, was advancing to meet him. The patriarch was "greatly afraid and distressed" when he received this word. Well he knew that unless Heaven should intervene, there could be but one result of that meeting. Realizing his peril, he quickly divided the people that were with him, with the flocks and the herds and the camels, into two bands, saying, "If Esau come to the one company, and smite it, then the other company which is left shall escape." [Genesis 32:7-8] From his flocks and herds he sent a princely present to his brother, hoping thus in some measure to appease his wrath, and win favor in his sight.

In all this experience, Jacob left nothing undone that it was possible to do to turn away his brother's anger. He resorted to no display, set up no defense against the armed band bent on his destruction. His servants unarmed, the women of his household defenseless, his children clinging to their mothers' arms, his herds and flocks guided by shepherds untrained in the art of war, all this must appeal to Esau, and convince him that his brother is not prepared to fight, and that all Jacob has can easily be taken by one so well armed and mighty as he.

Everything that lay in Jacob's power to devise and perform in that hour was done; but not in these things did the patriarch place his trust. He knew his own helplessness. He knew the strength of Esau. But more than this, he knew the mighty power of God. In his desperate need, he cast himself upon the mercy of Jehovah, realizing that unless he received divine aid, all was lost. "And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the Lord which said unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee: I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which Thou has showed unto Thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands. Deliver me, I pray Thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children. And Thou said, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude." [Genesis 32:9-12]

THE ANGEL OF THE COVENANT

Night came on; and as a measure of further protection and safety to his loved ones, Jacob sent his wives and children across the ford of the brook Jabbok. Alone, undefended, he remained behind to commune with God, and to implore His intervening mercy and grace. He saw in its true light his evil course in seeking to secure for a price the sacred gift of spiritual blessings inherent in the birthright, and in sorrow reflected on the wrong he had done his brother, and his sin in deceiving his father. Beseeking the assurance of forgiveness for his evil course, and a token that he would find favor with Esau, suddenly Jacob felt a hand laid upon him. Thinking himself attacked by some robber or assassin in that lonely spot, he sprang to defend himself against his unseen assailant. Until daybreak the struggle continued. Though he was a strong man, he was powerless to overthrow his antagonist; yet he continued the struggle, unwilling to surrender,

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fearing that to do so would mean not only the loss of his own life, but harm and danger to all that he held most dear.

It was no ordinary antagonist with whom Jacob struggled in that lonely place. The “Angel of the covenant” had met him there to test His servant’s faith, his sincerity of purpose, his humility of heart, his desire for righteousness. As the darkness lifted a little, and the light of dawn glowed faintly in the eastern sky, “He touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob’s thigh was out of joint, as He wrestled with him.” Excruciating physical pain was now added to his mental distress; but in that moment, the patriarch recognized with gratitude the holy nature of his assailant. Here is help in his extremity! With tears and supplication, he clings to the heavenly wrestler; and to the Angel’s request, “Let Me go, for the day breaks,” the patriarch, though disabled and suffering, exclaims, “I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me.” [Genesis 32:25-26]

In that supreme moment, self died. The blessing of Heaven was of more consequence to Jacob than earthly possessions, the favor of Esau, or even life itself. As he prayed, his heart submissive and humble, he had the assurance of acceptance. “He had power over the Angel, and prevailed.” [Hosea 12:4] Peace passing human knowledge flooded his being; and with unspeakable gratitude and thanksgiving, he bowed his head to receive the benediction of the Angel. “And He said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. And He said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel [or, a prince of God]: for as a prince has thou power with God and with men, and has prevailed. And Jacob asked Him, and said, Tell me, I pray Thee, Thy name. And He said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after My name? And He blessed him there. And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel [that is, the face of God]: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.” [Genesis 32:27-30]

All too soon that holy hour passed, and day broke over the eastern hills - the day so dreaded but a few short hours before. How different the patriarch’s feelings now! The sin that has so long hung like a weight upon his heart is forgiven, peace fills his soul, and he has the assurance that he will not be delivered into the hand of his brother. And when he sees Esau approaching in the distance, accompanied by the four hundred archers who had inspired such terror in his heart the day before, his faith is unshaken. He knows that heavenly angels are his bodyguard. With perfect confidence, he advances to meet his brother. “And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him: and they wept.” [Genesis 33:4]

By the mighty power of God, the wicked purpose of Esau had been changed, bitterness was removed, and a reconciliation between the two men was effected. Love took the place of hate, peace cast out fear, and in mutual respect and confidence the brothers exchanged the courtesies suitable to the occasion, and went their ways.

Jacob’s experiences with heavenly beings were not recorded to honor and exalt him in the eyes of men; but they are “written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.” [1 Corinthians 10:11] In the hour of darkness and temptation, when dangers and difficulties beset us on every hand; when the mistakes of our past lives rise up like mountains before us, and the memory of our wrongdoing and the knowledge of sin within our own hearts press upon us with crushing weight; when the enemy floods our souls with distrust and unbelief till hope is gone, and we feel forsaken and desolate, then it is that a contemplation of such experiences as these becomes precious to the soul. The blessings of Heaven are not given according to man’s merit, or station, or riches, or attainments, but according to his consecration, and his confidence in the power and willingness of Jehovah to fulfill in the individual life the promises of His word. What God did for Jacob, He will do for every heart that will fully accept and trust Him. Or our part there must be faith; there must be earnest prayer, wrestling with God. On the Lord’s part there will surely be a fulfillment of all that He has promised, and blessings abundant for our need.

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ANGEL MINISTRY TO ISRAEL

“This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the Angel which spoke to him in the Mount Sins, and with our fathers: Who received the lively oracles to give unto us.” Acts 7:38.

THE ANGEL WITH ISRAEL FROM EGYPT

IN vision the Lord had made known to Abraham that his descendants would dwell as servants in a strange land for four hundred years; but afterward they would come out “with great substance.” [Genesis 15:14] In due time this prediction was fulfilled. Israel had dwelt in Egypt; they had eaten the bread of affliction; they had been miraculously delivered from their enemies; and their feet had been set in the way that led to the goodly land promised to Abraham.

Of the mighty power manifested by Jehovah in behalf of His people in Egypt, and of His later dealings with them, the psalmist writes: “He ... wrought His signs in Egypt, and His wonders in the field of loan: and had turned their rivers into blood; and their floods, that they could not drink. He sent divers sorts of flies among them, which devoured them; and frogs, which destroyed them. He gave also their increase unto the caterpillar, and their labor unto the locust. He destroyed their vines with hail, and their sycamore trees with frost. He gave up their cattle also to the hail, and their flocks to hot thunderbolts. He made a way to His anger; He spared not their soul from death, but gave their life over to the pestilence; and smote all the first-born in Egypt; the chief of their strength in the tabernacles of Ham: but made His own people to go forth like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock. And He led them on safely, so that they feared not.” [Psalm 78:43-53]

Daily had Israel seen the power of God working in their behalf, yet they were not steadfast in His service. Encamped at the foot of Sinai, they had seen the mount shrouded in thick darkness when the Lord descended upon it in fire; they had felt the earth quake at His coming; they had trembled in terror at the “voice of the trumpet exceeding loud.” [Exodus 19:16] Yet when Moses was called into the mount to receive from Jehovah the holy oracles that were to guide the chosen people in succeeding ages, Israel fashioned for themselves a molten calf, an image of gold, and setting it up among them, declared, “These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.”

“And the Lord said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiff-necked people: now therefore let Me alone, that My wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation.” [Exodus 34:4-10] The heart of Moses was filled with sorrow when he heard of Israel’s sin and the Lord’s purpose to destroy them. Earnestly he besought Jehovah to remember His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and repent of His purpose to cut them off.

The prayer of Moses was heard; his faith was honored. Jehovah declared that He would spare the people, and that in spite of their monstrous sin, they would still remain the children of the covenant.

After Moses had gone down to the plain, and had beheld the sin of the people, and cleansed the camp of the leaders in idolatry, he returned to the mount, once more to beseech God’s mercy for Israel. “And Moses returned unto the Lord, and said, O, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou has written. And the Lord said unto Moses, Whosoever has sinned against Me, him will I blot out of My book. Therefore now go, lead the people unto the place of which I have spoken unto thee: behold, Mine Angel shall go before thee: nevertheless in the day when I visit I will visit their sin upon them.” [Exodus 32:31-34]

During all the time that Israel was passing through these varied experiences, the Angel of the Lord was with them. In a pillar of cloud by day, protecting the people from the intense rays of the sun; and in a burning flame of fire by night, that no beast nor enemy would dare approach, “the Angel of His presence” led and guarded them. Continually the glory of holy angels was manifest in their sight. They had only to lift their eyes to see the manifestation of God’s protecting power, and the glory that enshrouded their heavenly Leader. Never in the history of mankind has the visible presence of God been so manifested in behalf of any other people ; never has another people been so tenderly led, as a mother leads her little child, so

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protected, so ministered to, as the children of Israel. Yet they were in a constant state of rebellion and apostasy; complaints, murmurings, and disloyalty were continually manifest among them. Often was the anger of Jehovah kindled against them as He saw their murmurings and rebellion; often was His heart grieved at their lack of faith, their waywardness, their lusting for the pleasures of sin.

The evangelist Stephen, in the memorable address delivered just before his death, speaking of this time in the history of Israel, when God was manifest among the people, said: "A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall you hear. This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the Angel which spoke to him in the Mount Sinai, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us: to whom our fathers would not obey, but thrust him from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt." [Acts 7:37-39]

Again, speaking to the Jews, Stephen said: "You stiff necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, you do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? And they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom you have been now the betrayers and murderers: who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it." [Acts 7:51-53]

Thus we see how God dealt, during the early days of the children of Israel, with His people. He ministered to them continually, night and day, by the presence of heavenly angels. When they were hungry, He opened the storehouse of heaven, and gave them angels' food to eat. "Man did eat angels' food: He sent them meat to the full." [Psalm 78:25] When they were thirsty, He caused waters to spring from the given rock, that they might be refreshed. "In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the Angel of His presence saved them: in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bare them, and carried them all the clays of old." [Isaiah 63:9]

Again and again the Bible writers call our attention to the fact that as God manifested His care, His protection, and His loving ministry in behalf of the children of Israel in ancient days, so He will care for His trusting children even now. What He did for Israel is a surety of what He will do for all who believe on His name. Though we are unable to see with our natural eye the holy beings about us, still we can come to God in faith, believing and trusting that their presence is ever with us, and that their ministry continues in our behalf.

BALAAAM AND THE ANGEL

As the children of Israel neared the promised land, on their journey from Egypt to Canaan, it was convenient for them to pass through the borders of Moab; but owing to the relationship existing between this people and themselves, for the Moabites were the descendants of Lot, Israel was warned not to molest them nor engage in warfare against them. But Balak, king of Moab, placed no confidence in Israel's declarations of peace. He had heard of the mighty power attending this people, and he was greatly alarmed. Apprehensive and fearful, he resolved to take steps to bring the curse of Heaven upon Israel. Quickly a council of the leading men of Moab and of their ally, Midian, was called, and a plan of action was adopted. Far to the north of Moab, in the country of Aram, lived Balaam. He had once been a prophet of Jehovah; and of him it was reputed that God blessed whom he blessed, and cursed whom he cursed. With "the rewards of divination" in their hands, elders the curse of Heaven upon Israel. Quickly a council of the prophet to deliver the king's message: "Behold, there is a people come out from Egypt: behold, they cover the face of the earth, and they abide over against me: come now therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people; for they are too mighty for me." [Numbers 22:5-6]

It was true that Balaam was a prophet. He had consecrated his service to Jehovah, and God had spoken to him in vision. But the prophet had lost his spirituality. Covetousness, love of the world, a desire for earthly treasure, had cast their blighting influence on his experience. Well he knew the power that was manifested in behalf of the returning children of Israel; yet the bribes brought by the emissaries of the heathen king blinded his eyes to the enormity of his proposal. Though conscious that he should refuse Balak's request with a fitting rebuke, he temporized, dallied with the temptation, allowed his mind to dwell on the rich gifts offered. His heart coveted "the wages of unrighteousness," yet he feared the wrath of Jehovah should he give consent to curse His people. A wretched plight was this for one who had been honored as the

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mouthpiece of God; yet it is an experience that, under different aspects, has been faced innumerable times in the history of those who have counted themselves among the children of the kingdom.

With a desire to gain time, but under pretext of seeking counsel of God, Balaam invited the messengers of Balak to remain overnight. In mercy the Lord revealed Himself to the faithless, tempted man, and made very clear the course he should follow. No room was left for dallying or doubt. "And God said unto Balaam, Thou shall not go with them; thou shall not curse the people: for they are blessed." [Numbers 22:12]

That experience marked a crisis in the life of Balaam. Though rendering outward obedience to the Lord's command, his reluctance was manifest to the messengers, even in the words and manner in which he declined the king's request: "The Lord refuses to give me leave to go with you."

Nor did Balak yield his purpose when the princes of Moab returned with the message, "Balaam refuses to come with us." Thinking the prophet desired a greater reward, he sent another group of princes, "more, and more honorable" than the first. "And they came to Balaam, and said to him, Thus said Balak the son of Zippor, Let nothing, I pray thee, hinder thee from coming unto me: for I will promote thee unto very great honor, and I will do whatsoever thou says unto me: come therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people." [Numbers 22:13-17]

There is no middle ground in the warfare with sin. In spirit, in desire, Balaam had yielded to the first temptation placed before him by the king of Moab, though in word and act he had appeared to reject his proposal. By longing for the offered rewards, allowing his mind to dwell upon them, his fancy to play around them, he lost the first battle in the conflict waging for his soul, and failed to gain the strength needed to resist a severer test. Something vital was lost in that yielding. Now, when greater rewards and honors are offered, he has not the advantages of a former victory to help him. Heavenly angels are by his side, watching with inexpressible sadness the course of the prophet, and ready to drive back the powers of darkness; but he feels no need of their aid. Divine power is within his reach, but he seeks it not. Longing to go with the king's messengers, yet fearful of the wrath of God, he again urges them to remain all night. "And God came unto Balaam at night, and said unto him, If the men come to call thee, rise up, and go with them; but yet the word which I shall say unto thee, that shall thou do." [Numbers 22:20]

The will of God had been clearly made known to Balaam; yet now, seeing that the prophet was determined to follow the course of action that appeared so profitable to him, the Lord gave him permission to go with the messengers if they came to call him. This was one more test. Had Balaam then rested content, leaving the matter in God's hands, all might yet have been well. But the madness of covetousness was upon him. In the morning-, finding that the messengers of the king had departed, he made haste to saddle a beast and go after them. Blind to the heavenly presence, deaf to the voice of angel guardians, he rushed on in the course he had chosen.

"And God's anger was kindled because he went: and the angel of the Lord stood in the way for an adversary against him. Now he was riding upon his ass, and his two servants were with him. And the ass saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand: and the ass turned aside out of the way, and went into the field: and Balaam smote the ass, to turn her into the way."

It was the dumb beast, despised and unregarded, that recognized the holy presence, that saw the angel, and stepped aside out of the path. The man who in former days had known the power of God, who had heard His voice, and spoken His messages, had no thought now for holy things. His eagerness to overtake the princes of Moab was like a consuming fire in his heart. Every holy impulse, every right desire, shriveled before it. Urging the reluctant beast onward, he soon reached a narrow path in the vineyard through which he was passing. Here again "the angel of the Lord stood, a wall being on this side, and a wall on that side. And when the ass saw the angel of the Lord, she thrust herself unto the wall, and crushed Balaam's foot against the wall: and he smote her again."

Yet once more, "in a narrow place, where was no way to turn either to the right hand or to the left," the angel of the Lord stood with flaming sword. "And when the ass saw the angel of the Lord, she fell down

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under Balaam.” [Numbers 22:22-27] In rage and fury at being thus thwarted and hindered, Balaam again beat the ass with a staff. “And the Lord opened the mouth of the ass, and she said unto Balaam, What have I done unto thee, that thou has smitten me these three times? And Balaam said unto the ass, Because thou has mocked me: I would there were a sword in mine hand, for now would I kill thee.”

“Then 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. And the angel of the Lord said unto him, Wherefore has thou smitten your ass these three times? Behold, I went out to withstand thee, because thy way is perverse before me: and the ass saw me, and turned from me these three times: unless she had turned from me, surely now also I had slain thee, and saved her alive. And Balaam said unto the angel of the Lord, I have sinned; for I knew not that thou stood in the way against me: now therefore, if it displease thee, I will get me back again. And the angel of the Lord said unto Balaam, Go with the men: but only the word that I shall speak unto thee, that thou shall speak.” [Numbers 22:28-35]

Blind indeed was this deluded prophet. Plainly told that his way was displeasing to God, he made the insincere confession, “I have sinned,” yet in the next breath he said, “If it displease thee, I will get me back again,” thus implying that he supposed his mission approved by Heaven. But God does not compel men to walk in the way of righteousness. Often, as in Balaam’s case, He suffers them to pursue their chosen course, and carry out their evil designs.

Not only did Balaam overtake the servants of Balak, and return with them to their master, but on three separate occasions he tried to curse the people of God. Failing to carry out his wicked purpose, he gave counsel to Balak that proved a dreadful curse to Israel, and finally brought ruin and death upon himself. The pitiful story of this man, once honored of Heaven; shows that men who have been used by the Lord, even those possessing the gift of prophecy, may so depart from Him, may go so far in the way of disobedience and sin, as to become instruments in the hands of the powers of evil to bring disaster and ruin upon the people of God.

Peter, in commenting on the doings of those who obey not the Lord, compares them to Balaam, and says they follow in his way. “But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption; and shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, as they that count it pleasure to riot in the daytime. Spots they are and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceiving while they feast with you; having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children: which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; but was rebuked for his iniquity : the dumb ass speaking with man’s voice forbade the madness of the prophet.” [2 Peter 2:16-18]

Jude, speaking of a certain class, refers to this man, who once was a prophet of God, in these words: “Woe unto them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward.” [Jude 1:11]

The temptation that came to Balaam, comes often to those who hear the truth of God. They listen to instruction from His word, they know its teachings, they know what is right and what is wrong, they are strongly convicted of duty ; and yet, for gain, for the brief possession of a few of this world’s goods, a little earthly treasure, the honor and flattery of their fellow men, or from fear of opposition and persecution, they act according to the desires of their own evil heart, neglecting the heavenly message, stifling the voice of conscience, delaying obedience, and thus following in the footsteps of Balaam. Not only do these deluded souls bring upon themselves condemnation and ruin, but they also bring discouragement, confusion, indifference, and disobedience upon those who come under their influence. And as surely as the wrath of God followed Balaam, as certainly as this man perished as a result of his disloyalty and disobedience, so surely will those who do not walk in the ways of God and obey His commandments experience, in the day of final account, utter ruin in the loss of eternal life.

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ELIJAH AND THE ANGEL

Against the dark background of the reign of the dissolute and apostate King Ahab, the record of Elijah the Tishbite is drawn in letters that flash with celestial light. He came upon that scene of wickedness and evil doing as one bearing along the flaming torch of the wrath of Jehovah; he left it in such majesty and glory as has never, before or since, been vouchsafed to one of the children of men. Appearing at a critical moment in the history of Israel, unknown and unannounced, Elijah delivered a startling message of divine judgment to the corrupt king. At his word, the rain ceased from the earth. In answer to his prayer, the dead son of a poor widow was raised to life, and fire came down on Mount Carmel in the sight of the prophets of Baal. In exile and famine, the ravens brought him daily food. Later a constant miracle, indicative of God's never failing bounties, was wrought to provide him sustenance. Mighty was the faith of this godly man, and richly was it honored by Heaven.

Yet there came a dark and dreadful day in the experience of this loyal prophet. The drought that had come at his word had been broken in answer to his prayer. The prophets of Baal had been discredited and put to death. In the heart of Elijah was kindled the hope of a new order of things in the kingdom. He longed to see the heathen practices and altars abandoned, the false gods destroyed, the groves in which they were worshiped hewn down, and the name of Jehovah again revered and honored in the land. Instead of this, Jezebel, the dissolute wife of Ahab, hearing the fate that had overtaken the prophets of Baal; sent a defiant message to Elijah, saying, "So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to-morrow about this time." [1 Kings 19:2]

Elijah was a man of like passions as ourselves. Though a prophet, he had human frailties, and sometimes yielded to the infirmities of the flesh. Now he who had stood before King Ahab in his wrath, and had seen divine power working in answer to his prayer, was possessed with fear and trembling at the anger of this wicked woman. Before her threat, his courage went out like a candle in a hurricane. Stopping not to inquire of Heaven what course he should follow in this crisis, "he arose, and went for his life." At Beersheba, continuing his weary flight, his servant was left behind; but the prophet went a day's journey farther into the wilderness, until at last even his marvelous strength failed, and utterly spent, he sank down under a juniper tree. Not only was his physical endurance at an end, but his disappointment, his fear, and his weariness caused a lapse of his valiant faith. In the abandon of despair he prayed that he might die, saying: "It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers." [1 Kings 19:3-4]

The sympathy of the God of heaven went out to this despairing man. He who "knows our frame," who "remembers that we are dust," [Psalm 103:14] did not forsake His loyal servant in this trying hour. An angel from heaven was sent to minister to Elijah, to renew his physical strength, and to encourage his heart by bringing to his remembrance the loving care and mercy of God. As the prophet lay sleeping, "behold, then an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise and eat. And he looked, and, behold, there was a cake baked on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head. And he did eat and drink, and laid him down again. And the angel of the Lord came again the second time, and touched him, and said, Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee. And he arose, and did eat and drink. And went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God." [1 Kings 19:5-8]

Wondrously does the Lord provide for His children - not always in the same way, but always according to their need. In every instance that the Bible records where angels have visited men and ministered to them, new conditions and new circumstances are seen, showing that the Lord sends His help to us where we are, and supplies what we lack. Few indeed have ever been in more desperate straits than was Elijah in the wilderness. Without food or water, his strength exhausted, his courage gone, his faith in eclipse, with no human eye to look upon his condition, no heart to beat in sympathy with his sorrow and distress, no friendly hand to provide relief and comfort, he seemed utterly alone and forsaken. Yet the God of heaven forsook him not, but in the hour of need sent a mighty angel to minister to His servant.

That all-embracing love never changes. Rich or poor, lowly or exalted, learned or ignorant, the mighty God of heaven has a continued guarding care for those who trust in Him. To the humble, contrite soul, whatever his condition in life, the angels of God are constantly sent forth to minister. To hearts that are aching and desolate, to those who mourn, to those who, like the prophet Elijah, are persecuted for their obedience to the commandments of Jehovah, to all such God sends His messengers to comfort them, encourage their

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hearts, and renew their confidence in Him. The hour of man's direst need is His unfailing opportunity.

Like godly Enoch, who lived at a time when the hearts of men were fully set to do evil, Elijah lived during a period of great debauchery and sin in Israel; and like Enoch, he was caught up from this sin-cursed earth to heaven without seeing death. In this last supreme experience, once more the angels of heaven came from the courts of glory to the side of the prophet. It appears, from the Bible record, that both Elijah and Elisha had the assurance that something miraculous was to take place; and when Elijah set out on his journey, Elisha went with him. Very soon was he to take up the burden long carried by Elijah, and bear on his heart the load of anxiety and sorrow caused by a wayward people. Now, in what he felt to be his last hours with his great teacher, he refused to leave him.

At Gilgal, west of the Jordan, "Elijah said unto Elisha, Tarry here, I pray thee; for the Lord has sent me to Bethel. And Elisha said unto him, As the Lord lives, and as thy soul lives, I will not leave thee. So they went down to Bethel. And the sons of the prophets that were at Bethel came forth to Elisha, and said unto him, Know thou that the Lord will take away thy master from thy head to-day? And he said, Yea, I know it; hold you your peace. And Elijah said unto him, Elisha, tarry here, I pray thee; for the Lord has sent me to Jericho. And he said, As the Lord lives, and as thy soul lives, I will not leave thee. So they came to Jericho. And the sons of the prophets that were at Jericho came to Elisha, and said unto him, Know thou that the Lord will take away thy master from thy head to-day? And he answered, Yea, I know it; hold you your peace. And Elijah said unto him, Tarry, I pray thee, here; for the Lord has sent me to Jordan. And he said, As the Lord lives, and as thy soul lives, I will not leave thee. And they two went on.

"And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went, and stood to view afar off: and they two stood by Jordan. And Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground. And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me. And he said, Thou has asked a hard thing: nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so. And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven." [2 Kings 2:2-11]

That the chariot of fire and the horses of fire were angels of God, sent to convey Elijah to the glorious courts of heaven, and into the presence of his divine Leader, we are assured; for we are told by the psalmist that the Lord "makes His angels spirits; His ministers a flaming fire." [Psalm 104:4] And again, "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place." [Psalm 68:17] Elisha also had the same thought; for as he gazed in awe and amazement at his departing master and friend, he cried out, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof." [2 Kings 2:12]

Wonderful beyond all human imagination was Elijah's translation from this sin-cursed earth to the heavenly land of beauty and goodness and peace. Yet this marvelous experience that came to the prophet in the vale of Jordan almost three thousand years ago, is a promise to the last generation of men, who will be living upon the earth when the Lord Jesus appears in the clouds of heaven, that He will translate and take to Himself those who believe on His name. Surely it becomes us who are living in these last days to take heed to our ways, as did Elijah. Then, though surrounded by sin on every hand, we shall take no part therein, but walk before the Lord in sincerity and humbleness of heart, and be found among those who will be accepted by Him.

THE THREE WORTHIES AND THE ANGEL

Men of notable achievement have ever felt sadness and regret at the thought that a time would come when their mighty works would perish from the earth, their heroic exploits be unremembered, even their very memory forgotten. From the earliest ages, men have sought some means to overcome the inevitable result of death - oblivion. Some have built great temples, adorned and beautified with precious spoil from the ends of the earth, forgetting that their very value and beauty would make them a prey to covetous men. Others have erected magnificent tombs of seemingly imperishable materials, and in their impregnable

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walls, their dim and quiet vaults, have hoped to find a permanent memorial. Others, again, like haughty Absalom, have set up pillars, to keep their names in remembrance.

Glorying in his power, in the victories that followed his legions in war, and the prosperity that attended his administration in peace, King Nebuchadnezzar thought to build a city that should endure through all ages, and remain a splendid monument to his valor and wisdom and power. With foresight and skill which the world cannot but admire, he set about this great undertaking, and apparently accomplished his purpose. The city that he built for the capital of his kingdom and the perpetuation of his memory was a wonder to the world. Never had another city been laid out on such broad and splendid lines, or been protected and defended by such massive walls, or beautified by such magnificent palaces, or adorned with such lovely gardens.

Looking at the city in all its grandeur and beauty, and considering the comfort and luxury it provided, and the effect of permanency in its massive proportions, the heart of Nebuchadnezzar was filled with pride. Exulting in his majesty, his wisdom to conceive, and his power to execute, he determined to take one more step to magnify his name and extend his power. In the plain of Dura he caused to be set up a golden image of heroic proportions. None but a king of such wealth and might as himself could erect such an image as this. Its dedication must be made an occasion of such importance as to herald the name and fame of Nebuchadnezzar throughout the earth.

With this great king, to think was to act. The plain was beautified, the image cast and set up, every possible preparation made for carrying out his plan to make this the greatest event of peace in his reign. All “the princes, the governors, and captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counselors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces,” [Daniel 3:3] all the great men of the kingdom, were invited to be present. Among those commanded to appear were three servants of Jehovah, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who, under the blessing of God, had been entrusted with important administrative responsibilities in the kingdom. Nebuchadnezzar must have known that these Jews could not bow down to the golden image, and worship it as God. He was familiar with the religion of the Jews, and knew well their abhorrence of idolatry. He knew, too, the uprightness of these men, and their inflexible will in matters of conscience; and he himself had greatly honored them. Yet now he forgot all this in his desire for adulation and self-exaltation.

When the day came, and the guests were assembled, he caused a herald to pass among them, and cry in a loud voice: “To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages, that at what time you hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music, you fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king has set up: and whoso falls not down and worships shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. Therefore at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and all kinds of music, all the people, the nations, and the languages, fell down and worshiped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.” [Daniel 3:4-7]

Courage of a high order was required in that hour to disobey the king’s command and defy an overwhelming popular sentiment; yet when, at the sound of the music, an impressive hush fell upon that gay and brilliant throng, and as one man the multitude fell prostrate in worship, the three Hebrews stood erect. There was no compromise of bowed head or lowered eyelids in their attitude. Representatives of a conquered and despised people, they were not without malicious and powerful enemies in the kingdom in which they had been so honored; and well they knew the satisfaction of wicked men to find so flagrant a cause of offense against them. They knew, too, the fate prepared for the disobedient, yet they faltered not. The loyal people of God are ever “a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men” [1 Corinthians 4:9] and these three Hebrews were willing to suffer personal humiliation, obloquy, and face even death itself, in order to exalt and honor the name of Jehovah.

Immediately their attitude was reported to the king, certain Chaldeans accusing them before him, saying: “O king, live forever. Thou, O king, has made a decree, that every man that shall hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music, shall fall down and worship the golden image: and whoso falls not down and worships, that he should be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. There are certain Jews whom thou has set over the affairs of the province of Babylon,

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Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; these men, O king, have not regarded thee: they serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou has set up.” [Daniel 3:9-12]

Fury possessed the mighty Nebuchadnezzar when he heard this report. Its veiled insinuations, its suggestions of ingratitude and disloyalty on the part of those whom he had so, exalted, stung his pride. In “rage and fury” he commanded that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought into his presence, and there he inquired of them concerning the report which he had heard. Even in the anger that possessed him, he remembered the fidelity and uprightness of these men, and sought from their own lips a confirmation of the report brought by their enemies. “Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego,” he inquired, “do not you serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up?” He went even further, and offered them another opportunity to prove their loyalty to him by worshiping the golden image. “But if you worship not,” he declared, “you shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?” [Daniel 3:14-15]

The answer of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to King Nebuchadnezzar on this occasion is one of the most remarkable on record. Not only were their own lives at stake, but their course involved the lives of their countrymen; for by refusing to obey the king’s command, they might bring upon all the captives of the Jews then in Babylon, as well as those scattered throughout the provinces, whose representatives were assembled at this dedication, the consuming wrath of Nebuchadnezzar. But their reply to the sovereign’s suggestion was unequivocal. There could be no possible doubt as to whether they intended to obey his command or remain loyal to Jehovah. With dignity and courtesy, yet with unmistakable firmness, they said: “O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou has set up.” [Daniel 3:16-18]

This answer, returned to the king before his assembled lords and governors and princes, all the great men subject to his lightest wish and showing unbounded outward respect for his authority, was intolerable to Nebuchadnezzar. He felt that the very foundations of his throne were being undermined, and he determined to make an example of these captive Jews before the assembled host, and so establish beyond question his authority and power. “Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego: therefore he spoke, and commanded that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heated. And he commanded the most mighty men that were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace. Then these men were bound in their coats, their hosen, and their hats, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.” [Daniel 3:19-21]

So exceeding hot was the furnace, that its fiery flames swept out and killed the men who cast the three Hebrews, bound in their inflammable garments, into its burning depths. Yet as the king, watching and fearful, looked on, he saw a wonderful sight. Rising up in haste and astonishment, he called to his counselors, “Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?” To their reply, “True, O king,” he answered: “Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.” [Daniel 3:24-25] Before this wonderful revelation of the power of Jehovah, pride and self-glory were forgotten. In humbleness of heart the king “came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, and spoke, and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, you servants of the most high God, come forth, and come hither. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, came forth of the midst of the fire. And the princes, governors, and captains, and the king’s counselors, being gathered together, saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them.” [Daniel 3:26-27]

Wonderful indeed was the care of God for these faithful men, and far-reaching the influence of their courage and faith. A powerful angel from heaven stood by their side, and delivered them from the power of the fire. The wrath of man was changed to praise in that hour; and before the assembled princes and rulers of his kingdom, Nebuchadnezzar exalted the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, saying: “Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent His angel, and delivered His servants that trusted in Him, and have changed the king’s word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor

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worship any god, except their own God. Therefore I make a decree, that every people, nation, and language, which speak anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill: because there is no other god that can deliver after this sort. Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, in the province of Babylon.” [Daniel 3:28-30]

A great victory was gained over the powers of evil that day on the plain of Dura. Through the loyal faith of three men, the great image set up to exalt and glorify frail humanity became the means of spreading a knowledge of the true God, and of His power and saving grace, to the ends of the earth. Babylon and its glories and splendor were for a time forgotten, and in humility of heart the king pondered on the wonderful revelation of the love and power of God that he had beheld.

“O for a faith that will not shrink,
Though pressed by many a foe;
That will not tremble on the brink
Of poverty or woe!

Lord, give me such a faith as this,
And then, whatever may come,
I'll taste even here the hallowed bliss
Of an eternal home.”

JESUS AND THE ANGELS

“And there appeared an angel unto Him from heaven, strengthening Him.” Luke 22:43

THIRTY years the Son of God lived in obscurity in this fallen world for whose lost inhabitants He was to shed His blood, that “whosoever” promise as wide as the ravages of sin itself - “believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” [John 3:16] Born in poverty, of humble parents, He dwelt with them during all the years of His developing manhood, learned a lowly trade, and worked with His hands for His daily bread, He who was the life of men. The sorrows of childhood and youth, its temptations and allurements, were known to Him. Like other men, He lived and labored ; and during all these years, it was not recognized that He was different from those about Him, save by the purity and uprightness of His life, His tenderness to the sorrowing and afflicted, His love for that which was good, His abhorrence of evil.

But at last these quiet years ended. In the wilderness a voice was heard preaching “the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.” [Mark 1:4] Repentance - an unwelcome and startling message to the self-righteous and self-satisfied race that had long looked upon themselves as the sole recipients of divine favor on the earth; yet such was the power attending the messenger, that multitudes flocked to the desert to hear the words which ate into their hearts like a consuming and purifying flame: “Prepare you the way of the Lord Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance. Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages. I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.” [Luke 3:14-16]

The message of John was the call to Jesus to leave the little shop in Nazareth, and enter upon His public labors. He who was known in the hill village as the son of the carpenter Joseph, recognized the call; and a morning came when He laid aside saw and hammer and plane, and set His feet toward Bethabara, near Jordan, where John was baptizing. Here, when, at His own request, He received this holy ordinance, divine witness was given of His acceptance by Heaven. “And, lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him: and lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” [Matthew 3:16-17]

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AFTER THE TEMPTATION

Before entering upon His actual work of ministry, Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness; and for forty days and forty nights He fasted and prayed, seeking heavenly guidance and strength for the great work upon which He was soon to enter. At the end of this period, when, by reason of His long fast, He was almost fainting from hunger, Satan came to Him with his most subtle and malicious temptations. Not unprepared for a struggle came this powerful fallen angel, who once stood as a covering cherub before the throne of Jehovah, and who had led a third part of the heavenly host into open rebellion against their Maker, and who in his wicked pride and insubordination had been cast with his followers out of heaven. His plan of attack was well defined. The end he desired to gain was clearly determined. Mighty forces of evil were concentrated in that lonely place to aid in the consummation of his purpose, that Jesus should assert His divinity, that He should exercise supernatural power in His own behalf, or that He should be led to acknowledge the right of Satan to the dominion of the earth.

Our first parents were tested for loyalty to the commands of God on the point of appetite. They failed; and where their failure began, at the first weak point of attack, Satan entered the field to overthrow the Son of God dwelling in human flesh. Fainting in body, distressed in mind by His contemplation of the sins of the world, and the realization of the cup He must drink to open the way to the heavenly city for all who should seek to gain its borders, at this time Satan approached Him, and in apparent sympathy suggested, "If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." [Matthew 4:3] In these words, the inference was present, that it was not fitting for one of such power and authority-if Christ were the Son of God indeed-to suffer hunger, when at a single word He could turn the very stones beneath His feet to bread, and thus relieve His distress. But with the apparent sympathy there was the veiled doubt, a doubt which it was Satan's fixed purpose to implant in the heart of Christ, and thus turn Him away from the accomplishment of His great mission. Jesus recognized the purpose in the suggestion; and He so answered Satan as to show that, having taken upon Himself man's nature, He would never exercise His divine power in His own behalf. Wherein the first Adam failed-on appetite-the second Adam, weak and suffering though He was, came forth "more than conqueror."

A second temptation quickly followed. "Then the devil takes Him up into the holy city, and sets Him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said unto Him, If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down: for it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee: and in their hands they shall bear Thee up, lest at any time Thou dash Thy foot against a stone." [Matthew 4:5-6] Jesus had used the words of Scripture in meeting the first temptation of Satan. Now the evil one showed himself familiar with Holy Writ, and cited a promise made especially with reference to the Son of God. Yet even as he did so, it was again his purpose to create doubt in the mind of the Man of Nazareth concerning His divine son ship, "If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down." At His baptism, Jesus had heard and understood the words of His Father, "This is My beloved Son." Nevertheless, He would not yield to the insinuation of the tempter, and by an act of presumption, seek to prove His divine authority. Again He vanquished the enemy of the souls of men with the quick and powerful weapon supplied by the divine armory for the weakest of His children, "It is written."

Yet not without physical exhaustion and a drain upon the vital forces were these victories gained. The conflict with sin is one of the most real things in the world. The earth may be removed, and the mountains sink into the depths of the sea. Still, until the appointed time, this conflict remains, renewed with every passing hour; for the children of men fight not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers whose might the unaided human will is as unable to overcome as would be the strength of a baby's hand to stay the on sweeping waters of Niagara. Not for His own glory did the Son of God enter upon this conflict. A world of struggling, helpless, undone human beings, their lives forever forfeit if He failed, hung in the balance.

One more temptation, the most subtle and alluring that satanic cunning could invent, was brought to bear upon Jesus. "Again, the devil takes Him up into an exceeding high mountain, and shows Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and said unto Him, All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me." [Matthew 4:8-9]

Jesus knew Satan, and understood his wicked scheme. He had seen his conduct in heaven, and had led the

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loyal armies in victorious battle against the hosts of this mighty evil angel. For four thousand years He had watched and studied the ruin of men and women wrought by one who had been among the most exalted of the heavenly beings. Now, with unspeakable effrontery Satan stands before Christ, offering to yield all, to cease his warfare against God, and no longer tempt men and women into disobedience, if only Christ will bow before him, and acknowledge his supremacy. "All this power will I give Thee," urged the prince of evil, "and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. If Thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be Yours." [Luke 4:6-7]

The statement of the evil one was only partly true. In the beginning, man received dominion over the earth; but by his fall, his dominion was wrested from him by Satan, and in a sense passed to Satan - since the kingdom of heaven is not a kingdom of force. Never would Jehovah compel the sons of Adam to submit against their will to the laws of righteousness; but in His love and pity, He made a way by which this lost dominion might in due time be restored. That way involved untold hardship and suffering and agony of soul, ending at last in an ignominious and cruel death for One who had never sinned. Yet in this dark hour, how clear and strong the answer of the Son of God: "Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shall thou serve." [Matthew 4:10-11]

The temptation was ended. Now, as in a later hour, the prince of this world had come to Jesus, and had found nothing in Him - no point on which he could gain a victory over Him. Defeated, utterly vanquished, a conquered foe, Satan left the mount, his legions with him; and the Redeemer of men, the Mighty One, who had taken upon Himself frail human flesh, sank exhausted to the earth. But He was not left alone in that hour of need. "Angels came and ministered unto Him." With tender love they supplied His needs, and brought before His mind the joy that would be His when the work of redemption was finished, and the multitude of the redeemed, whom no man could number, should stand before the throne of God, their voices lifted in the song of Moses and the Lamb. Strength and comfort for the present, confidence and hope for the future, were given to the Savior in that hour of need.

Heavenly beings ever watch with unceasing interest the conflict between the powers of good and the hosts of evil. One soul repenting of his sinful course, yielding to the entreaties of guardian angels, causes joy in heaven. What exultant rapture, therefore, must have thrilled those glorious courts as the angels saw their beloved Leader victorious over the enemy of all righteousness! Relying alone upon the word of Jehovah - the same Word that is our sword and buckler - their divine Commander, clothed in weak human flesh, had met Satan upon his own battle ground, and had won a complete victory over him. For ages the heavenly beings had looked forward to this event with strong desires that the Son of God might triumph over the enemy of God and man. Now the battle had been fought and won, thus giving assurance that the plan of salvation, laid at the fall, would be carried out, and the power of Satan forever broken. Happy indeed the company of angelic beings sent from the Father's throne to minister to Jesus in that hour!

But observe that the angels did not save even the Son of God from temptation. They did not remove from Him the buffetings of His relentless enemy. Grace to endure was supplied during the trial, comfort and ministry followed. Often the child of God yields to temptation because he does not feel the immediate presence of heavenly beings at his side, when would he but faithfully obey the Lord and resist the enemy, peace and comfort would follow as surely as day follows night. Sometimes the Lord leaves us to be buffeted by the enemy in order to test our faith or to develop in our lives the principle of adherence to righteousness. Never, however, does He leave His children alone, unguarded, without comfort and grace, if, in the hour of temptation, they manifest patience and loyalty to Him. How comforting is the thought that the angels are ever about us, watching each struggle, knowing every pain, conscious of every thought, and more anxious than we can conceive to help us in the hour of need!

IN GETHSEMANE

On at least one other occasion - the night before His crucifixion - record is made of special angel ministry in behalf of the Son of God. Of course these angelic beings were ever by His side, as they are continually present with those who serve Him; but these two instances of particular need and special ministry are recorded for our comfort. The earthly life of Jesus was nearly ended. The last public instruction had been given, His last Passover eaten with His disciples. He had finished the work given to Him by the Father. Now He is confronted with death. Soon He must enter the dark portals of the tomb. Frail mortal flesh must

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ever shrink before the thought of such suffering; and when we remember that to the prospect of extreme physical agony was added such mental anguish as the mind of man cannot even dimly comprehend, we can realize in some small degree how the heart of Jesus longed for sympathy and love. With the little company of His disciples a band, alas, now broken, for one had gone swiftly out into the darkness to betray his Lord, Jesus withdrew from the city to the Mount of Olives, and turned aside into a certain garden for greater retirement and seclusion. Bidding His disciples, "Sit you here, while I go and pray yonder," Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John, "and began to be sorrowful and very heavy." [Matthew 26:36-37]

The soul of the Son of man longed for human comfort and sympathy; and who of all the world would offer it if not these chosen three, Peter, the ardent, the zealous, who but a moment before had pledged his faithfulness against that of the whole world in behalf of his Lord; James, the prudent, the wise; and John, the beloved of the Savior's breaking heart? "Then said He unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry you here, and watch with Me." [Matthew 26:38] Weary and exhausted, the disciples sank down to rest; and even as the Son of God withdrew a little farther into the shadows, there to fall on His face, and beseech His Father that, if it were possible and according to His will, this cup might pass from Him, in this hour of sorrowful but exalted privilege, such as has been vouchsafed to no other men on earth since the beginning of time, the disciples slept! Slept - when they were gently urged to watch with their divine Lord! Slept - when they might have ministered to Him, comforted Him, and added their petitions to His in that dark and dreadful hour! Slept - when they so sorely needed to obey His sorrowful admonition, "Pray, that you enter not into temptation!" [Matthew 26:41]

Upon the heart of Jesus lay the burden of the sins of the whole world. So crushing was the weight of sin pressing upon Him, that His very life seemed ready to depart. He knew the afflictions that would come to those who should believe on His name. Before His mind there passed in review the scenes of future years, when millions of His followers would meet a cruel death at the hand of wicked men. He knew the heartaches, the sorrow, the pain and suffering, that sin had caused, and would yet cause in this fallen world. As He thought of all these things, and of the great work that must be carried on in the earth, amid so many perils and so much persecution, His heart was bowed with sorrow, and it seemed for a time as if even His Father had hidden His face from Him, and left Him in His extremity to bear His burden alone.

In His loneliness and suffering, the Savior returned to His disciples, to seek from them comfort and sympathy in that hour of unspeakable sorrow. But human love failed the Savior of men. Thrice He returned to the place where He had asked His disciples to watch with Him; and twice He returned to wrestle alone in prayer for strength to endure the crisis before Him, and for the assurance that he was accepted by Heaven.

With intense interest the heavenly hosts had watched the powers of darkness closing in around the only-begotten of the Father. For three years and a half the legions of evil had beset Jesus on every hand. By every temptation possible for them to bring to bear against the human heart, by stirring up wicked men to spy upon, persecute, and ensnare the Son of God, Satan and his angels had used their utmost power to overcome the Sinless One. But not for an instant had Christ wavered. Not in the slightest degree had He given place to evil. Now Satan and his fallen angels knew that all was lost unless they could in that trying hour cause the Son of God to yield to despair. It was a fitting time to attempt to carry out this dark purpose. Even then Judas was leading the enemies of Jesus to the garden. The disciples were stupefied with grief and sleep. The three chosen to watch with Jesus were wrapped in slumber. The evil angels, exulting in the thought of overcoming and conquering the only-begotten of the Father, gathered closer and yet closer about that form stretched in agony on the earth.

But though human sympathy failed the Son of God, and human hands were neglectful to minister in love to His need, He was not forsaken in His hour of desolation.

Though forgotten by those who were nearest to Him on earth, yet He was remembered at His heavenly Father's throne. From the courts of glory a strong and powerful angel came to that dark and lonely garden, and ministered to the Lord, driving back the powers of darkness, and strengthening Jesus for the fiery ordeal through which He must shortly pass.

Before the thought of that angel visit and communion, our hearts turn reverently away. Yet with what

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comfort we remember that Jesus is our elder Brother; that we are members of His family; that to us, even as to Him, in the time of deepest need, the angels bear comfort and strength and grace from our Father's throne! But we must not forget that Jesus prayed to His Father with all His soul, in language that man cannot utter, in sorrow beyond our comprehension, for divine help and succor. Shall the children of God expect the angels of heaven to come to their aid when they themselves do not cast their souls upon Him in faith? If Christ could win His great conflict with the enemy of all righteousness only through agonizing prayer, need we expect that those who pray for deliverance in the hour of trial and adversity can be delivered without wrestling with God? The divinely implanted desire for righteousness is a desire fulfilled by prayer. Every temptation, every trial, every heartache, is a call to prayer. Every great victory gained over the powers of darkness is gained by faith and prayer. The very invitation to enter the Christian warfare is an invitation to a life of earnest, prevailing prayer. And it is upon those who most fully give themselves to God in prayer that His angels will ever bestow their sweetest ministry.

ANGEL MINISTRY IN THE GOSPEL

“But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said, Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life.” Acts 5:19-20.

PHILIP AND THE ANGEL

THE farewell message of the Lord Jesus to the little company of disciples was the solemn statement that they would soon receive the baptism of the Holy Ghost, and afterward become witnesses for Him “in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” [Acts 1:8] This word was shortly fulfilled. In Jerusalem, in spite of persecution and imprisonment, thousands gladly received the word of life, and “multitudes both of men and women” [Acts 5:14] were added to the Lord. Increasing numbers brought increasing responsibilities and cares; and seven godly men, “full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom,” [Acts 6:3] were chosen to bear certain burdens connected with the administration of the affairs of the church. “And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.” [Acts 6:7]

Wonderful indeed was this great church, raised up and established in the city which so short a time before had crucified its Lord. Not without concern did the rulers of the Jews note the spread of the Christian faith; and they resolved to stamp out the teachings of the Nazarene. Stephen, the leader of the seven deacons, a man of faith and power, who did great miracles and wonders among the people, was unjustly and cruelly put to death; and afterward there arose a period of bitter persecution to the believers. Saul, young, zealous, filled with bitter frenzy against the unpopular sect, “made havoc of the church,” [Acts 8:3] visiting from house to house, and haling both men and women to prison.

This persecution became, under the blessing of God, a precious experience for the believers. Fleeing for their lives into remote places in Judea, seeking a refuge among their enemies in Samaria, and even going into still more distant lands, the Christians carried with them the glad tidings of the gospel. Scattered abroad, penniless, without home or friends, yet they were filled with holy zeal, and “went everywhere preaching the Word.” [Acts 8:4]

Among those who left Jerusalem at the time of the great persecution was Philip, also one of the seven deacons, and a man of earnestness and faith. Going into the city of Samaria, he preached Jesus to the people. It was not a new message; they had heard the word of life from the lips of the great Teacher Himself, and some had believed. But now, as the people with one accord gave heed to the saving truths proclaimed by the evangelist, a mighty work was done in that city. Unclean spirits were cast out of those whom they had long tormented; the palsied, the lame, the halt, were healed; sinners repented of their evil ways, and found happiness in believing. No wonder the record adds the significant words, “And there was great joy in that city.” [Acts 8:8]

Not long after this, and while Philip was still in Samaria, he had a strange experience. “The angel of the Lord”- that mighty angel who has ever taken such an active part in behalf of God's children - spoke to the evangelist, saying, “Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goes down from Jerusalem unto Gaza,

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which is desert.” [Acts 8:26]

Unquestioningly Philip obeyed the command of the angel. Without hesitation, or argument, or seeking to know the purpose of the command, “he arose and went.” Placing himself thus in the way of obedience, the will of the Lord was revealed step by step to His servant. “And, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet.”

Though Philip saw the Ethiopian, he knew no reason to accost him, till the Spirit gave the command, “Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.” Hasting to obey, Philip ran thither, and, hearing him read a prophecy of the Messiah from the pen of Isaiah, he courteously inquired, “Understand thou what thou reads?”

Recognizing in this man one who might answer the questions that troubled his heart, the eunuch replied, “How can I, except some man should guide me?” and invited Philip to come up and sit with him in his chariot. “The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened He not His mouth : in His humiliation His judgment was taken away: and who shall declare His generation? For His life is taken from the earth. And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaks the prophet this? Of himself, or of some other man?” [Acts 8:27-34]

With grateful joy Philip, beginning with the very scripture that had puzzled the Ethiopian, preached to him Jesus. The word spoken fell upon good ground; the Ethiopian believed, and in simple, childlike faith accepted Jesus as his Savior. “And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believes with all your heart, thou may. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.” [Acts 8:36-39]

Not only was the eunuch converted, but the record shows that Philip made very clear to his mind the first steps in Christian experience, belief, repentance, baptism. When the Ethiopian expressed a desire for baptism, and declared his faith in the divinity of Jesus, the holy ordinance was administered, not by sprinkling a few drops of water on the brow, or by pouring a little water on the head, but in the same way that the Son of God Himself was baptized. Philip and the eunuch went down together into the water, and there he was buried with his Lord in the watery grave, and rose to walk in newness of life. One could hardly ask for a plainer example of baptism than this. It emphasizes the fact that the apostles and the early church believed and practiced the ordinance of baptism by immersion, rather than by other modes so prevalent to-day.

This experience that came to Philip, the earnest evangelist, and the Ethiopian, a man who honestly desired to understand the Scriptures, is of great comfort to the people of God, showing plainly, as it does, that through the ministry of His holy angels the Father watches over every humble seeker after truth, and will bring to all such the light and help desired. Nor are the angels themselves sent from heaven to explain God’s word to men. They direct and guide, by their silent ministry they counsel and lead; but to man - lost, undone, but saved by grace - is given the priceless privilege of opening the word of God to those who sit in darkness, of breaking the bread of life to hungry hearts. Thus are men made sharers of the joy of their Lord in seeing sinners converted, as they are also, by their profession of that worthy name, made partakers of His sufferings.

So far as the outward eye could discern, circumstances were all against the eunuch’s receiving the instruction he desired. True, he had the holy roll; he could read it; but his mind failed to grasp its meaning, or to associate recent events in Judea with Isaiah’s prophecy of the Messiah. It was essential that some one should explain to him the fulfillment of the prophet’s words, and help him to comprehend their meaning. So far as we know, none of the disciples knew of the eunuch’s visit to Jerusalem; and had they known of it, they would probably have had no opportunity to set the truth before him. Then, too, he was a member of an alien race, and not likely to receive, in the ordinary course of events, the instruction he desired. Now his

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visit was ended, and he was returning to his own country without the light he longed to receive; hourly his chariot was carrying him away from those who were able to give him the information he sought.

But all these adverse circumstances, which might so naturally have combined to keep this man in darkness and bewilderment, speedily melted away before the all-conquering power of holy angels. Angels attended the eunuch as he read Isaiah's words. They knew his desire to understand their meaning, and that his heart was ready for the gospel. Not only so, but the Lord sent His angel to a man who, with unquestioning faith, would obey His command, and carry the word of life to one who hungered to receive it. Had Philip delayed, or for any reason failed to follow the counsel of the angel, God would have employed some other agency to save the eunuch; but Philip would have lost a precious experience.

"God works in a mysterious way His wonders to perform." When a person or a people is ready for light, the Lord sends light, not always according to man's plan, but in a way that redounds to His own honor and glory. Sometimes He causes to be placed in the seeker's hand a verse, a tract, a tiny key to unlock a vast storehouse of truth; or a word, spoken by some sincere soul, sends the arrow of truth home; or it may be that the tender strains of some holy hymn break up the fallow ground of the heart, and prepare it to receive the good seed of the Word. Whatever the direct agency employed, it is by the work of the Holy Spirit, and the sweet influence of angel messengers, that the loving Father prepares the hearts of men to receive His saving grace, and impels His faithful servants to proclaim His glorious salvation to the "uttermost part of the earth."

CORNELIUS AND THE ANGEL

Though in a direct and miraculous way the gospel had been brought to the eunuch, a Gentile, nevertheless the disciples did not yet fully comprehend the fact that the people who had refused to accept Jesus as their King, declaring in their mad frenzy, "We have no king but Caesar," [John 19:15] now stood no longer before the world as the chosen of Jehovah. "Other sheep I have," said the Master, "which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice." [John 10:16] And in His last words to His disciples, He charged them to "make Christians of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." [Matthew 28:19]

Still the disciples clung to the idea that the good tidings must be preached only to the Jews, in Judea, and Samaria, and even in the uttermost part of the earth, truly, but still to the people who had so long been the recipients of special favors from heaven. Now the time had come when their eyes were to be opened to the world-wide nature of the gospel message, and they were to learn the great truth that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation those who love and fear Him are accepted by Him.

In Caesarea, a leading seaport city of Samaria, dwelt a certain centurion called Cornelius. Naturally the Jews, as a subject race under heavy tribute, hated and feared the Romans, and especially those in positions of authority and power. Though regarded by the Jews as a heathen and therefore unsaved, nevertheless Cornelius was a humble seeker after divine truth. He was, says the record, "a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house." Moreover, his heart was touched by the needs of the poor about him, and he "gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always." [Acts 10:2]

Our loving heavenly Father, who watches over the sons of men with far more than an earthly father's love and solicitude, knew the honest desire of Cornelius; and a messenger from the courts above was sent to tell him what to do. Not only was the centurion to receive a great blessing as the result of this angel visit; but to Peter, the ardent and impetuous leader of the little band of disciples, was to come a special revelation of the all-embracing character of the gospel message.

As "a man in bright clothing" the angel came to Cornelius, and addressed him by name. The centurion, recognizing the holy character of his visitor, was afraid, and said, "What is it, Lord?" This inquiry came from the centurion's heart. It betokened perfect surrender, instant readiness to perform the angel's bidding; he was ready for any command, for any service. The first words of the angel were words of comfort and encouragement. "And he said unto him, Thy prayers and your alms are come tip for a memorial before God." [Acts 10:4]

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What a precious assurance is given, in this answer of the angel, that man's feeble petitions are heard at the throne of Jehovah! The angels bear the prayers of the children of God on earth to His throne in heaven. In the book of Revelation the prayers of the believers are represented as sweet incense, offered before the throne of God from an angel's hand: "And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand." [Revelation 8:3-4] How encouraging to the child of faith to know that to the Lord of heaven and earth the humble, sincere petitions of His children are like sweet incense, a precious odor, before Him!

The heart of Cornelius was ready to receive the gospel; and, as to the eunuch, a heavenly messenger was sent to shape the course of events in such a way as to bring the good tidings to him. "Send men to Joppa," said the angel, "and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter: he lodges with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the seaside: he shall tell thee what thou ought to do." [Acts 10:5-6]

Interesting indeed are these minute directions of the angel. He knew Simon, knew his surname, knew where he was, the name of the city in which he was stopping, the man at whose house he was lodging, his name, and the street in which he lived. Such intimate knowledge shows that angelic beings know all about man. They know his lying down and his rising up, his faithfulness or negligence, his zeal and earnestness, his half warmness and barrenness of soul; they are messengers of Him who knows even man's very thoughts afar off.

Of this knowledge David wrote in reverent wonder and awe: "O Lord, Thou has searched me, and known me. Thou knows my down sitting and mine uprising, Thou understands my thought afar off. Thou compasses my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, Thou knows it altogether. Thou has beset me behind and before, and laid Your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it. Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? Or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hides not from Thee; but the night shines as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to Thee." [Psalm 139:1-12]

Job, also, as he contemplated the loving watch-care of God for His children, was led to ask: "What is man, that Thou should magnify him? And that Thou should set Your heart upon him? And that Thou should visit him every morning, and try him every moment?" [Job 7:17-18]

Whose lot can compare with that of the Christian - the Lord of glory ever watching his ways, the Holy Spirit constantly at his side, and heavenly angels encamping round about him to keep him from danger and harm, and to direct his steps in the ways of righteousness and peace!

When the angel messenger had departed, Cornelius called two of the servants of his household, with a devout soldier, one of his bodyguard, and related to them all that had taken place. "And when he had declared all these things unto them, he sent them to Joppa." [Acts 10:8]

But it was not enough that messengers should come to Joppa and make inquiry of Peter: the heart of the disciple must be prepared to receive the messengers, and to go with them. As the men came near Joppa, "Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour: and he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance, and saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth: wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean. And the voice spoke unto him again the second time, What God has cleansed, that call not thou common. This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven." [Acts 10:9-16]

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As Peter meditated on the vision, wondering in his heart what it might mean, the men from the centurion's household stood at the gate, and asked for him. Desirous to know of their mission, and still reflecting on the strange vision, Peter delayed; but "the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee. Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them."

After hearing their message, Peter called the men in, and lodged them, going with them the next day to Caesarea. "And certain brethren from Joppa accompanied him." It was a very unusual thing, and against all Jewish law and custom, for Peter to visit the house of the centurion : so notwithstanding the vision and the direct command of the Spirit of God, Peter thought best to take with him these men, who could give a true testimony of his words and acts in the home of Cornelius.

With intense interest Cornelius awaited the arrival of the men of whom the angel had spoken. Not only had he made all preparations to receive Peter, but he had called together his kinsfolk and near friends, that they with him might receive the word of life. "And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshiped him. But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man." [Acts 10: 19-26].

When Peter saw the company gathered to receive him, he referred briefly to Jewish law, and to the vision by which the Lord had shown him that he should call no man common or unclean. And when he had heard the centurion's recital of the visit of the angel, and his command to send to Joppa and call the disciple from that place, Peter said: "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that fears Him, and works righteousness, is accepted with Him."

Earnestly then the disciple preached Christ to that little company of Gentile seekers after righteousness; and when he had led his hearers to that grand central truth of the gospel, "Whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins," a solemn interruption occurred in his discourse. For "while Peter yet spoke these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word." The believing Jews who had come with Peter were amazed to see this great blessing bestowed on those whom they had regarded as so far below themselves in spiritual privilege. In surprise, and almost disbelieving the evidence of their senses, they asked the disciple the meaning of this strange thing. "Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord." [Acts 10:34-48]

Happy indeed the little company of the centurion's household who thus received the gospel, and enrolled themselves among the believers in Jesus. That step was not one that could be taken in secret by Roman officers in that day. Courage of a high order was necessary to withstand the ridicule and sneers and scoffing of those who hitherto had shown only the deepest respect in the presence of the centurion. But fidelity marked the lives of these Gentile believers; and because of the plain leading of God in causing the gospel to be given to Cornelius and his family, the believing Jews were led to make the acknowledgment, "Then has God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life," [Acts 11:18] thus opening the way for the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles "to the uttermost part of the earth."

The case of Cornelius, like that of the eunuch, shows that the Lord knows every honest heart, every seeker after light and truth. The legions of angels about His throne are ever ready to fly to those on earth who long for righteousness, to open the way for them to receive the help they need, and to lead the honest-hearted into the service of the Lord. Surely when the great God will do so much to win men, to set their feet in a plain path, and to inspire them with courage and faith and hope, those who profess to serve Him, and to be His children, should rest on His promises in calmness and hope, believing that He will supply all their need; for "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" [Romans 8:32]

HEROD AND THE ANGEL

The onward progress of the Christian church was marked by many perplexities within the organization, and by bitter persecution without. Under Claudius, emperor of Rome, Herod Agrippa held the office of king of Judea and tetrarch of Galilee. It was the aim of this subordinate prince to gain the approval of the emperor and at the same time win the favor of the people under his control. In order to establish himself in the good

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graces of the Jews, he professed himself a proselyte of their faith, and became very zealous in persecuting the believers in Jesus. James the brother of John he caused to be killed with the sword; and when he saw the pleasure that this wicked act gave to the people, he proceeded against Peter also, intending to put him to death in a more public way.

But the Lord interposed in Peter's behalf, and by His angel wondrously delivered him from the prison where he was securely chained and closely guarded by armed soldiers. Not all the power of the wicked king could avail against the quiet might and majesty of that holy being. Chagrined and alarmed, Herod caused the keepers of the prison to be put to death, and shortly afterward went down to Caesarea, and there abode.

The people of Tyre and Sidon were near neighbors of the Jews, and were bound to them by many common interests. Engaged in art and commerce, they were to a large degree dependent upon the countries of Galilee and Judea for food. It was natural, therefore, that the Tyrians and the Sidonians should desire peace, and a continuance of friendly relations; but Herod was hostile toward them. Making friends with Blastus, the king's chamberlain, the people of these northern cities used every means at their command to gain the favor of the ruler. At last, undoubtedly by costly gifts, he was won over, and a day was appointed when he would meet their embassy, and arrange conditions of peace.

No less than at the present day, the people of the East loved pomp and splendid display. With Herod this was an important occasion; and he set to work to make it one that should impress and please the people, and redound to his own glory and honor. Arraying himself in a shimmering robe "made wholly of silver, and of a contexture most truly wonderful," his breast covered with jeweled decorations, and on his head a golden crown studded with precious gems, he awaited the moment when he should show himself to the people and deliver his carefully prepared address before them.

It was early in the morning when, the signal being given, the king entered the audience chamber, and ascended the golden throne, which was raised above the heads of the people, and so placed that at that hour the full sunlight fell upon it. As the bright rays of the sun struck the silver robe and flashing jewels of the king, the dazzling brightness of his glittering attire for a moment blinded the eyes of the beholders. In profound silence they awaited his words. Nor were they disappointed in their expectation of listening to an oration worthy of such a brilliant setting. With a clear voice the king addressed the great company, swaying them to his will as easily as the summer wind sways the growing grain. In rapture and amazement they hung upon his words, being moved no more by the brilliancy of his apparel than by the clearness of his logic and the fluency and eloquence of his discourse. When he ceased, there fell for a moment an even deeper hush upon the assembly, broken presently by a shout of praise and adoration. "It is the voice of a god," the people cried, "and not of a man." [Acts 12:22]

The wicked king, whose whole plan of life was to exalt himself, received this adulation with outward modesty, but with inward pleasure and satisfaction. The echoing of the voices shouting his praises was to Herod as sweet music. This was the hour of his greatest triumph, a triumph, alas, how vain and fleeting! Scarcely had the acclaim of the people glorifying this sinful mortal man died upon the air, scarcely had the swift visions of further honors and still higher exaltation flashed before his mind, when a swift and terrible judgment befell the king. An angel from another court, all unseen and not honored, entered that audience chamber with a message for this proud, self-seeking earthly monarch, from the King of kings and Lord of lords. "And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost." [Acts 12:23]

Dreadful was the punishment meted out to this man, who had taken to himself adoration and praise that belong to God alone. In mortal agony he whom the people had but now called a god, tears his splendid garments from him.

In his countenance, so lately glowing with health, and alight with self-satisfaction, is seen the deepening pallor of death. His voice, a moment before so clear and strong and musical, now trembles and breaks, as, in excruciating physical suffering, he bids his attendants carry him from the throne he had so recently ascended in splendor and dignity. A few brief days, racked with tormenting pain, and the king was dead. Stricken in the hour of his greatest apparent success, and with the praises of the delighted multitude

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sounding in his ears, his dreadful end is a reminder to all who love earthly riches and honors and adulation, that “the Most High rules in the kingdom of men,” [Daniel 4:32] and that “those that walk in pride He is able to abase.” [Daniel 4:37]

Wonderful indeed is the power of angels. Not always as ministers of mercy do they visit this dark world, but sometimes to execute the just judgments of Jehovah. All through the ages, they have acted as His agents, His loyal ambassadors, faithfully doing His will. Often have they been sent from the heavenly courts to minister to the believing children of God. They have brought hope to the dying, provided food for the hungry, delivered the trusting saints from dangers that threatened to destroy them, comforted the aged and forsaken, and dried the tears of the broken in heart, causing them to look with the eye of faith unto the better country prepared for those who love God. But on other occasions, they have come as ministers of the wrath of Jehovah, smiting the lofty and proud and those whose hearts were fully set to do evil, that His name might be revered and honored in the earth.

PAUL AND THE ANGEL

Persecution, loss of home and worldly possessions, banishment, imprisonment, torture, even death itself, could not quench the holy flame kindled in the hearts of the disciples on the day of Pentecost. The name of Jesus was carried to the ends of the known world by His loyal followers; and His teachings, which the leaders of the Jews, in their bitter frenzy and hatred, had sought to silence, were honored and cherished by thousands as the dearest hope of their hearts. Saul the persecutor had become Paul the apostle; he who had stood by consenting to the death of the godly Stephen, had since borne in his own body many things for his faith in Jesus. “Five times,” he writes to the believers at Corinth, “received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeying often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watching often, in hunger and thirst, in fasting often, in cold and nakedness.” [2 Corinthians 11:24-27]

All these things had the apostle gladly suffered for his Lord, rejoicing, with the disciples who had stood by Christ’s side during His earthly ministry, that he was “counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.” [Acts 5:42] In persecution and affliction he remembered the words of the Lord Jesus: “He is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: for I will show him how great things he must suffer for My name’s sake.” [Acts 9:15-16] Now in his old age and feebleness he was to drain the last dregs of the cup that made him indeed a partaker of the sufferings of his Master. In Rome he was to be tried for his life, and be offered for his faith. But in all this he rejoiced, longing to speak in behalf of Jesus, and proclaim His gospel before the emperor.

Even the journey itself, from Caesarea to Italy, was not accomplished without hardship in those days, especially by those who were taken thither as prisoners. The ship on which Paul was sent from Caesarea was driven out of its course by unfavorable winds; and at Myra, a city of Lycia, the centurion in charge of the prisoners transferred them to a larger vessel sailing from Alexandria to Italy. Still more serious disaster followed this boat, however. A fearful wind swept over the Mediterranean, catching the ship, and driving it out of its course toward the small island of Clauda. While passing this island, and by it protected in some degree from the storm, the sailors under girded the ship, drew up the small boat, closely reefed the sails, and by every means at their command endeavored to prepare the vessel to endure the fearful shock of wind and wave. But all too soon the slight shelter afforded by the little island was passed, and again the ship was exposed to the full fury of the tempest.

As they saw their boat tossed like a leaf on that wild and angry sea, all on board were greatly alarmed. “The next day,” says Luke, “they lightened the ship; and the third day we cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship. And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away. But after long abstinence Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man’s life among you, but of the ship.”

This was a strange message indeed to be given to that distressed company by one who was among them in

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chains. But Paul spoke not of his own wisdom. With solemnity and reverence he told those ungodly and terrified men his authority for the assurance he had just given them. "For there stood by me this night," said the apostle, "the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, saying, Fear not, Paul ; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God has given thee all them that sail with thee. Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me. Howbeit we must be cast upon a certain island." [Acts 27:18-26]

That this company of Roman soldiers and wicked seamen listened to Paul and respected his message is in itself a tribute to the sincerity and purity of the apostle's life among them. They had seen him in reverent study of the Jewish Scriptures; they had observed him in conversation with Luke and Aristarchus; they had heard his earnest prayers to the God of heaven, talking to Him with a childlike yet compelling faith in His love and goodness. Now, when Paul stands before them, and gives his strange message, conviction attends his words, and hope is kindled in their hearts.

Not immediately was the dreadful suspense ended. For many hours the vessel continued to be tossed by the waves and driven to and fro by the wind. But on the fourteenth day, as morning dawned, it was seen that the ship was nearing the outlet of a little creek. "And when they had taken up the anchors, they committed themselves unto the sea, and loosed the rudder bands, and hoisted up the mainsail to the wind, and made toward shore. And falling into a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground; and the fore part stuck fast, and remained unmovable, but the hinder part was broken with the violence of the waves. And the soldiers' counsel was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim out, and escape. But the centurion, willing to save Paul, kept them from their purpose; and commanded that they which could swim should cast themselves first into the sea, and get to land : and the rest, some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship. And so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land." [Acts 27:40-44] The promise of the angel who had stood by Paul's side in the night watches was literally fulfilled. Not one of the two hundred seventy-six persons on board was missing when they were counted on shore - all saved, by a mighty angel, from the power of the sea and the tempest, because of the presence of the servant of God, who, though a prisoner, was His ambassador and loyal witness.

Wonderful indeed this angel deliverance! Yet no more wonderful than angel guardianship and care to-day. East and west, in the Old World and the New, in cold northern lands and under tropic skies, faithful men and women bear aloft the standard of that same Jesus whom Paul proclaimed. Again and again, times without number, are their lives spared when to human sight it would seem that they must perish. The history of missions is a record of angel ministry and deliverance from the days of Paul to the present hour. As long as God has a work to be done on the earth, as long as He has a message to be given to mankind, so long will His mighty angels encamp round about those who fear Him, and deliver them. In view of this glorious truth, we may well say, with Paul himself: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." [Romans 8:35-39]

JOHN AND THE ANGEL

John the Beloved outlived all the other disciples. Among the earliest of those called to be with Jesus during His earthly ministry, and to carry on His work after His crucifixion, John was the last of that little group to close his eyes in death. Nearly seventy years after he had seen the bright cloud receive his Lord out of his sight on Olivet, he lived to proclaim the teachings of Jesus, and to instruct and comfort those who believed on His name.

In the long years of his active life, John had seen the Christian church organized, and many companies of believers raised up in distant lands. He had seen Jerusalem besieged and destroyed, and the beautiful temple that had been regarded with such admiration and reverence by the disciples, razed to the ground, in literal fulfillment of the words of Jesus, "There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." [Matthew 24:2] His brother James had been beheaded by the time-serving Herod. Paul, the earnest evangelist to the Gentiles, had likewise been beheaded in Rome by the order of Nero. Peter, one of

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John's closest associates and friends, had been imprisoned, tortured, and finally crucified, by the will of the same cruel monarch. By imperial decree, the aged apostle had himself been called to Rome to answer for his faith, and before the emperor Domitian had borne a clear and unflinching testimony for his Lord. In fury the emperor commanded that the apostle be cast into a caldron of boiling oil; and, when his life was miraculously preserved, afterward ordered that he be banished to Patmos, a small, rocky islet in the Aegean Sea.

In this dreary retreat, shut forever away from the society of those who believed in Jesus, surrounded by criminals and wicked men, the apostle spent his closing days. But they were days of precious experience to the aged disciple. Angels from heaven were by his side as he meditated on the wonderful years that lay behind him, and contemplated with loving anticipation the glad day when he should again behold his beloved Master. Thus banishment, designed by the base emperor to silence the voice of John and restrict his influence, was the beginning of an experience rich in blessing to the veteran disciple, and of untold value to the church of Christ. Not prison walls, nor guarded dungeons, nor exile in lonely lands, can shut away the messengers of heaven, or deprive the trusting soul of their ministry. Banished "for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ," [Revelation 1:9] by an earthly ruler, John was greatly honored by the great Ruler of the universe. "The Revelation of Jesus Christ," [Revelation 1:1] that farewell message of warning, of comfort, of entreaty, and of promise, was committed to John by his Lord, to write for the benefit of succeeding ages. "And He sent and signified it by His angel unto His servant John." [Revelation 1:1] A mighty angel was sent to reveal this message to the disciple, to clear his inward vision, to steady his hand, and to strengthen his arm for the accomplishment of this great work. The book of Revelation is not a hidden book; it is the Revelation of Jesus Christ, and belongs to the church of God both to read and to understand.

Wonderful days were these for the apostle. Before his mind the angel revealed the progress of the gospel of Jesus during long ages to come. By symbols and figures, the church was portrayed as passing through bloody seas of persecution. Bonds, imprisonment, torture, and death were foretold as the portion of the believers. Wars, strife, and contention for the supremacy would be the part of the world. But in the end, the truth of God would triumph, and His people would be redeemed.

Rarely have visions of such glory been given to mortal man as were shown by the angel to the beloved disciple on that rocky, lonely isle. He saw the heavens opened, and beheld again his Lord -not buffeted by the jeering mob, mocked, spit upon, scourged, crowned with thorns, and fainting beneath the cruel cross, but - O wonder and glory! His eyes as a flame of fire, and on His head many crowns, and "on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords." [Revelation 19:16] He saw Satan and his evil hosts bound and cast into the bottomless pit. Before his vision passed the scenes of the judgment, and he "saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works." [Revelation 20:12] He saw the righteous dead raised to life and immortality, and the devil and his angels destroyed, sin and sinners and every evil thing consumed in the fire of the Lord's anger. He saw the earth renewed and purified, and given to the saints. He saw the glorious holy city descending from God out of heaven, to become the metropolis of the new earth. He saw the mansions prepared by the Father and the Son for the meek, the lowly, the pure in heart. He saw the great company of the redeemed, "which no man could number, of all nations, and kingdoms, and people, and tongues," standing "before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands." [Revelation 7:9] To his ears, so long accustomed to the wrangling, jarring discords of earth, to the moans of pain and the voice of bitter weeping, sounded the sweet strains of heavenly harpers harping with their harps, and above that harmonious orchestra the triumphant chorus, the song of Moses and the Lamb :

"Great and marvelous are Thy works, O Lord God, the Almighty;
Righteous and true are Thy ways, Thou King of the ages."
[Revelation 15:3]

Faithfully, till the end of his long life, did John bear witness for his Lord. No inspired pen has recorded for us his closing hours; but we cannot doubt that holy angels were ever by his side, and that the Comforter sent by Jesus Himself to minister to His loyal children, was constantly with the beloved disciple, bringing

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to his mind in great clearness and beauty all the words of his divine Master. How blessed, as the shadows close in around the pilgrims of earth, and their feet enter that dark valley where human love cannot follow or human comfort sustain, to have the consciousness of such heavenly companionship! Who would not say, as he studies the last days of the exile on Patmos, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!" [Numbers 23:10]

ANGELS AND THE SECOND ADVENT

"And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four Winds, from one end of heaven to the other." Matthew 24:31

Two lines of prophecy concerning the Son of God in His relation to mankind are clearly set forth in the Scriptures. The first has reference to His first advent. In these prophecies, the time when the Messiah would appear, the manner of His coming, and certain events that would take place at that time, are predicted. We are told of His lowly life, His ministry for others, and His miraculous power; of His patience under suffering, His firmness under temptation, and His great love for the children of men; of His betrayal and cruel death; of His resurrection, ascension, and exaltation "far above all principality and power."

The second group of prophecies, dealing with the second coming of Christ to this earth, not in weakness and poverty, unrecognized and unattended, but in His own glory, and the glory of His Father, and accompanied by all the holy angels, is no less explicit. At His first advent, by His sinless life and triumphant death, He paid the price for sin, and opened a door of hope through which mankind might pass to possess that glorious estate lost by the fall. At His second coming, He will call to life the countless hosts of those who have believed on His name; and upon them, together with the faithful who are alive to witness His return, He will bestow the priceless inheritance He has purchased for them by His blood-eternal life.

The Scriptures abound with information concerning this glorious event, and the wonderful changes to take place at the Master's returning. From the prophecy of devout Enoch, several hundred years before the Flood, "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment upon all," [Jude 1:14-15] to its inspired echo from the lonely seer in exile on Patmos, "Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him," [Revelation 1:7] the Bible writers have dwelt at length upon the theme of the second advent, on the sublimity of the event; on the resurrection from the dead, so closely associated with it; on the punishment of evildoers; and on the rewards then to be bestowed upon the children of God.

In all ages, the faithful have looked forward to this day as the time when they would receive the gift of eternal life in Christ Jesus, and enter into their inheritance. In the hour of trial and affliction, when material possessions took wings, when friends failed, and death struck down the light and comfort of the heart, the hope of that hour has brought confidence and peace. Most blessed hope! It has helped the tempted and tried soul to wait patiently, suffer uncomplainingly, and endure as already seeing Him who is to return again and take to Himself every loyal heart. It has comforted the afflicted, cheered the desponding, and enabled the faithful soldiers of the cross, bearing to far lands the good news of the gospel, to withstand weariness and pain, hunger and thirst, cold and heat, and to face bravely, as did Paul, perils and persecutions of every sort. Well may we in this age, looking forward to that coming, now at the very door, join in the exultant strains:

"How sweet are the tidings that greet the pilgrim's ear,
As he wanders in exile from home!
Soon, soon will the Savior in glory appear,
And soon will the kingdom come.

He's coming, coming, coming soon,
I know, Coming back to this earth again;
And the weary pilgrims will to glory go,
When the Savior comes to reign."

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Enoch, dwelling among a perverse people, so near to Eden, yet so lost to its holy influences, prophesied of the second coming of Christ to execute judgment upon the ungodly: "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him." [Jude 1:14-15]

From the depth of his affliction, Job, looking forward to that hour, exclaimed in triumphant faith: "I know that my Redeemer lives, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another." [Job 19:25-27]

The psalmist also foretold Christ's second coming: "Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God has shined. Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before Him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about Him. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that He may judge His people. Gather My saints together unto Me; those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice." [Psalm 50:2-5] Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; for He cometh, for He cometh to judge the earth: He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with His truth." [Psalm 96:11-13]

Isaiah gives this testimony: "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee; hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be over past. For, behold, the Lord cometh out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain." [Isaiah 26:20-21] But some will be looking for their Lord in that day, and of these the prophet says: "And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation." [Isaiah 25:9]

Of the beauty and majesty of the Coming One, Habakkuk testifies in glowing words: "God came from Teman, and the Holy One from Mount Paran. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of His praise. And His brightness was as the light. The mountains saw Thee, and they trembled. The deep uttered his voice, and lifted up his hands on high. The sun and moon stood still in their habitation: at the light of Your arrows they went, and at the shining of Thy glittering spear." [Habakkuk 3:3-11]

In vision, a view of the events of that day was shown to the prophet Daniel, who declares: "At that time shall Michael stand up, the great Prince which stands for the children of thy people: ... and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book." [Daniel 12:1]

During His earthly life, the Lord Jesus gave abundant testimony to the fact that He will come again. The events to precede His coming, the manner of His return, and His purpose in returning, are all clearly set forth in His own words. On one occasion the disciples asked the Savior concerning His second coming. They said to Him, "Tell us, . . . what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world?" [Matthew 24:3] Very clearly Jesus answered them, in language that the most ignorant could understand, outlining the events that would precede that day, and the signs that would show that His coming was near. "This gospel of the kingdom," He said, "shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." [Matthew 24:14]

Concerning the manner of His return, the Savior said: "And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." [Matthew 24:30] "For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shines even unto the west; so shall also the coming- of the Son of man be." [Matthew 24:27] And again: "For whosoever shall be ashamed of Me and of My words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when He shall come in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels." [Luke 9:26]

In thousands of Bibles, owned by men and women in every land and in every condition, there is one leaf that is thinner, frailer, more yellowed by use, more dimmed with tears, than any other. We know it well. Every other promise of the Holy Book may fade from the mind; but so long as memory endures, those blessed words remain to cheer and comfort the pilgrims of earth. As we read them, we see the Savior in that

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little upper room, about Him His chosen disciples. To us He speaks, as to them, in a voice of sweetest music: "Let not your heart be troubled." The disciples were troubled and perplexed. They could not understand that their Master must die. They had hoped to see His kingdom established on the earth, sin and pain banished, Jerusalem exalted, and themselves sharing in the honors that would be given to their leader. Now in the solemn stillness of that tipper room, listening to the Savior's words so plainly telling them of His death, they were troubled. Reading their thoughts, and wishing to comfort them, He said: "Let not your heart be troubled: you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions. . . . I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there you may be also." [John 14:1-3] Surely He will come again. His covenant made in that solemn hour will be ratified.

Not only was the second coming of our Lord foretold by holy men of old, and confirmed by the words of the Savior Himself, but angels from heaven also added their testimony to the certainty of this event. The disciples had witnessed the supreme tragedy of the universe. Their Master and Friend, the Lord of life and glory, was crucified by wicked men. He was laid in the tomb. For a brief space, the powers of evil seemed victorious. But the grave could not hold captive the Son of God. From that sealed and guarded sepulcher He came forth triumphant over sin and death. He appeared again to His disciples. They walked with Him, welcomed Him in their assembly, listened to His words of counsel by the seaside, and one never-to-be-forgotten day, went with Him for the last time up the slopes of Olivet. The old questions still troubled their hearts. The kingdom - would He at this time restore it to Israel? Would He not now take the throne of David, and rule with justice and equity? Very gently He rebuked their eager haste. Solemnly He gave them the last words of instruction they would hear from His lips on earth. "And when He had spoken these things, while they beheld, He was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight." [Acts 1:9-11]

Their Master had gone. He on whom their hopes were built had departed from them. The first part of His promise, "I go to prepare a place for you," was fulfilled before their eyes. Dazed and uncomprehending, they continued to gaze into the heavens that had hidden Him from their sight. But Jesus did not leave His loved ones without comfort in this hour of amazing bereavement. As they still gazed steadfastly heavenward, "behold, two men stood by them in white apparel." Two angels from that heavenly company which made a cloud of glory about their ascending Lord, were sent quickly to earth with a message to the disciples, an assurance for them and for us that He will come again. "You men of Galilee," said the angels, "why stand you gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen Him go into heaven." [Acts 1:9-11] Never could language be framed clearer and more explicit than this. Even a child can give the meaning of every word. To earth once more He is to come, "this same Jesus"- but this time clothed in celestial glory, and attended by a "cloud of witnesses" [Hebrews 12:1] from the courts above.

The great apostle to the Gentiles also cherished the hope of Christ's second coming. In the closing days of his ministry, he wrote to his followers of this great event, assuring them that "unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation." [Hebrews 9:28] By this testimony, Paul expressed his confidence in the words of the Master, and in the promise of the angels at His ascension. Blessed assurance!

The apostle James thus exhorts the believers: "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waits for the precious fruit of the earth, and has long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be you also patient; establish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draws nigh." [James 5:7-8] Here again the same cheering doctrine is taught. It is not a hope to be ridiculed, nor one of which man need be ashamed. It was given to be a comfort to the believers, to fortify them against temptation, to strengthen them in trial, to encourage them in sacrifice and service, and to establish their hearts in the things of God.

Peter, who also was with the Lord during His earthly ministry, and again and again heard Him speak of His, second coming, uses this graphic language: "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and

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hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?" [2 Peter 3:10-12] "The day of the Lord" has always been associated in the Bible with the second coming of Christ; and in the apostle's vivid description, the events attending that day - the doom of this world, and its destruction by fire - are clearly set forth. Surely one must close his eyes to the word of God, and shut out of his heart all these precious promises, when he repudiates the doctrine of the second advent.

When about to record the wonderful visions given him concerning the future of the people of God and the triumph of the church militant, the beloved John cried out: "Behold, He cometh with clouds ; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all kingdoms of the earth shall wail because of Him. Even so, amen." [Revelation 1:7] Again he says: "And I beheld when He had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; and the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casts her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every freeman, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" [Revelation 6:12-17]

Certainly the beloved apostle believed in the second advent. Looking forward to that day, with what longing to see again his Teacher and Friend, his Master and Redeemer, John wrote down the closing testimony of the great Revelation, the last promise of the Lord Jesus to the children of men, "Surely I come quickly." In loving anticipation, the heart of the aged disciple responded with the devout prayer, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus," [Revelation 22:20] a petition in which all who love His appearing must fervently join.

From all these scriptures, only one conclusion can be drawn, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Redeemer of mankind, will come again. He will come to take His people to Himself, to take them from this sin-cursed earth, this land of rebellion and sorrow and trouble and death, to the place He has prepared for those who believe on His name. All over the earth, and in the depths of the sea, are sleeping the saints of God. He will come to call them to awake to new life, and to enter upon their inheritance. "I go to prepare a place for you," He said. "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself." [John 14:1-3]

He will come to reward His people. "The Son of man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels," He declared; "and then He shall reward every man according to his works." [Matthew 16:27]

Paul, in the closing hours of his life, as he wrote his farewell letter to Timothy, declared his confidence in the Savior's coming, and the certainty of the reward to be received at that day. In his heart was no doubt of his acceptance. Since the day when he had heard, outside Damascus gate, the voice from heaven, he had never wavered in faith, never doubted the power of God to save his soul; but that he did not expect to enter upon his inheritance immediately at death is clear from his own words: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing." [2 Timothy 4:7-8] From that day to the present hour this triumphant testimony, in which the apostle sums up his experience and gives expression to his hope, has stood as a witness to all peoples of the power of God to give victory to His servants, and of Paul's exultant joy and confidence in the day of reward.

The doctrine of the resurrection is closely associated with that great and solemn day of reward and of punishment, and is clearly taught in many scriptures. Long ago Isaiah sang in notes of triumphant joy: "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, you that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead." [Isaiah 26:19]

Ezekiel, rapt in holy vision, received this message for the house of Israel: "Thus said the Lord God; Behold, O My people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the

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land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up out of your graves.” [Ezekiel 37:12-13]

Jesus spoke plainly of the resurrection day. “Marvel not at this,” He said; “for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.” [John 5:28-30]

Again, speaking to those who should show kindness to the poor, He said: “Thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.” [Luke 14:14]

Paul looked upon the hope of the resurrection as one of great comfort. Writing to the church at Thessalonica, he said: “But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that you sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.” [1 Thessalonians 4:13-18]

As often as we see the sad procession of death, how cheering the thought of the resurrection morning! And if it is some loved one borne from our arms to the last silent resting place, how personal does the thought of that day become to us! It is our hope. We are comforted by it when every other comfort, every other refuge, every other hope, fails. These mortal bodies, weak, frail, disfigured by sin and suffering, raised to life again-but a life glorious, immortal! Sown in corruption, raised in incorruption; sown in dishonor, raised in glory; sown in weakness, raised in power!

But what part do the angels have in these great events, the second coming of Christ, the resurrection, the reward that is to be given to the saints, the punishment to be meted out to the ungodly?

Jesus repeatedly assures us that when this glorious event takes place.-when He comes the second time without sin unto salvation, the angels will come with Him. At His first advent, He came with no visible retinue - a babe, helpless, born in a manger, and even in infancy conspiracy made against His life. But when He comes again, He will come in power and surpassing glory. “Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of Me. . . . of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when He cometh in the glory of His Father with the holy angels,” [Mark 8:38] said Jesus. And again: “Of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when He shall come in His own glory, and in His Father’s, and of the holy angels.” [Luke 9:26] In yet another place we read: “When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory.” [Matthew 25:31]

Plainly, then, when Jesus returns to this earth, He will be accompanied by the angelic hosts ”all the holy angels” -those “ministers of His, that do His pleasure.” In the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew is given a glimpse of one work to be done by the angels at this time: “And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” [Matthew 24:30-31] From this we see that when Christ comes, He will send His angels in every direction, wherever the saints of God lie sleeping, to gather out His faithful ones, His elect, chosen, precious, ransomed from among men. Not one grave, however lonely, will be neglected in that hour; not one burial place overlooked. Not one who made God his trust, though he lie in the depths of the sea, will be forgotten. Guardian angels, who have stood by the side of the weakest of His saints, who have watched over them, ministered to them, guarded them till the ceasing of their feeble mortal breath, these holy beings know well the resting places of the people of God; and in that day they will gather them together to meet their Lord in the air.

An additional thought on the work of the angels is given by the Savior in His interpretation of the parable

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of the tares: "He that sows the good seed is the Son of man; the field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; the enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." [Matthew 13:37-42]

All through the ages, the holy angels have acted an important part in the salvation of man. They have been the messengers of God, going between heaven and earth, bearing to the throne of Jehovah the prayers of His people, and bringing from that throne His blessing, help, and strength to His tempted, tried, and trusting children. These very angels have watched by the side of the people of God during their lifetime. Often have they defended them from the attacks of the enemy of their souls, beating- back the powers of darkness, and delivering from dangers seen and unseen. They have encamped round about those who have made the Lord their trust. They have ever been near them. They have continually ministered to them, strengthened them in the hour of temptation, comforted them in sorrow, watched beside them in the night of pain and suffering. They have stood as silent witnesses in the death chamber, suffering with those who suffer, weeping with those who weep, sorrowing with those whose hearts are bowed and broken. And when those who have believed on the name of Jesus. on His power and willingness to save from sin, have been borne from our presence, and laid in the dust of the earth to await their Lord's return, the angels have kept the record, and marked their resting places. So when the Son of God comes to earth the second time, to bring His people life and immortality, these holy beings come with Him, not as silent witnesses of His glory and might and majesty, not as mere interested spectators of the marvel of the resurrection from the dead, but as His active agents in that stupendous event. At the great sound of the trump of God, the angels fly to the graves of His people, over whom they have watched, and gather them together to meet their Lord and Savior, their Redeemer and King.

This is a joyful and happy work, but it is not the only part to be acted by the angels in that solemn day. As the reapers in the harvest fields of Palestine gathered out the tares from the wheat, and bound them in bundles to be burned, so in that day the angel-reapers will "gather together out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity," for the great day of destruction and burning. Who can know better than the angels the wickedness of men's hearts, how they have rejected mercy, despised righteousness, and loved the ways of sin and evil doing? These holy messengers have recorded the life history of every man that has been born into the world. During all the years of earthly existence, day by day, hour by hour, moment by moment, they have watched their course. They have witnessed the fighting and struggling wayward men have put forth against righteousness. And now, at the bidding of Jehovah, they gather the wicked souls, who have rejected the mercy of God during the hours of probation, to be destroyed in the lake of fire, in which He will wipe from this earth the curse of sin, and obliterate its very memory.

ANGELS AND THE REDEEMED IN GLORY

"Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection." Luke 20:36.

WE have traced the record of the angels, and the part they have acted in the history of mankind, from the first mention of them in the word of God to the end of its Inspired pages; but the beautiful story would not be complete without some consideration of the angels in their relation to the redeemed in glory.

In the human heart the world over, there is found a desire for life that shall endure beyond the brief span of mortal years. This desire is divinely implanted. God Himself has made "of one blood all nations of men," and has determined "the bounds of their habitation;" [Acts 17:26] that they might seek after Him and find Him. The great masses of the human race look forward to an existence beyond the grave. Even the heathen have various beliefs concerning their future condition, vague and erroneous though these may be. To the Christian, the hope of a future life is intimately bound up with his faith. It is an anchor to his soul, a buoy to his heart, a balm for his sorrows. It begets in him confidence and courage, and enables him to count it all

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joy when called upon to endure hardships, self-denials, and privations here, that he may enjoy the rich inheritance promised to the saints.

As Paul recounted the faith of the worthies of ancient days, he repeatedly called attention to the fact that they were to receive their inheritance in the world to come. They “had respect unto the recompense of the reward.” [Hebrews 11:26] They “looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” [Hebrews 11:10] They desired “a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He has prepared for them a city.” [Hebrews 11:16]

In the beginning, the earth was created perfect - not broken and rent and unsightly as we see it now, not marred by the curse and disfigured by the works of fallen man, but a glorious and holy home, designed to be the dwelling place of sinless beings. In its crystal streams flashed and glowed exquisite forms of life. On its broad surfaces were noble forests, fertile plains, and lakes whose unsullied depths reflected the loveliness around them. To all the fair creation there was no blight of sickness or disease. Life - life with no touch or fear of death - thrilled all nature. Innocence and beauty crowned the earth. It was the exquisite springtime of the world, with no scorching summer heat, no blasting autumn frosts, no killing winter cold, to mar the finished work of God. Wherever the eye of the Creator rested, He beheld perfection; and as He looked upon the work of His hands, He pronounced it “very good.”

The all-wise God has not left man in ignorance concerning His purpose in bringing the world into existence. Clothed with surpassing loveliness, with nothing in it to hurt or to destroy, it was given to the sinless pair, to be the home of themselves and their posterity. “The earth has He given to the children of men.” [Psalm 115:16] “For thus said the Lord that created the heavens; God Himself that formed the earth and made it; He has established it, He created it not in vain, He formed it to be inhabited.” [Isaiah 45:18] The command given to Adam and Eve in the garden, “Multiply, and replenish the earth,” [Genesis 1:28] clearly shows that the purpose of God in creating the earth was that it should be filled with sinless, holy beings. When man fell, and his dominion passed under the control of Satan, the arch deceiver hoped that this world would forever remain his own. Here he would establish his kingdom, and instill into the hearts of the sons of Adam the same bitter hatred of God and His government that actuated his own evil course.

But the plans of Jehovah are unalterable and unchangeable. Man may not work in harmony with them; wicked angels may seem for generations to delay their fulfillment; Satan may exert all his subtlety and cunning, all his malignity and power, to overthrow them; but ultimately the government of God will triumph. Though by his own act man had lost the righteousness that clothed him as in a vesture of light, and by no works of his own could he ever regain it; though by disobedience he had forfeited his inheritance of the earth, and by no effort of his own could he ever again possess himself of it, nevertheless a way of escape from his helpless and undone condition was provided. Not simply was man to be redeemed from Satan’s power, but all that he possessed before the fall - righteousness, dominion, glory - was to be bestowed upon him as a free and gracious gift - a gift made possible by the Son of God Himself, who would pay with His own life the penalty for sin, and restore to man the inheritance lost by disobedience.

No less a sacrifice than the life of the Son of God would pay the debt man incurred by sin; but that life would fully satisfy the claims of God’s broken law, and all that man lost by transgression would be restored in Christ Jesus. In the gift of His Son, God demonstrated the justice of His law and the equity of His government. By laying down His life, shedding His blood, Jesus paid the price of sin, and wrested from Satan all that he became possessed of through the fall of Adam. Through the name of Jesus, every sinner who will repent of his evil ways, and turn to God for forgiveness, may have imputed to him the righteousness of Christ. Through Jesus, God restores to man innocence, freedom from sin, and endless life; the bondage of sin is broken, slavery to Satan is ended, and man becomes indeed a new creature.

Again and again, after the fall, God promised this world to be the home of the saved. To Abraham He said: “I will establish My covenant between Me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.” [Genesis 17:7-8] Often was the substance of this promise renewed to the patriarch, and it was also repeated to Isaac and Jacob. In his letter to the church at Rome, Paul reminds the believers

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of the promise given to Abraham, “that he should be the heir of the world.” [Romans 4:13] Again, speaking of Abraham’s faith, the apostle says, “he looked for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” [Hebrews 11:10]

Though the earth was promised to Abraham, he received in his earthly lifetime no inheritance in it. “And He gave him none inheritance in it,” says the martyr Stephen, “no, not so much as to set his foot on: yet He promised that He would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him.” [Acts 7:5] In the plan of God, the lineal descendants of Abraham do not comprise the seed according to the promise, but the Abrahamic covenant includes the faithful of all ages and nations. Paul declares that “they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.” [Galatians 3:7] Again he says, “And if you be Christ’s, then are you Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” [Galatians 3:29] Thus those who believe in Jesus, and accept Him as their Savior, are recognized by Heaven as the children of Abraham, and therefore heirs of the promises made to him. “So then,” says the apostle, “they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.” [Galatians 3:9]

Christ Himself renewed the promise made to Abraham, when He said, “Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.” [Matthew 5:5] Not in its present state, not during the reign of sin, while Satan has dominion and power, but when the sons of men are called to give an account of their stewardship, will the Lord take possession of the earth, cleanse and purify it, and bestow it upon the heirs of faith.

In a vision given to the prophet Daniel, he saw the kingdoms that were to succeed one another in power in the earth. Babylon with its splendor, Medo-Persia with its swift conquests, Greece with its strength, Rome with its world-wide power, passed in review before his mind. He saw the cruel power of Rome broken, and its extensive domain divided into ten kingdoms. And when these new kingdoms shall have run their course and fulfilled their mission, “in the days of these kings,” says the prophet, “shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.” [Daniel 2:44]

Perplexed and troubled, grieved in spirit and sorrowful of heart, the prophet pondered on the meaning of the vision, and “came near unto one of them that stood by, and asked him the truth of all this.” [Daniel 7:16] All was explained by the angel: and it would seem as if, for the comfort of the prophet and those who should serve God in later ages, special emphasis was given to the thought that the saints would possess the earth. “But the saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever. And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him.” [Daniel 7:18-27.]

These promises are yet future. They will be fulfilled when the kingdoms of this world have come to an end, and the everlasting kingdom of our God is established among men. When the Son of man comes in His own glory, and the glory of the Father, and of all the holy angels, to redeem His people, He will take to Himself the dominion of the earth, that He may cleanse it by fire, purge it from every trace of sin, and bestow it, renewed and beautified, upon the faithful. What a spectacle - the earth, once so fair and pure and good; then bearing on its broken, marred surface, in its dens and caves, even below its troubled seas, the devastating marks of sin and the curse! The prophet Isaiah writes of the desolation that will overtake the earth in that day: “Behold, the Lord makes the earth empty, and makes it waste, and turns it upside down, and scatters abroad the inhabitants thereof. ... The land shall be utterly emptied, and utterly spoiled. The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved, the earth is moved exceedingly. The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage.” [Isaiah 24:1-20]

At the coming of Jesus, the righteous dead will be raised to immortal life, and together with the living saints, whose mortal bodies are changed and glorified, will be caught up to meet their Lord. The hosts of the wicked who have survived the plagues that have devastated the earth, with those who are raised to behold the Lord as He comes in the clouds of heaven to gather His elect, are consumed by the Spirit of His mouth, and destroyed by the brightness of His coming; and the redeemed are taken to the city of God, the heavenly Jerusalem, there to reign with Him a thousand years. During this period, the earth will lie desolate. “I beheld the earth,” says the prophet, “and, lo, it was without form, and void; and the heavens,

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and they had no light. I beheld the mountains, and, lo, they trembled, and all the hills moved lightly. I beheld, and, lo, there was no man, and all the birds of the heavens were fled. I beheld, and, lo, the fruitful place was a wilderness, and all the cities thereof were broken down at the presence of the Lord, and by His fierce anger. For thus has the Lord said, The whole land shall be desolate; yet will I not make a full end.“ [Jeremiah 4:23-27]

“Yet will I not make a full end.” God will not utterly destroy the earth. He will not blot it from His infinite universe. At the end of the thousand years, attended by all the angels of heaven and by the countless throng of the redeemed, Jesus again visits the earth, this time as the just and righteous judge, to execute sentence upon the ungodly. At His voice, the wicked dead - unnumbered millions who have disobeyed the commandments of the Lord, rejected His statutes, and despised the riches of His grace - are raised to life, to behold the reward of the righteous, and to receive their punishment. They see Him whom they have spurned and rejected. They see the loyal angelic hosts. They see the multitude of the redeemed, clothed in white robes, and palms in their hands. They see the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, resplendent with the glory of God. They see the meek and lowly, the humble and poor of earth, whom they have derided and oppressed and persecuted, inside those glorious walls, but they themselves shut out. Bitter indeed the sense of loss that overwhelms the hosts of evildoers in that dreadful hour! For the transitory, fleeting things of the world, they have sold their heavenly birthright. They have spent their lives in the gratification of pride and ambition, the indulgence of appetite, the pursuit of the unsatisfying pleasures of earth, the heaping up of its uncertain riches, the accumulation of its ephemeral treasures. Now with unutterable remorse they see what they have lost, a portion in “the inheritance of the saints,” a home in the holy city, life that shall never end, a right to the tree of life and to the pure pleasures of heaven.

During the thousand years when the earth has lain desolate, Satan, with his' evil legions, has been confined as in a prison house. When the wicked are raised to life, and -to some degree of strength, he determines to organize them, capture the holy city, and by force wrest from the Son of God the dominion which he sought by subtlety to seize on the mount of temptation. With this purpose, he goes out “to deceive the nations, the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.” [Revelation 20:8] In that great company are warriors who have been honored by earth, kings, rulers, mighty men, who covet the power and riches that the prince of evil assures them shall be theirs if they will follow his standard, and take possession of the city of God. These whom Satan has so long deceived on earth are easily reenlisted in his service now. Says the prophet, “And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city.” [Revelation 20:9] This last act of sin, the crowning presumption of Satan, is allowed in the wise purpose of Jehovah; but as the hosts of evil advance to take the city, fire comes down from God out of heaven, and devours them. That is the time spoken of by Peter, when “the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.” [2 Peter 3:10] That is the day “that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble.” [Malachi 4:1] That is the hour when Jehovah will rain upon the wicked “quick burning coals, fire and brimstone, and a burning tempest,” [Psalm 11:6] when He will purge the earth, and “burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.” [Matthew 3:12]

In that purifying flame, all the works of men, their proud cities, their lofty temples, their treasures of art and beauty, are wiped out; the rebellious and impenitent are consumed away into smoke; Satan and his hosts are destroyed; every trace of the ravages of sin, every mark of the curse of God, is obliterated; the very elements of which the earth is composed are “fused like the ores of a smelter's furnace, and the whole earth becomes a fluid, fiery, molten mass,” upon which the city of God “floats, as the ark of Noah floated upon the Flood.” Inside its glorious walls, the saints of God have a sure refuge. They have “washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” [Revelation 7:14] The second death has no power over them. The “burning tempest” of the wrath of Jehovah harms them not.

When the cleansing fires of that dreadful day have done their work, the elements composing the earth are again united at the command of God. To the redeemed, who have lived on the earth in its - marred and lost condition, who have seen it purged and purified, melted in the fervent heat of the fire of God, even dissolved in the intensity of that burning flame, the King of glory says, “Behold, I make all things new.” [Revelation 21:5] Before their eyes is reenacted the wonder of creation. They see the fires quenched, and the earth again take form and substance. They see it clothed with loveliness even surpassing that of its first

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estate. As they behold the mighty power of God, they lift again their voices in songs of praise and adoration, joining with the angelic throngs who shouted for joy at the first creation in extolling the power and majesty of their Lord.

Now are fulfilled the promises made to the children of faith through the ages of earth. Now is the purpose of God in creation consummated. To His redeemed, His beloved, bought from everlasting bondage by His own blood, the King of glory extends the invitation, "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." [Matthew 25:34] With joy beyond human comprehension, the Creator restores to the saved the dominion lost by sin, and bestows upon the pure in heart the "new earth, wherein dwells righteousness." [2 Peter 3:13]

The home of the saved has ever been a theme upon which the Christian has loved to dwell. Prophets have sung of its beauties. Revelations of its loveliness have been made to those whom God Himself has chosen to describe that heavenly home for the encouragement of His people. Yet with all that has been made known of that glorious country, Inspiration tells us that "eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love Him." [1 Corinthians 2:9]

We know that it will be a beautiful home. "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellence of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the, glory of the Lord, and the excellence of our God. In he wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes." [Isaiah 35:1-7]

It will be a pure land. "And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein." [Isaiah 35:8] "Thy people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land forever, the branch of My planting, the work of My hands, that I may be glorified." [Isaiah 60:21] "And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defiles, neither whatsoever works abomination, or makes a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life." [Revelation 21:27]

It will be a peaceful land. None will oppress and none destroy in all its wide domain. "Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shall call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise." [Isaiah 60:18] "And My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places." [Isaiah 32:18] "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." [Isaiah 11:6-9]

No wasting disease, no maimed, no blind, no dumb, none who moan on beds of pain, will be found there. "The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick." [Isaiah 33:24] "The eyes of the blind shall be opened, the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing." [Isaiah 35:5-6]

In that home, all tears are forever wiped away, all sorrow is banished, death never enters. "The voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying." [Isaiah 65:19] "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." [Revelation 21:4] "He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of His people shall He take away from off all the earth: for the Lord has spoken it." [Isaiah 25:8] "Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory." [1 Corinthians 15:54]

It will be a happy home. "Behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy." [Isaiah 65:18] "In Thy presence is fullness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore." [Psalm 16:11] "For you shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you

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into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.” [Isaiah 55:12] “And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.” [Isaiah 35:10]

Not only is the earth to be given to the saints of God, but the holy city, the heavenly Jerusalem, will be its metropolis. No pen can picture the glories of that city, whose builder and maker is God. “Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King.” [Psalm 42:8] In it is the throne of God, “high and lifted up.” The palaces and towers of which David sang are found within its walls. It is the city of “many mansions,” of homes prepared by Jesus Himself for those who love Him.

In rapturous vision John beheld the beloved city, “coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband,” [Revelation 21:2] and a powerful angel was commissioned to reveal to him its glories. “And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain,” writes the apostle, “and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal; and had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gate twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: on the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.” [Revelation 21:10-21]

The city rests on twelve foundations composed of precious stones, and in these stones appear the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. The angel who talked with John measured the city, and its dimensions are recorded. “And the city lies foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal. And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel.” [Revelation 21:16-17] By a study of this description, we understand that the city is laid out as a perfect square. The distance around its glorious wall, twelve thousand furlongs, is equal to fifteen hundred English miles, or three hundred seventy-five miles to each side. Reckoning the cubit at twenty-two inches, the height of the wall would be about two hundred sixty-four feet.

Many cities of earth have broad avenues, smoothly paved, with imposing buildings on either side. They have fine boulevards, with thousands of symmetrical trees, acres of velvet sward, and miles of well-kept walks. But how poor, how plain, how insignificant, are the works of man, when compared with the handiwork of God! The streets of the New Jerusalem are of pure gold, from whose burnished surface are reflected as in a mirror the stately palaces and towers on either side, the glowing colors of undying flowers and fruit, the living green of noble trees, and over all, the clear and shining depths of the sky above. As in the cities of earth, so in the metropolis of that better country, there is one street that is of greater honor than the others. In the midst of this street flows the “pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb;” and on either side of the river is seen “the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month : and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.” [Revelation 22:1-2]

“And I saw no temple therein,” says the prophet “for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honor of the nations into it.” [Revelation 21:22-26] “And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before Me, said the Lord.” [Isaiah 66:22-24]

This is the triumph of the plan of salvation. Satan and his hosts have been consumed; sin and sinners have been destroyed; the earth has been cleansed and purified, and restored to man. Abraham and all those who by faith have become heirs with him of the promises, have entered upon their inheritance. The meek possess the earth. Says the Father, “Mine elect shall inherit it, and My servants shall dwell there.” [Isaiah

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65:9]

Not only will the redeemed live in the earth, but the Father and the Son dwell with them; for we read: "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God." [Revelation 21:3] And again: "There shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and His servants shall serve Him: and they shall see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God gives them light: and they shall reign forever and ever." [Revelation 22:3-5]

Surely if God makes His abode with men, and removes His tabernacle to the glorious city, the holy angels who serve Him continually will come with Him. Will not those holy beings who have rejoiced in heaven over the salvation of the lost, who have lifted their voices in exultant praise when one straying soul has been brought back to the fold, enjoy the society of those over whom they have watched and to whom they have so often ministered? Will not the saints delight in the companionship of those who, during their earthly lifetime, ministered to and watched over them, carrying their prayers to the throne of God, and bringing from that throne the answers to their petitions? As if to give us the very assurance our hearts desire, we are plainly told that angels will dwell in the New Jerusalem. Says the apostle, "But you are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels." [Hebrews 12:22]

Those heavenly beings who have ever dwelt in the presence of God, who have studied His works, and desired to understand the plan of salvation, will be the teachers and instructors, the friends and associates, of the redeemed in glory. Who that has known the blessing of human friendship at its best estate, who that has suffered the pangs of desertion and ingratitude and unfaithfulness, of false friends, would not long for such loyal, such exalted society? Not for a brief lifetime will this holy fellowship endure, but through unending ages. Instructed by angel teachers, the redeemed will study the works of God, works that reflect the matchless beauty and perfection of His character. Guided by angel couriers, they will visit distant worlds, whose inhabitants have never sinned, and who will welcome them as precious jewels ransomed from the enemy by the life of their King. With the unnumbered multitude of angels, they will bow in reverent worship before the throne of Jehovah, and join in exultant praise and thanksgiving to Him who has washed them from their sins in His own blood.

The angels cover the span of human existence. They knew Adam and Eve in Eden; they sorrowed at man's fall; they rejoiced in the way provided for his restoration. Through all the ages, they have been closely associated with man, faithfully working with God in carrying out the plan of salvation. They have been vigilant in guarding the children of God, faithful in attendance, unceasing in service. Never on earth will all the story of angel ministry to the children of men be told; but when, through the sacrifice of the Lamb of God, man is made like the angels, and can commune with them face to face, it will be revealed. Then will it be seen that often what seemed mysterious on earth was but the exercise of the mighty power of these holy beings. Problems that remained unsolved on earth, rescues from danger, deliverances in the hour of need all these will be explained. Through unending ages, the redeemed of earth will enjoy the companionship of these exalted beings, learning of them the wonders of heaven and the marvelous glories of the universe of Jehovah, and gaining by this holy association a deeper comprehension of the power and majesty, the wisdom and love, of our God.

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