

“ANGELS WATCHING OVER ME”

GENESIS 32:1-2

Years ago we sang a lively little tune that has stuck in my mind. It said: “Angels watching over me, my Lord; Well its all day, all night, angels watching over me, my Lord.” This little tune is appropriate for any Christian who is on mission for God. The Christian is constantly being watched over by the angels of God.

Jacob became aware of this in a very timely manner. He was re-entering the Promised Land after his departure from Haran. He had left an angry father-in-law behind and was facing an angry brother. He could not forget the threat that Esau had pronounced the last time he saw his brother—it was a threat that he would kill him in revenge for the apparent injustices that Jacob had inflicted upon him. Jacob must have been rather anxious about his future. Yet he had a clear word from the God of Abraham and Isaac that he was to return to the land of his father. What would the future hold for him?

As he was traveling on the way to his meeting with Isaac in obedience to the word of the Lord, he was suddenly confronted with an army of angels. The meeting with this army of angels was so impressive that he named the place of meeting Mahanaim, which means two camps. There was the little company of Jacob's family and there was the heavenly company of the angels of God. The heavenly company was there for the sake of the earthly company. They did not just happen to be passing that way and ran into Jacob and his family; they were there by divine appointment.

What do we know about these angels of God? The truth is that we do not know much. All that we know for sure is that which is revealed to us in the pages of the Holy Scriptures. Much of the current interest in angels today is being fueled by the New Age—not by a renewed interest in the Bible. It is closer to ideas found in some of eastern religions than it is the revelation of Scripture.

What does Scripture reveal? They are a special order of heavenly beings—created by God to carry out His work. They are spiritual beings which mean that they do not normally have physical bodies. They assume the form of a body only for the purpose of revealing themselves to mankind. They can be

present with us without being seen by us. In fact, this is usually the case.

They were physically revealed to Jacob because Jacob needed some reassurance at this point in his journey.

As the angels of God their natural habitat seems to be before the throne of God in heaven or around the throne of God. They are always available to Him to be sent on special missions. They go only where they are sent. They do only what they are told. I am not aware of any instance where an angel was acting arbitrarily or doing things on his own. The word translated “angel” in both the Old Testament and the New Testament mean “messenger”. Our word angel comes from the Greek word for messenger.

When the Father sends these angelic beings on a mission, they are able to exercise great power. One angel was able to slay one hundred and eighty-five thousand Assyrian soldiers in one night. Can you imagine the potential of a whole company of them that met Jacob that day?

Let us consider this passage related to Jacob to learn what we can about these angels of God. Jacob had been prepared for this moment by his experience with God at Bethel. In the vision God gave him that night, he

saw the angels of God ascending and descending on the stairway to heaven. Now we discover why these angels were descending—they have been to earth on special assignment.

I. THE ANGELS OF GOD WATCH OVER US WHILE WE ARE ON A DIVINE MISSION.

We must not overstate what we find here. It is important that we remember who met the angels. Jacob was a human being with a special relationship with God. God had entered into covenant with him at Bethel twenty years earlier. As a part of that covenant God had promised to be with him wherever he might go.

If you are in covenant with God, then you can expect that the angels of God are watching over you. If you are in Christ, then you are in covenant with God. You have a better covenant with God than the one that God established with Jacob. Your covenant with God is based on the Cross of Jesus Christ. It includes a promise that your sins will be remembered against you no more. Honesty compels me to say that if you are not in Christ, there is no reason to believe that you are under angelic care.

But Jacob was also traveling under special assignment. God had said to him in Haran, “Return unto the land of thy fathers, and to thy kindred; and I will be with thee.” (Genesis 31:3) Jacob is a man with a special assignment from God. He is to be the father of the nation through whom God will carry out His redemptive purposes in history. The promised “Seed of the woman” will come into the world through one of his descendents. God has entrusted to this mortal man an important assignment. The presence of the angels of God is a sure sign of just how important this mission really is. Angels are not sent on trivial assignments.

Does this leave us out? None of us would claim to be a Jacob. Surely we have not been chosen for such a weighty assignment from the Lord. But are you sure? Just how important is the carrying out of the Great Commission? Just how important is the work that these FAITH team members are involved in? Just how important is it to get the Gospel to all of the creatures on the earth? The sobering truth is that our mission is a part of some of the same mission that Jacob was given. Jacob was responsible for being used of God to bring the Savior into the world and we are responsible for being used of God to let every creature on earth know that He has come.

When you are a Great Commission person, you can know that the angels of God are watching over you. When you are on a Great Commission activity, such as FAITH and Sunday School, you can know that the angels of God are watching over you.

II. THE ANGELS OF GOD MINISTER TO THOSE WHO ARE ON MISSION FOR GOD.

Angels are the servants of God and the servants of those who of those who serve God. Whenever they make an appearance, as they did to Jacob, they do not come to be worshipped. It is always wrong to give to an angels the reverence and worship that belongs to God. The writer of Hebrews helps us understand this: “But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool: Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation?” (Hebrews 1:13-14) This why they met Jacob—they were to minister.

1. They minister protection.

This was what Jacob felt that he needed at this point. He knew that he would soon face an angry Esau who had become something of a prince during the

years that Jacob had been in Haran. Esau would bring with him a small army. When Jacob actually met Esau, the brother had at least four hundred men under his command. Comparatively Jacob led a rather small group. In a conflict the odds were heavily in favor of Esau. The God the covenant wanted Jacob to know that he was not alone. Since he was on mission, an unseen army that would move for his protection if it became necessary was accompanying him.

This reminds us of the experience of Elisha at Dothan when the King of Syria came after him. The prophet was without any apparent protection against this angry king and his army. When the servant of Elisha became frightened by their circumstance, the prophet assured him that they were safe. He assured the servant that they had more on their side than the king had in his army. When the servant was still frightened, 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.” (I Kings 6:17) When the servant saw the heavenly army of the angels of God that had been there all of the time, he was ready for whatever might happen.

Such an army is about those who go forth to do the work of the Lord; He is with them for their protection.

While John G. Paton and his wife were serving as missionary on the New Hebrides Islands, they experienced angelic protection. It happened one dark night when a company of hostile natives set out to kill Paton and his family and to burn the mission compound. Paton and his wife prayed all night for the Lord's deliverance.

Just about daybreak they were surprised to see the natives begin to flee.

They ran in all directions as though someone had frightened them.

About a year later a chief from the hostile group was converted. Paton asked the chief, "When the group came to burn us out, why did your men run?"

The chief asked him a question in return, "Who were those men with you?"

The missionary asked, "What do you mean? There was no one with me."

The chief said, "But my men saw a number of large men with shining garments and they had drawn swords in their hands."

Paton knew who they were even though he never saw them. They were a company of the angels of God.

2. They minister provision.

Even though there is no record of them providing anything for Jacob, they have often so ministered. They become the delivery service for the provision of the Lord. It was an assurance to know that the delivery service was with him.

Jesus received such ministry from the Lord. After the forty days of temptation in the wilderness, Matthew reports: “Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.” (Matthew 4:11) We are not told what they did. They may have brought with them an appropriate meal with which to break the forty days of fasting.

3. They minister revelation.

This was especially true in the Old Testament. In this appearance there is no report of any message delivered, but when they appeared to Jacob’s grandfather, they usually delivered a message. They also delivered messages in the Book of Acts. Since we have the Bible and the Holy Spirit to lead us into an understanding of the Bible, they are not as likely to bring us any message from God.

III. THE ANGELS OF GOD ENCOURAGE THOSE ON MISSION FOR GOD.

The angels of God have a ministry of encouragement. I am confident that the day looked a lot brighter after Jacob's encounter with the camp of the Lord. From that day forward he knew that there were two camps—not just one.

1. They encourage us to trust in God.

It is wrong to trust in the angels—you trust in the God who sends the angels. To this point in his life Jacob had been trusting in Jacob. When God met with him in Bethel, He gave Jacob good reason to trust in Him. But Jacob had been slow to do this. The appearance of the angels was a reminder to Jacob that the Lord was His source. The Lord was His defender.

Evidently Jacob missed the encouragement. The rest of this chapter will record the feverish attempts of Jacob to prepare for meeting Esau. Victory over Esau was already his, if he would only trust the Lord. Jacob reacted to the approach of Esau as though it all depended on him. Are we any better? Why are we so fearful about venturing forth in service to the Lord? Why are we so fearful about becoming involved in house to house evangelism? Why

are we so hesitant to be obedient to the Lord? Angels are watching over you!

Be encouraged.

2. The angels encourage us to keep on.

Jacob may have been considered turning aside from the path that the Lord had assigned him. The appearance of the angelic company is an encouragement to see it through. If the heavenly army is accompanying you on the journey, surely you can finish it.

You will remember the time when Paul received such ministry from the Lord. After several days at sea in a terrible storm, the angel of the Lord appeared to him to say, “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, and it shall be even as it was told me.” (Acts 27:23-25)

Are you discouraged? Does the way seem impossible? Angels are watching over you. Their ministry says to you: “Cheer up! God is with you.” You cannot fail when God is with you.

Yes, day and night, all day, angels are watching over the heirs of salvation.

If you are in the covenant with God and are on mission for Him, angels are watching over you. Be strong in the Lord! Angels are watching over you.

Keep to the task! Angels are watching over you.