

AN ANGEL HELPS ELIJAH

Rev. Kurt Horigan Asplundh

Elijah was a prophet of the Lord. He had defeated four hundred and fifty false prophets of Baal in a great contest by fire. These prophets were slain so they could no longer lead Israel away from worshipping the Lord. But Elijah's work was not finished. Now, Jezebel, the wicked queen of Israel, promised to kill Elijah for what he had done. She loved the worship of Baal more than the worship of the Lord. Elijah heard what Jezebel was planning to do to him.

It was too much for Elijah. He was afraid and ran for his life. Deeply discouraged, he felt he had failed to cleanse Israel of the abominable worship of Baal. Leaving his servant in the town of Beersheba, Elijah himself went a day's journey into the wilderness and sat under a small desert bush called a broom tree or juniper. Here, he cried out to the Lord in despair, praying that he might die. "It is enough!" he cried. Then he lay down and slept under that little tree.

Elijah did not know that evil spirits were with him to discourage him and make him give up his work for the Lord. This is what is called a temptation, and Elijah felt helpless and very much alone because of it.

But Elijah was not really alone. Neither are we ever alone when we feel discouraged or threatened by temptations.

The Lord protects and guides us every moment of our life. He sends guardian angels to protect us from evil spirits who wish to harm us. We have at least two and sometimes more angels with us all the time. Usually, we don't see these angels but they are near and want to help us.

So it was, as Elijah slept, suddenly an angel touched him, waking him up. "Arise and eat," the angel said. By his head Elijah saw a cake that had been baked on coals and a jar of water. He ate and drank, then lay down again to sleep, still discouraged.

Later, the angel came again and awakened him. "Arise and eat," he said. "You need food for a long journey." So Elijah did as the angel had said. He got up and ate.

He was strengthened by the food and set out on a journey of forty days and nights. He came at last to Horeb, the mountain of God. This was the same mountain where the Lord had given the Commandments to Moses many years before. Elijah had come all that way to the mountain without needing anything more to eat. After he arrived at this special place, the Lord came to him and told him that he was not alone in the battle against false worship and evil. The

Lord sent Elijah from the mountain with new courage to anoint kings and a new prophet. The evil of Baal worship would be conquered.

Our guardian angels are always near. They watch carefully to see what evil spirits are trying to do to us. Then they help us. They bring us hope when we feel discouraged. They help us move forward when bad spirits want us to give up on trying to do the right thing. They give us the spiritual food and drink we need to continue on our journey to find the Lord and to serve Him. They love to strengthen us against the power of evil.

Without the angel's help, Elijah would have given up. Without guardian angels from the Lord, we would give up our fight against evil spirits who want to harm us. The Lord knows we need angelic protection every day and every moment of our lives. So He sends angels to be with us, just as we read in the 91st Psalm:

*He shall give His angels charge over you,
To keep you in all your ways.
They shall bear you up in their hands,
Lest you dash your foot against a stone.*
(Psalm 91:11-12)

Amen.

Lessons: I Kings 19:1-8; *Heaven and Hell* 391part; *Arcana Coelestia* 5980 part

Angels from each society [in heaven] are sent to men to watch over them and to lead them away from evil affections and consequent thoughts, and to inspire them with good affections... (Heaven and Hell 391).

Angels watch carefully and unceasingly to see what the evil spirits and genii present with a person are intent on and trying to do; and so far as the person allows them, they turn evils into good, or into something approaching good, or into something which leads in that direction (Arcana Coelestia 5980).