

“THOSE WHO ARE WITH US”

Adapted from a sermon by Rev. Frank S. Rose

“Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them” (II Kings 6:16).

These words were spoken by Elisha at a time when there seemed to be no possible avenue of escape. There was war between Syria and the kingdom of Israel. Having been severely, and unexpectedly, defeated in two pitched battles with the Israelites, the Syrians attempted to take their army by surprise, and on a number of occasions set an ambush for them. “And the man of God sent to the king of Israel, saying, ‘Beware that you do not pass this place, for the Syrians are coming down there’” (II Kings 6:9). These prophetic warnings enabled the king to save his army “not just once or twice” (II Kings 6:10).

Not understanding the true cause of these escapes, the king of Syria suspected a traitor in his own camp, and said: “‘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 who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the words that you speak in your bedroom’” (II Kings 6:11-12).

This at once revealed where the strength of Israel lay, and made it quite clear that if the Syrians were to be victorious they must first capture the prophet of God. Thinking that even such a man could not escape, the Syrians sent horses and chariots and a great host to take him at the city of Dothan, which was built on a mountain.

The army arrived by night and surrounded the city, so that when Elisha and his servant rose early in the morning, they found the invaders facing them from every side. The servant said, “‘Alas, my master, what shall we do?’ So he answered, ‘Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them’” (II Kings 6:16).

By itself this statement must have been incredible to the frightened boy. His natural eyes told him that they were completely surrounded, without any hope of escape. But, in this, his eyes deceived him. Elisha therefore prayed, and said, “‘Lord, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.’ Then the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha” (II Kings 6:17).

This was an actual seeing into the spiritual world—the world which surrounds and infills the natural world and is nearer to our minds than the things of time and space. Therefore, the servant was not seeing something imaginary. Indeed, it was the first time he had been permitted to see things as they really were. For this radiant army was present with Elisha wherever he went. It consisted of societies in the spiritual world who were in the love of understanding the Word and defending those in good. The Heavenly Doctrine for the New Church tells us that such armies are often seen in the spiritual world where the intelligent and wise live (*Arcana Coelestia* 2762).

The Syrians, of course, saw nothing. They were not aware of the forces arrayed against them in the spiritual world. Far from seeing the horses and chariots of fire, the Syrians were blinded, and in this condition they became helpless and were easily led. Elisha said to them, “‘This is not the

way, nor is this the city. Follow me, and I will bring you to the man whom you seek.’ But he led them to Samaria” (II Kings 6:19). He led them into the midst of the capital city of the kingdom of Israel. When they were surrounded by its walls and were at the complete mercy of the king of Israel, Elisha prayed to the Lord that the Syrians’ eyes be opened again. “And there they were, inside Samaria!” (II Kings 6:20).

The King of Israel asked if he should kill these enemies. Elisha replied that his soldiers would not have killed the Syrians if they had captured them in open combat. Why do so when the Lord had led them into their hands? He said, “‘Set food and water before them, that they may eat and drink and go to their master.’ Then he prepared a great feast for them; and after they ate and drank, he sent them away” (II Kings 6:22-23). Elisha did not lead the Syrian army into the camp of Israel in order to destroy them, but rather to open their eyes and feed them. Indeed, the Syrians were blinded in order that they might see. Instead of being attacked, they were offered food and drink and returned home with respect for this new Word of God and for the people who served the Lord. “So the bands of Syrian raiders came no more into the land of Israel (II Kings 6:23).

When our beliefs are attacked, we must lift our eyes to the Lord and call to mind the strong horses of spiritual understanding and the swift and flaming chariots of doctrine that are given as a protection for all who love Him. When our affection of serving the Lord is in danger, we should remember the many glorious truths we have received in reading the Lord’s Word. This army of truths is countless, extending through the mountains of our internal mind, and putting us in communication with the entire angelic heavens, in whose light we can see the glory of the Lord Himself.