

II Kings 6:8-19; Rev. 20:7-10; Seeing by Faith I. Secrets Exposed II. Surrounding the Saints III. Seeing the Truth

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, discouraging events and tragic stories are not hard to find today.

Discouragement is all around us- and we face many foes. Our leaders have forsaken truth and justice, our society is captivated and deluded by the spirit of this age. Public schools are overrun by propaganda.

Government spending and mandates are driving up inflation and debt. And the church- well the church is

divided and discouraged. The forces of darkness have gathered. Many of us read the news to find out

what is going on in the world- but we must read our Bibles to find out what is really going on in this world!

Not all is as it seems- although the news can only report on what is seen- what is unseen is even more

important and pressing! Today as we return to II Kings 6, we find both a seen and an unseen battle taking

place. With this theme: Jesus Christ reveals His army to encourage those surrounded by enemies. The

battle taking place on these pages is a type of sorts- a picture of the battle between good and evil- the

conflict between Jesus and Satan- the church and the world. And the comforting truth found is this: Those

who are with us are more than those who are with them!

I. Secrets Exposed

In our first point, we find that the secrets of man's heart are exposed before the eyes of the LORD. We find

that the king of Syria- likely Ben-Hadad- is up to his old tricks. Once again, he is planning on attacking Israel

and securing further resources from his southern neighbor. In order to succeed, he begins his campaign

with exploratory expeditions. This would be like sending out the marines to establish a beachhead in

foreign territory. But every time he sends out his troops, he meets stiff opposition. Every time he probes

their defenses, the army of Israel is ready and waiting. They meet a wall- and they are quickly turned back

and repelled. The army of Syria cannot advance, the king of Syria is growing frustrated. In v. 11 he says,

who has been telling the king of Israel my plans. Who is the traitor in our midst? The tactics of Israel and

their troop movement exactly match where I go. Now this is long before satellite tracking- the only way to

know if an army was coming was to see it with your own eyes- with little to no time to plan and muster a

defense. Moving troops was a slow busing- no planes available to rush troops into place. But as v. 10 says, Israel and their king is saved again and again- time after time the Syrian plan is thwarted. Almost like there was a wire tap or listening devise, the very words of the king of Syria are told to the king of Israel. Now this fact is a comforting truth- that the wicked king's plans did not escape the eyes and ears of the LORD. This applies today as well- nothing escapes the gaze of our God – as Heb. 4 puts it- no creature is hidden from His sight! This applies not only to God's people- but also to our enemies! As we saw last week with the Lord's Prayer- deliver us from evil is a prayer that presumes God knows where evil is! Assuming that God sees and can deliver us from that said evil! The fact is, not even Satan and his schemes can catch the LORD unprepared! Our God knows- and He even reveals the tactics and strategies of the Devil to us by His Spirit in His word. Now there is great comfort in this truth! I may not know what is really going on this world! I do not know which conspiracies are true and which ones are not! I do not know the plans of the evil one- nor do I know who is really pulling the strings on the world's stage. But God does! He knows and He sees! And the King of Kings is still the King who rules over all! The Father is sovereign- nothing happens by chance- all things happen for His glory and our good. Even though I may be caught by surprise, our God is not! He knows exactly when and where the devil will attack- the movement of the army of darkness cannot take him by surprise! And since our God is for us- this is a comforting truth!

II. Surrounding the Saints

But back in our text, Ben Hadad has had enough. His every move is published to the king of Israel by Elisha- so in his mind- if he takes out Elisha, he will have an open road to victory. Now this really is a fool's errand. If Elisha already knows where the Syrian army is going to attack- if the movements of Ben-Hadad are published to Elisha up to this point- did he really think he could sneak up on Elisha and capture him? Well, be that as it may, he plans to capture Elisha. So, he sends his troops to Dothan which was about 10 miles North of Samaria- the capital of Israel. Proving his own pride, he thought that he could reach out his hand and grasp the LORDS anointed. That He could silence the Word by arresting the LORD'S prophet! Dothan

was a relatively small city, so the troops arrive at night and surround the city in v. 14. A very great army has come down to capture this one man- and since the city is surrounded, it appears that there is no way of escape. But as is often true, all is not as it seems! Elisha's servant is surely afraid! In v. 15 he says, alas my master, what shall we do? There is no escape- and no hope! But to this cry of fear and dread, Elisha responds- do not be afraid. Those who are with us are more than those who are with them. Now you may perhaps know someone like this- someone who is always afraid. Worried about the political landscape, afraid of the next bad thing to happen. That society is on the verge of collapse or that we will see the end of the economy and western civilization as we know it. And if you read the news, there sure are a lot of things that could cause worry, fear and dread. But take to heart these words of the prophet- do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them! It doesn't always seem like that is true- does it? That there are more with us than with the world! How could Elisha say that? Don't you read the news! Don't you see the army of Syria surrounding the city? Well, we need to learn to see the truth- and that truth can only be seen with the eyes of faith!

III. Seeing the Truth

So we come to our last point- as Elisha utters this encouraging word and offers this gracious prayer- O LORD, open his eyes so that he may see. Do not be afraid- and by faith you see what is true! As Heb. 11:1 says, faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. Well then, what is not seen? What is true that can only be seen by faith? As the young man's eyes are opened, he sees an angelic army that is surrounding the army of Syria! If the army sent by Ben-Hadad was large enough to surround a city- how large must this angelic army be! To surround those who surround Elisha? The mountains were full of horses and chariots of fire! The angelic army was greater- more than any earthly army could ever be. The sheer number of this army is greater- legion upon legion- an innumerable host! Yes, a great number of angels fell in the beginning and became demons. But many more did not fall- and they are greater! The presence of angels in this world- and specifically that they are sent to minister unto and protect God's

elect- should be a comforting truth. Psalm 91 says that God will give His angels charge over us. In other words, God has appointed angels to protect His people in this world- and to defend them from harm! They are greater- not only in number, but in power. As we found last week from I John, He who is in us is greater than he who is in the world. The Spirit's power is unrivaled by the devil's schemes and plots. Added to this, we know that the commander of the angelic host is in fact the Angel of the LORD- He who rides on a white horse whose name is faithful and true- who will judge world- whose name is Word of God! Jesus is at the head of this angelic army- and all power and authority have been given to Him! As Psalm 34 says, the angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him- and he delivers them. Yes, we face some strong enemies- but Jesus has overcome and has the victory secured! When He returns at the head of this army on the last day, none can resist His will! And it is for that reason that we need not fear! But the contrast between the army of God and the army of Syria is even greater in our text. Yes, Ben-Hadad sent a great army- but what is the power of man's hand compared to a heavenly angel. Perhaps you remember what happened in Isaiah 37- where one of these angels of God went out and killed 185 thousand Assyrian troops in one night! That was one angel- killing 185 K men in one night! And here the hills are covered with an angelic army. Heb. 12 says that there are thousands upon thousands- myriads- a countless host of angels that is beyond number! And these angels perfectly do and obey the will of our Father in heaven! Truly more are those with us than those against us! This truth must be a comfort to God's people for all ages. When it seems hopeless- like the wicked are winning the day- repeat this truth to your heart! Do not fear, those who are with the church are more than those who are with the world. This truth really does test our faith- we cannot see it with our eyes- but we know it is true because God has revealed it in His word! We see it with the eyes of faith! An angelic army surrounds God's people- unseen- but at the beck and call of Jesus our Lord! This challenges our perception- who really is in control- who really is winning? As I said before, we may read the news to find out what is going on- but we must read our Bible to find out what is really going on! And that is why I read from Rev. 20 earlier, it may appear that the forces of darkness are currently surrounding the church- the city of Zion encircled by her foes. But in the end,

victory for God's people will be swift and complete! So in our text, Jesus pulls back the curtains just for a moment- we see His army ready to carry out His will upon this earth.

But before we conclude, there is one more area of application in which to apply this truth. The concept of seeing by faith- walking by faith and not by sight- applies to our sacraments as well. As we saw this morning, the water applied to little Emma Jo was just normal water. Nothing special in the water- nothing unique to look at. Children are washed with water all the time- sometimes they need a bath more than once a day! So washing our children with water is not all that abnormal- but when we look at baptism with the eyes of faith we see something greater- something stronger! By faith we see the blood of Jesus Christ- the mighty and effective washing we receive by His blood and Spirit is what comforts us! And by faith, we can have comfort in this world even as we raise our children. God would be our God- and the God of our children! Karl and Sarah- and all of the parents in this church- are raising their children in a very difficult period of time. I have heard it asked- is it wise to have children- to raise children in times like this? As parents, we need to have the eyes of faith! To see that there are more with us than with the world! When we remember that God is faithful to His word- that He is the covenant making and keeping God- only then can we be strong and not overcome by fear and doubt!

To conclude, when we see the power of God by faith- when Jesus reveals His presence and His army to us- we can and do have great comfort and encouragement. When it seems like we are outnumbered and the church is overwhelmed- remember that there are more with us than with them. Remember, the gates of hell will not prevail against the church- because Jesus is the Lord of the Church and the commander of the angelic host! As our theme said, Jesus Christ reveals His army to encourage those surrounded by enemies. So as we live our lives among a wicked and perverse generation, remember this truth! As we raise our children in the fear and knowledge of the Lord, remember this promise! If God is for us, who can be against us! If the angelic host is sent to protect, then those with us are more than those against us!