

LESSONS

1st Lesson: 1 Kings 3: 16-28

16. Now two women who were harlots came to the king, and stood before him. 17. And one woman said, "O my lord, this woman and I dwell in the same house; and I gave birth while she was in the house. 18. Then it happened, the third day after I had given birth, that this woman also gave birth. And we were together; no one was with us in the house, except the two of us in the house. 19. And this woman's son died in the night, because she lay on him. 20. So she arose in the middle of the night and took my son from my side, while your maidservant slept, and laid him in her bosom, and laid her dead child in my bosom. 21. And when I rose in the morning to nurse my son, there he was, dead. But when I had examined him in the morning, indeed, he was not my son whom I had borne." 22. Then the other woman said, "No! But the living one is my son, and the dead one is your son." And the first woman said, "No! But the dead one is your son, and the living one is my son." Thus they spoke before the king. 23. And the king said, "The one says, 'This is my son, who lives, and your son is the dead one'; and the other says, 'No! But your son is the dead one, and my son is the living one.'" 24. Then the king said, "Bring me a sword." So they brought a sword before the king. 25. And the king said, "Divide the living child in two, and give half to one, and half to the other." 26. Then the woman whose son was living spoke to the king, for she yearned with compassion for her son; and she said, "O my lord, give her the living child, and by no means kill him!" But the other said, "Let him be neither mine nor yours, but divide him." 27. So the king answered and said, "Give the first woman the living child, and by no means kill him; she is his mother." 28. And all Israel heard of the judgment which the king had rendered; and they feared the king, for they saw that the wisdom of God was in him to administer justice.

2nd Lesson: Matthew 12: 22-30

22. Then one was brought to Him who was demon-possessed, blind and mute; and He healed him, so that the blind and mute man both spoke and saw. 23. And all the multitudes were amazed and said, "Could this be the Son of David?" 24. Now when the Pharisees heard it they said, "This fellow does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons." 25. But Jesus knew their thoughts, and said to them: "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand. 26. If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? 27. And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges. 28. But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. 29. Or how can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house. 30. He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad."

3rd Lesson: Divine Providence 233:2

A rational person can see without explanation that evil with its falsity cannot exist in a person's interior constituents at the same time as good with its truths. For evil is opposed to good, and good is opposed to evil, and two opposites cannot exist together. Inherent also in every evil is a hatred of good, and inherent in every good is a love of protecting itself against evil and of removing it from itself. It follows from this that one cannot exist together with the other; and if they were to exist together, first a conflict and battle would arise and then destruction ensue. This the Lord also teaches in these words: "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand" (Matthew 12:25).

S E R M O N

A House Divided

A Sermon by
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Introductory Ideas:

As the Lord and His disciples went through grain fields the disciples became hungry and began to pluck the heads of the grain and to eat. The Pharisees complained to the Lord, "Your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath" (Matthew 12: 1-2). Then the Lord departed there and went into a synagogue where He healed a man who had a withered hand.

Then the Pharisees plotted against the Lord how they might destroy Him (Matthew 12: 9-14). But the Lord withdrew from there. A multitude of people who had followed the Lord brought to Him a man who was demon-possessed, blind and mute. So, the Lord healed him. Once again the Pharisees complained, this time saying the Lord cast out demons by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons.

These events occurred on the Sabbath. The Pharisees complained because, in their view, the Lord desecrated the Sabbath by what they believed was His disobedience of the Laws of Moses. The Lord's teaching and healing on the Sabbath became a primary point of contention between the Lord and the religious authorities. The Pharisees attempted to portray the Lord as a law breaker and to accuse Him of wrongdoing.

The Pharisees contend that the Lord is evil and somehow associated with Beelzebulb, the ruler of demons. In the midst of the arguing and bickering of the Pharisees the Lord uses the example of a kingdom, city and a house to make a point: “every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand.” How can Satan, the source of evil, do the works of God by casting out evil so as to go against himself? So we turn to the Lord’s example of a house.

Your House:

In the natural sense a house is a dwelling. Your house or dwelling place is probably adorned with articles of furniture, wall ornaments, and other accessories to make your house somewhat appealing. Your house is where you live. Our house is a haven to retire and the end of the day after we’ve served in the performance of our uses.

But we all have another house. This house is our spiritual house, the world of our inner life. A “house” in the internal sense means good (AC 4539). So that we may complete the idea we consider further from the Heavenly Doctrine that a “house” more particularly is our mind in which good dwells (AC 4973). Accordingly we conclude that our house, or our mind, is a vessel that can receive good from the Lord.

Now consider that “in the Word a ‘door’ signifies that which introduces or gives admission either to truth, to good, or to the Lord” (AC 2356). Also consider that the Lord’s good is not something “out there” or somewhere beyond us. The Lord’s good can dwell within us if we open the doors of our minds to receive of Him. The Lord’s good can live within the house of our minds as a means by which the Lord can influence us in our quest to shun evil loves.

Even though a “house” is our mind and the good that dwells within our mind, there’s still even much, much more. In the Heavenly Doctrine we learn that by a “house” is also signified the good which is of the life (AC 4981). Good that we acquire from the Lord must dwell within us, it is true. But good must flow from our minds to an outward resting place and take form in the life that we live.

Therefore, our house is also our life or, in other words, the manifestation of the Lord’s good with us in the form of how we live and treat one another. Even so inasmuch as we live a good life from the Lord, we have a spiritual mind and a natural mind. And unfortunately, our mind can be divided.

A House Divided:

On the one hand, our spiritual mind “is such as to be able to contemplate and love truths and goods in every degree [and is] capable of being raised up by the Lord to the Lord and of being conjoined to Him (AE 1202:5); and “this is why every man lives eternally” (AE 1202:5). When we open ourselves to the Lord and receive of Him we allow Him to inspire the higher degree or spiritual part of our mind. We are so created by the Lord that

by means of our spiritual mind the Lord can, with our cooperation, fill us with His love and teach us His truths and as a result lead and guide us to heaven.

On the other hand, our natural mind is capable of receiving things of the natural world. Now, the problem: our natural mind, having its seat in the lower parts of human nature “can be full of all kinds of evils such as thefts, adulteries, murders, false witnesses, covetousness, and even blasphemies and profanations of God” (AE 969:2). These hellish things oppose the goods and truths the Lord is trying to instill within us.

The Heavenly Doctrine teaches us that a person “does not produce anything false and evil from himself, but it is the evil spirits with him who produce it, and at the same time make the [person] believe that he does it of himself” (AC 761). The hells constantly agitate human hereditary inclination toward evil and endeavor to draw us away from the Lord. They introduce feelings and thoughts that are ugly and dirty. This is true about evil spirits. Unfortunately sometimes, not always, we will listen to them.

When we’re receptive of the Lord, He may fill the spiritual part of our minds with His love and truths. But our natural mind, being susceptible to evil, opposes the Lord’s attempt to inspire and save us. So, let’s realize that the house of our minds can be divided. In an attempt to help us avoid spiritual death the Lord desires that we know that “every house divided against itself will not stand.” If our mind is divided, i.e., following good and at the same time following evil, we cannot stand. Our house, “the good which is of the life” (AC 4981) will not stand but instead will crumble and fall.

Goods from the Lord and evils from the hells cannot dwell together within us. As taught in the Heavenly Doctrine if good and evil were to exist together within a person, first a conflict and battle would arise and then destruction ensue (DP 233:2). Evils will wreak destruction and consume the goods the Lord is trying to build within us.

How may we describe a divided mind? A person has a divided mind when, for example, there is discord between what he says and what he thinks. A person may speak in a manner that appears to be sincere when in fact his intention can be filled with deceit. A person has a divided mind when, for example, there is disharmony between his outward behavior and nature of his heart. In outward appearance he may live what seems to be a good life when inside his heart and mind there is hatred or contempt. Hypocrisy, fraud, deceit, flattery – these are products of a divided mind.

A House United:

Now that we know our mind can be divided it is critically important that we look around and examine the inside of our house. We must reflect from time to time upon what we’ve placed in the house of our minds. Therefore the question: what is in your house? Self reflection in order to ascertain what we’ve placed in the house of our minds is necessary so we can know what to do for our spiritual development in cooperation with the Lord. Maybe we have listened to evil spirits thus allowing ourselves to accept hellish influences

and thereby dividing our mind with part of us acknowledging the Lord while at the same time indulging in something we know is sinful.

If we see that the house of our mind is divided then we must allow the Lord to cast out those demons that tend to disrupt our minds. In the Heavenly Doctrine we learn that “to cast out demons” signifies to remove and reject the falsities of evil (AE 455:22). When we allow the Lord to do this, then we make it possible for the Lord to unite our mind.

The Lord created the human mind in such a manner that the “understanding [vessel receiving truths] and will [vessel receiving loves] may constitute a united mind” (AC 4574:2). We have a “united mind when the understanding acts in unison with the will” (AC 4574:2). People who have an “undivided mind” are people who “act in accordance with what they believe to be true and good, and in accordance with what they understand” (AC 9114).

Consider the two women who presented their case to King Solomon. Both claimed the living child while contending that the dead child belonged to the other. Therefore the king proposed dividing the child in two, giving each woman a half. As she was moved with compassion, the child’s mother yielded saying that the child should be given to the other woman and that by no means should the child be killed. But the other woman persisted saying to divide the child; this would have caused the child’s death.

This remarkable story of Solomon and the two women gives us an image of both an undivided and a divided mind. A son represents truth (AC 738, AC 2623). A woman represents good when the spiritual Church [people governed by truth] is the subject (AC 6756, AC 8337, AC 9046).

We may see then that the woman who was not the child’s mother symbolically describes a person with a divided mind. This kind of person is of a mind pretending to love truth when the person really has no interest in truth but is willing to destroy it: “let him [the child] be neither mine nor yours, but divide him” (1 Kings 3: 26). Dividing the child is the child’s death. Death of the child is the death of truth with a person when the person no longer allows truth to lead to the good of life.

On the other hand the child’s mother, the woman who was willing to let the child live, gives us an image of a person with a united mind. This kind of person really loves and cares about truth and therefore desires that truth lives: “O my lord...by no means kill him” (1 Kings 3: 26). Allowing the child to live is to love truth and to then live according to what truth teaches. Then and only then “truth [with a person] is made into good” when it “passes into action and becomes part of his life” (AC 5595). “Therefore, as truth turns itself to good so truth becomes living [with a person] (AC 998:4).

Concluding Ideas:

What does it mean to have a united mind? A united, undivided mind makes it possible for the Lord’s love and truthfulness to dwell within us - in the heavenly part of us where

the Lord dwells when we open the doors of our minds to let Him in. It is when our mind is united or in other words when the Lord's love and truth dwell together within us that the means are in place for us to live a life of good.

A united mind can be a reality for us so long as we cooperate with the Lord and allow Him cast out our demons. The Lord says "If I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you." We know from the Word that "the kingdom of God shall come, and it came when [the Lord was in the world and] He reduced all things to order in the heavens and in the hells" (AE 376:36).

The Lord continues to order His kingdom of heaven within us as He fills us with His loves and truths while at the same time He removes hellish influences from our souls. The Lord is present with every person (TCR 774). But the Lord's coming is only to people "who receive Him, who are such as believe on Him and keep His commandments" (TCR 774). The Lord comes to a person who has a united mind. In other words, "the Lord's coming is to him who joins heat with light, that is, love with truth" (TCR 774) within his mind and also the life he lives.

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me" (Revelation 3:20).

Amen.