

# LESSONS

## 1<sup>st</sup> Lesson: Exodus 29: 19 – 25

19. You shall also take the other ram, and Aaron and his sons shall put their hands on the head of the ram. 20. Then you shall kill the ram, and take some of its blood and put it on the tip of the right ear of Aaron and on the tip of the right ear of his sons, on the thumb of their right hand and on the big toe of their right foot, and sprinkle the blood all around on the altar. 21. And you shall take some of the blood that is on the altar, and some of the anointing oil, and sprinkle it on Aaron and on his garments, on his sons and on the garments of his sons with him; and he and his garments shall be hallowed, and his sons and his sons' garments with him. 22. Also you shall take the fat of the ram, the fat tail, the fat that covers the entrails, the fatty lobe attached to the liver, the two kidneys and the fat on them, the right thigh (for it is a ram of consecration), 23. one loaf of bread, one cake made with oil, and one wafer from the basket of the unleavened bread that is before the Lord; 24. and you shall put all these in the hands of Aaron and in the hands of his sons, and you shall wave them as a wave offering before the Lord. 25. You shall receive them back from their hands and burn them on the altar as a burnt offering, as a sweet aroma before the Lord. It is an offering made by fire to the Lord.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Lesson: Matthew 13: 53-58

53. Now it came to pass, when Jesus had finished these parables, that He departed from there. 54. Then He had come to His own country, He taught them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished and said, "Where did this Man get this wisdom and these mighty works? 55. Is this not the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brothers James, Joses, Simon, and Judas? 56. And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this Man get all these things?" 57. So they were offended at Him. But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his own country and in his own house." 58. Now He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief.

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Lesson: AC 10083: 5 6

As by the "waving upon the palms of Aaron" [wave offering; Exodus 29: 24] is signified vivification through the acknowledgment of the Lord, and that all things are from Him, therefore a few words shall be said about this acknowledgment and the faith thence derived. It was often said by the Lord, when the sick were healed, that they should "have faith" and that it would be done to them "according to their faith." The reason was that the first of all is to acknowledge that the Lord is the Savior of the world, for without this acknowledgment no one can receive anything of truth and good from heaven, thus no faith; and because this is the first and most essential of all, therefore in order that the Lord might be acknowledged when He came into the world, in healing the sick He questioned them concerning their faith, and those who had faith were healed. The faith was that He was the Son of God who was to come into the world, and that He had power to heal and to save. Moreover, all the healings of diseases by the Lord, when He was in the world,

signified healings of the spiritual life, thus the things that belong to salvation. Because the acknowledgment of the Lord is the first of all things of spiritual life, and the most essential thing of the church, and because without it no one can receive from heaven anything of the truth of faith and the good of love, therefore the Lord often says that he who “believeth in Him hath eternal life” that he who “doth not believe hath not life.” But He also teaches at the same time that those have faith in Him who “live according to His precepts” so that the consequent life may enter into the faith. All this has been said to illustrate and confirm the fact, that the acknowledgment of the Lord, and that from Him is all salvation, is the first of life from the Divine with man.

## S E R M O N

### Mighty Works of the Lord

A Sermon By  
Rev. Michael E. Ferrell

Now He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief  
(Matthew 13: 58).

#### Introductory Ideas

What is it that may interfere with the Lord’s endeavor to do mighty works in our life? We know the Lord has all power in the kingdom of heaven and in His church here in the world. But the Lord may withhold His redeeming power from us, or so it seems. The idea of the Lord neglecting humanity contradicts our notion that the Lord loves to comfort and care for us. But in Nazareth the Lord did not do mighty works there. Let’s look first to the Word for simple examples of how two people responded to the Lord.

The Lord spoke to Moses at the burning bush instructing him that He would send him to Pharaoh to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt. Moses wondered, “who am I that I should go to Pharaoh” and “what shall I say to them?” Elijah killed the prophets of Baal. When Jezebel threatened his life, Elijah abandoned his faith in the power of God and fled all the way to Mt. Horeb. Moses’ hesitation and Elijah’s fear were somewhat tentative. Moses went on to become a great leader of the people out of Egypt. Elijah the prophet, after fleeing Jezebel, resumed his mission to proclaim, “thus says the Lord.”

The Lord is able and willing to intervene in our lives to help us in our relationships. He can mend broken hearts. He can restore vitality to our marriages. He can reignite the flame of our desire to obey. As He is quite capable of cleansing our souls the Lord can combat within us and miraculously conquer the power of sin that tends to tear us down. But again, the Lord may not accomplish these wonderful things or so it appears as such. And now we turn to the story when the Lord came among His relatives and the people where He grew up.

## The Lord in Nazareth

After healing a demon-possessed man on the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee, the Lord and His disciples crossed back over to the other side. A woman who had a blood disease touched the Lord's garment and was healed. The Lord also raised from the dead the daughter of a man named Jairus. Then the Lord came to His own country, the town of Nazareth.

As was His custom, the Lord went to the synagogue to teach. The people were astonished, saying "what wisdom is this which is given to Him." They knew somewhat of the Lord's power, "that such mighty works are performed by His hands." But there was a problem. The people were offended at Him. When we look at the circumstances we can see why the people harbored such a negative attitude toward the Lord.

The Lord grew up in Nazareth. He was the oldest among His brothers and sisters. People in Nazareth knew Mary and Joseph. In the eyes of the people the Lord was a common man, the son of a carpenter. It is true, as stated in the Athanasian Creed that "the Lord lived in so humble a way as scarcely to be distinguished from an ordinary man, and not in splendor as God" (Ath 98). Surely He was the son of a carpenter. But this was because of the spiritual meaning.

A carpenter or "a worker in wood" signifies the good of life from the doctrine of truth (Ath 99). And indeed the Lord's life provides a perfect, living and visible example of good. The Lord labored against an impure human that He assumed in the world. By means of overcoming temptations that attacked the human He assumed and by living Divine Truth, He became Divine Good Itself here on this natural plane in the world. Yes He was "a worker in wood."

Unlike some of the people in the city of Nain, the people in Nazareth did not know that this Man, Jesus who grew up in their midst was God, that "a great prophet has risen among us and God has visited His people" (Luke 7: 16). Instead, the people in Nazareth were insensitive and callous. Because they were offended they rejected the Lord's message. Therefore the Lord did not do mighty works there.

## Disease and Sickness

While in Nazareth the Lord, as the great Teacher, taught in the synagogue. As we know, He has the words of eternal life. On a deeper level, a "synagogue" is more than just a physical structure. In the Heavenly Doctrine we're told that by "synagogue" doctrine is signified, because in the synagogues there was instruction (AE 120:3). One reason the Lord came into the world was to teach Divine Truth and lead people to the good of life. By learning from the Lord and obeying Him, people then could make it all the more possible for the Lord to do mighty works in their life and lead them to heaven.

The Lord had to come into the world and teach. Humanity suffered under complete ignorance about God. Many people rejected Jesus because He did not fit into their

preconceived notion of the Messiah who was to come. In His mercy the Lord, nonetheless, continued with His mission to teach on every occasion that presented itself.

Humanity also suffered under the plague of evils and falsities. The soul of humanity was dying. As a consequence people were sick. The Word of the Heavenly Doctrine tells us that “natural diseases correspond to [evils destroying the life of the will of good, and falsities destroying the life of the understanding of truth] for every disease in the human race is from this source, because from sin” (AC 8364:3). Spiritual sickness contaminating the soul of humanity took visible form in natural abnormalities. Consequently, many people were blind, lame, deaf, dumb, and leprous. We must be cautioned however to refuse the urge to ascribe a particular sin as the cause of a sickness we observe in others. Only the Lord knows the quality of a person’s spiritual life.

When the Lord came into the world evils had destroyed the life of the human will and thereby corrupted people’s capacity to be loving and generous and kind. Spiritual sickness alienated humanity from love of God and the neighbor. Falsities had destroyed the life of the human understanding and consequently ruined people’s ability to learn and understand truths. Spiritual sickness blackened the light of truth thereby causing humanity to stumble in darkness. The ugliness of hatred, lying, deceit, adultery...all manner of evil, had grown to an enormous disease that threaten to kill the spiritual life of all mankind.

#### Problem in Nazareth

The Lord did not do mighty works in Nazareth and so it seems He turned His back on people. For the Lord to abandon humanity contradicts order because “in the Lord there is nothing but love and mercy” (AC 8875:2). The Lord did not abandon humanity. We know from the Word that “the blind, deaf, dumb, lame, maimed, and leprous would receive the Gospel and be spiritually restored to health, which would be accomplished by the Lord’s Coming into the world” (AC 7337).

What was the problem with the people in Nazareth? It was not only that they were offended. The Lord did not do many mighty works there [in Nazareth] because of their unbelief. Blinded by their unbelief they refused to acknowledge Him.

Our lesson from Exodus 29 is part of the instructions the Lord gave to Moses regarding the inauguration of Aaron and his sons into the priesthood. Moses was to take the fat of a ram, one loaf of bread, one cake, and a wafer from the unleavened bread and place these elements into the hands of Aaron and his sons. They would then elevate them, wave them back and forth before the altar, and hand them back to Moses who would then burn them on the altar as a burnt offering. These elements of the wave offering represent good from the Lord (AC 10077 – AC 10079).

The internal sense of this inauguration ritual can help explain why, because of their unbelief, the Lord did not do mighty works in Nazareth. The Heavenly Doctrine teaches us that by the wave offering is signified “acknowledgment of the Lord, and that all things

are from Him” (AC 10083: 5). The Lord did not do mighty works in Nazareth because the people did not acknowledge Him as the source of life, and of all that is good and true. Unlike the people of Nazareth we must, without equivocation, acknowledge the Lord for this reason given in the Arcana: “the first of all is to acknowledge that the Lord is the Savior of the world, for without this acknowledgment no one can receive anything of truth and good from heaven” (AC 10083: 5).

### Who’s At Fault?

The people of Nazareth must take the blame for not receiving of the Lord. From the beginning the Lord has had a plan for everyone. While we do not know what tomorrow may bring, the Lord has opened a window to give us a small glimpse of the future. The Heavenly Doctrine teaches that “all [people] are predestined for heaven” (DP 329). The predetermined plan and future for everyone is heaven and not hell. The stage has been set. The Lord has executed the Last Judgment, restored freedom, and has set in motion the means whereby we may feely choose heaven.

But we must first acknowledge the Lord and then have faith in Him. Next, we must couple our faith with obedience and “as of self” shun evils and live according to His commandments. Faith alone is dangerous because it does not require a person to engage in self examination to discover sins and to then implore the Lord for help. The Heavenly Doctrine is clear that “everyone may be saved; consequently that it is not the Lord’s fault if man is not saved, but man’s because he does not co-operate” (DP 328:9, TCR 580).

### Concluding Ideas

The Lord did not do mighty works in Nazareth. This was not that the Lord neglected them. Their unbelief erected a barrier that prevented their reception of the Lord’s salvation. The people of Nazareth and likewise each one of us need the Lord’s salvation because we are spiritually diseased. The Lord came into the world to cure humanity of its sickness. “All the healings of diseases by the Lord, when He was in the world, signified healings of the spiritual life” (AC 10083:5).

The mighty works of the Lord while in the world demonstrate His power and enduring love for all of humanity. In the greatest of all miracles, He united His Human to His Divine. At the same time, the Lord healed natural diseases and spiritual sicknesses that plagued humanity. While the Lord was here on earth, He also operated in the spiritual world. He cleansed the world of spirits, elevated to heaven all people who were in goods and truths, and permitted the unwilling to freely disengage themselves from the worthy and enter the hells.

While in the world the Lord performed great miracles: healing the blind, deaf, dumb, and lame; calming the storms; feeding the hungry; and raising the dead. These events occurred over two thousand years ago. Yet why are they important? They are important because of the Lord’s restoration of spiritual health of people who were then in need of healing. Yet they are important now in our day and age. In the Heavenly Doctrine we’re

taught that “all the miracles too which the Lord Himself performed when He was in the world were signs of the future state of the Church (AC 7337). We are that future church, the New Jerusalem, that the Lord is today building now that all things are ready. We (and people throughout the whole world) are that future church provided that we go to the Lord, acknowledge Him, and live according to His Word.

“The Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm, with great terror and with signs and wonders” (Deuteronomy 26: 8).

*Amen.*