

Homes of Our Own

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*“Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests,
but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.”*
(Matthew 8:20)

This quote speaks of the state of the church at the time of the Lord’s life on earth. There were many things that made the Jewish church a place for the kind of prudence and scheming that we associate with a fox. An example is the buying and selling that took place in the temple, making it, the place that should be God’s home, into a den of thieves. The corrupt leaders at that time also took up a great many ideas and thoughts from their own intelligence. Arguing over the minutest details, they snatched up from Scripture and particularly tradition anything that agreed with their own notions. Their minds worked like birds that soared in the sky and swooped down and took whatever they wanted out of the field. They plucked up every seed they could find which then could not produce any real fruit. So in that church the birds, or what they represented had nests, a secure place. But the Son of Man (the name of the Lord that means the Word of God), the Word of God had no place: no place to rest, no home in that church. This quote gives us a picture of the way in which people at that time had left the Word.

When we think of our own homes, we want to be sure that we provide a place for the Lord in them. Indeed, the home is the basic unit of church society, because the Lord teaches that husband and wife together make the church. To guide us in developing our own homes, we can turn to the pattern which the Lord gave of *His house*. His tabernacle, His temple, the home that He said should be established for the church, is also a model of the way our individual homes should be established. Think of the concepts given in the representative model of the Tabernacle and of the activities that took place in that Tabernacle (Exodus 40:16-33). These concepts and activities can teach us something about what should happen in our own homes.

The Holy of Holies

The tabernacle had an inmost chamber, and—to represent what is most important—the Ten Commandments were in that chamber as the Word of God. Those commands were given with a great miracle to show that God spoke all those words. So the Word, the Lord speaking to us, was placed in the inmost chamber. Representatively, the Son of Man, the Word of God, clearly had a place in the tabernacle: indeed the inmost place. So, too, inmost in our homes we must provide a time and a place where the Lord can speak to us. We need this, because we would not know anything about heaven or about spiritual life or even about our purpose for being, without Divine Revelation from the Lord.

Now one of the activities that took place in that inmost chamber was that the high priest inquired of the Lord what the children of Israel should do. The Heavenly Doctrines seem to imply that lights would flash in the precious stones of the priest’s breastplate, providing an answer. The priest was seeking enlightenment from the Lord, looking to Him to lead the people. Innocence,

as the Heavenly Doctrines use the term, means willingness to be led by the Lord. And this innocence must be at the heart of every genuine home. We must have that desire to inquire of the Lord: “Lord, what do You want us to do?” And if we do, we know that, in His good time, the Lord will give us the light—the answer, even as He answered Israel.

The Holy Place

In the second chamber of the Tabernacle, as it were a middle chamber, a more conscious area of life (nevertheless inspired by spiritual thought and affection) is represented. On the one side of this chamber was the the seven branched golden lampstand, which was always lit, giving forth perpetual light. On the other side was the table of shewbread. Fresh-baked bread was placed there every day. And so represented in that chamber we have good from the Lord, represented by the bread of God, inspiring our will, and we have the perpetual light of truth guiding our understanding.

The Heavenly Doctrines teach that men and women both have wills and understandings. Each has the light of truth represented by the lampstand *and* the inspiration of love represented by the bread. But in the woman the bread or the will is predominant, and so it becomes a predominant role in the home of the church for the woman to provide daily, fresh inspiration to do that which is good. On the other hand, it is incumbent upon the man of the home to provide the study and steady light of truth.

Those two come together with unified purpose. In the center of that middle chamber of the Tabernacle was the altar of incense. This altar typifies that unified purpose, for incense rising up to the Lord is like the voices of our prayers to the Lord our God. Together, the husband and wife, each bringing what is strongest with them, raise their hearts and minds in united prayer to the Lord. At its core, a home should have a desire to serve the Lord and an expression of that desire through prayer. What a beautiful picture this is!

The Courtyard

But life is not all in our heads and in our hearts. Life has to do with words and deeds. And so there was an outer court in the Tabernacle which held two other things. There was a sacrificial altar on which two basic kinds of offering were given: the sin offering—confession to the Lord about our need to be rid of evil—and the peace offerings of gratitude to the Lord. All worship involves humility and praise, and every home needs to expect both of these states. When we need to shun what is wrong, we feel humble before our God, unworthy of serving Him. At other times, we feel deep gratitude and offer praise to the Lord because we love Him and want to express that love. There is a beautiful duality here which every home needs. We must expect these changes of state: the good times and the tough times. That is the way we will freely worship the Lord through our lives.

In the courtyard there was also a laver full of water. Whenever the priests went in or out of the Tabernacle to perform their duties, they washed. The water of the laver represents the letter of the Word, the basic, ultimate commands that cleanse our daily lives and our words and deeds. Those basic truths provide the opportunity, in today’s slang, to clean up our act.

In the Tabernacle, the representative cleansing was done by the priesthood. In our homes, or in an individual person, the teachings—the doctrines that we understand and want to use—are like the priesthood. Those doctrines move from the court outside into the rooms inside and wash on the way. They also move from the inside rooms to the outer court in order to offer sacrifices, to sing, to praise, *to apply*, and again to wash.

Our homes need the cleansing power of direct, clear, primary teachings of the Lord, such as “the Lord is One,” “we should shun evil as sin against Him,” “we should look toward a life that leads to heaven.” These kind of teachings are like water that can cleanse the life of our home.

The doctrine of the church has its integrity in an individual’s heart when he sees that it is based upon the cleansing truths that are clearly stated in the Lord’s Word. When a person can see and acknowledge this, it enables the doctrines to, as it were, move inside to where they can help us think clearly and feel more deeply with our hearts. We seek to cleanse our thoughts and affections when we try to see the light of truth, to be inspired by good, and, particularly, when we bare our deepest self to the Lord in prayer. When we see—“Yes, that is what I should do, and here is what I should say”—then we, as it were, move outside again into daily life. When we do this, we wash once more.

A Place for the Lord

So we have this beautiful model of the kind of home we can offer to the Lord if He is to have a place to rest His head among us. But it is all too easy, in the pragmatic pressures of our daily lives, to make a place for those conniving states represented by foxes. It is all too easy to let prudence guide us pragmatically, to be driven by all the circumstances that press in upon our homes. But that is not going to make a place for the Lord.

And it is very easy to go to the Lord’s Word and just snatch up this or that passage, this or that idea, this or that concept, to serve our own ends. Then, instead of allowing the seed of truth to remain in the ground and produce fruit, we snatch away even the knowledge and thought of truth. We provide, as it were, nests for the birds which confirm selfishness in our homes, the kinds of arguments always couched in terms of “I’m right and you’re wrong.” Sometimes we even distort the Word to support what we want. That is not the spirit of inquiry represented by the priest’s reverently washing and going into the inmost chamber to ask, “What does the Lord want us to do?” When we simply snatch up an idea that supports what we want and argue with others in the family, we are not making a place for the Lord to rest His head.

The Son of Man needs a place to rest, to live, in our homes. Nothing is more important than to have homes and families where the Lord can indeed be present. Our homes should be places where the Lord is not just, as some say, a welcomed guest, but where, by analogy, the Lord feels truly at home, at rest, where He feels that His work of salvation can take place. This is the kind of home that is patterned for us in the Lord’s Word and in the description of the Tabernacle. It is a beautiful picture that puts a challenge clearly before us.

Each of us needs to have an inmost desire that asks, "What does the Lord want me to do?" Through reading the Word, we need to perpetuate the light of truth like the lampstand. We need to renew the goods we strive for, like daily bread upon the table of shewbread. Each day, we need to offer prayers that bring affection and thought together in an inner spirit of conscience. And we need to bring sacrifices of praise to the Lord when things go well and offer the sacrifices of our selfish desires as sin offerings when things go ill. If our homes follow this model, then truly the Lord will have a place with us where He can lay His head. And He will come in and dine with us and we with Him.

In heaven all are associated according to the similarities of love; and according to these they have their homes. For in the spiritual world there are not spaces but appearances of space...according to the states of life, and the states of life are according to the states of love. For this reason no one there can dwell in any but his own house, which is provided and assigned to him according to the quality of his love. If he abides elsewhere he labors in the breast and breathing (Conjugal Love 50).