

~Other Speakers S-Z: Sadhu Sundar Singh:

SECTION I

The Disciple, —Master, what are heaven and hell, and where are they?

The Master, —1. Heaven and hell are the two opposite states in the spiritual realm. They have their origin in the heart of man and it is in this world that their foundations are laid. Since man cannot see his own spirit, so neither can he see these two states of the soul. But he has experience of them within him, just as he feels pain from a blow and perceives sweetness from eating sweetmeats. The wound caused by the blow may increase until it caused the greatest pain and finally ends in death and decay, as on the other hand the sweetmeats may by digestion promote strength. In the same way the pain of a sinful act and the happiness of a good deed may to some extent be apparent immediately, yet the full penalty or reward for them will be perceived only on entry into the spiritual realm.

2. In this world man is never satisfied for long with one thing, but is ever in search of a change of circumstances or surroundings; for which it is clear that the fleeting things of this world never can satisfy him, for he wants something that is stable and unchanging and always agreeable to his tastes and desires. When in his search he finds this reality in Me, the desire for all further change comes to an end, because one does not grow wearied of perfect society and complete happiness, for this is the one demand of both body and spirit. In truth, to obtain a true peace is the one object of the human soul. Sometimes there comes to the heart of man, without any thought or desire of his own, a sudden sensation of pleasure or pain which is an emanation from the spiritual world of heaven or hell. These come to him again and again, gradually one or other of these prevails, according to his spiritual habit, and by steadily appropriating one of these he makes a final choice. In this way the foundation of heaven or hell is built up in a man's heart while still in this world, and after death he enters into that state which, in this life, his desires or passions have prepared him for.

3. Some say that desire is the root of all pain and sorrow, therefore it is not right to desire happiness in heaven or in communion with God, for salvation consists in killing all desire. To say this is as great a folly as to tell a thirsty man to kill his thirst instead of giving him water to drink, for thirst or desire is part of life itself. To take away desire or thirst without satisfying them is to destroy life, and this is not salvation but death. Just as thirst implies water, and water is intended to remove thirst, so the existence of desire in the soul implies the existence of true happiness and peace. When the soul finds Him who planted within it that desire, it receives far greater satisfaction than the thirsty man does from water, and this satisfaction of the soul's desire we call heaven.

4. There are many in this world who are like the man who died from thirst although he was in the midst of the boundless waters of the ocean, for sea water could not quench his thirst or save his life. Just so there are men who are living in the boundless ocean of love, and yet because the fresh water of God's grace is bitterness to them in their disobedience and sin, they perish with thirst. But for those who repent of their sin and turn to Me fountains of living water gush up from that sea of love, and they find in Him who loves them satisfaction and enduring peace. This, too, we call heaven.

5. There are many who have conceived such a love and devotion to the world that though by the example and teaching of My children their hearts are often lifted heavenwards, yet drawn down by the force of gravity, like stones that have been thrown upwards, they fall back into the world and finally slip into hell. But when man turns his heart to Me in true repentance, I cleanse the temple of his heart with the whips of love and make it a heavenly abode for the King of kings. This earthly life is such that the glory and pomp of kings are seen but today, and tomorrow are mingled with the dust. But those who become sons of the kingdom of God have glory and honour, thrones and crowns, and of their kingdom, which is heaven, there is no end.

6. Sinners in order to increase their pleasures steal the good things of others, and that is why men, good as well as bad, lock up their houses when they go abroad. And this locking up of goods must go on as long as men's hearts are locked against their Lord and Maker. When, however, the lock of the heart is open to Him whoever stands knocking at the door (Rev. iii.20), the desires and longings of the heart will be fulfilled. Then there will be no further need for the locking up of houses, for instead of stealing each other's goods and doing each other mischief all will serve one another in love. For when men give to God what is due to Him they will seek only what is good. Thus they enter into His wondrous joy and peace; and this is heaven.

7. When I gave My life upon the cross for the sons of men that I might save sinners from hell and lead them into

heaven, two thieves, one on each side of Me, met death at the same time. Although to all appearance we all three suffered a like fate, from a spiritual point of view there was a vast difference. One of them shut up his heart against Me and met his death unrepentant, but the other opened his heart to Me in true repentance, and in communion with Me found life, and that very day entered Paradise with Me (Luke xxiii.39-43). This Paradise exists not only beyond the grave, but begins in the hearts of men now, though it is hidden from the eyes of the world (Luke xvii.21). A faithful martyr of Mine was at the point of death after suffering untold agonies at the hands of his persecutors, and was so filled with the joy of heaven that he turned to them and said, "O that I could open my heart to you, and show you the wonderful peace I have, which the world can neither give nor take away! Then you would be convinced of its truth, but it is the hidden manna which is unseen and unseeable." After his death those foolish folk tore out his heart, hoping to find something precious in it, but they found nothing, for the reality of that heaven is known only to those who accept it and find in it their joy.

8. The womb of Mary, where in a fleshly form I had My abode for a few months, was not a place so blessed as the heart of the believer in which for all time I have My home and make it a heaven (Luke ix.27,28).

9. There are many who long for heaven yet miss it altogether through their own folly. A poor beggar sat for twenty-one years on the top of a hidden treasure chamber, and was so consumed with the desire to be rich that he hoarded up all the coppers that he received. Yet he died in a miserable state of poverty, utterly unaware of the treasure over which he had been sitting for years. Because he sat so long on the same spot a suspicion arose that he had something valuable buried there. So the Governor had the place dug up and discovered a hoard of valuables, which afterwards found its way into the royal treasury. My word is nigh thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart (Deut. xxx.14).

10. Those who know nothing of the spiritual life declare that it is impossible to experience real peace and heavenly joy in this grief-stricken world. But those who have experience of the spiritual life know that just as one finds here and there in the midst of the ice fields of the polar regions flowing streams of hot water, so in the midst of this cold and sorrow-laden world there are to be found flowing in the hearts of believers restful streams of heavenly peace, for the hidden fire of the Holy Spirit glows within them.

11. Although God made all men of one blood and created all in His own form and likeness, He has made them to differ in character, temperament, and powers. For if all the flowers in the world were of the same colour and scent, then the very face of the earth would lose its charm. The sun's rays as they pass through coloured glass do not change the colours, but only bring out their varied beauty and charm. In the same way the Sun of Righteousness, both in this world and in heaven, through the God-given virtues of believers and saints continually makes manifest His unbounded glory and love. Thus I abide in them and they in Me, and they will have joy for evermore.

SECTION II

The Disciple—"Master, some people say that the comfort and joy that believers experience are simply the outcome of their own thoughts and ideas. Is this true?

The Master—"1. That comfort and abiding peace which believers have within themselves is due to My presence in their hearts, and to the life-giving influence of the fullness of the Holy Spirit. As for those who say that this spiritual joy is the result only of the thoughts of the heart, they are like a foolish man who was blind from his birth, and who in the winter time used to sit out in the sunshine to warm himself. When they asked him what he thought of the sun's heat he stoutly denied that there was such a thing as the sun, and said, "This warmth which I am now feeling on the outside comes from within my own body, and is nothing more than the powerful effort of my own thoughts. This is utter nonsense that people tell me about something like a big ball of fire hanging up in the sky." Take heed, therefore, lest anyone captures you "with philosophy and vain deceit, after the traditions of men and after the rudiments of the world." (Col. ii.8).

2. If true happiness depended on the thoughts of man, then all philosophers and deep thinkers would be filled to overflowing with it. But with the exception of such of them as believe in Me, those who are wise in the philosophy of this world are altogether devoid of happiness, except for a kind of fleeting pleasure which they derive from following out certain rules of their own.

But I have so created man that he has a natural fitness for the reception of the Holy Spirit by means of which alone is he able to receive this heavenly life and joy. As in charcoal there is a natural fitness to receive fire, but without oxygen the fire cannot enter it, so unless the oxygen of the Holy Spirit finds an entrance into a man's

soul he will remain in darkness and will never enjoy this true and lasting peace (John iii.8).

3. This fitness of heart and thoughts of man is like that of the strings of a guitar or violin. When these are tightened and made to harmonize, then by the touch of the plectrum or the bow the most charming music is produced; but if that is not done the touch of the bow only produces discords. And the production of sweet sounds when the strings all harmonize is again dependent on the air, by the force and motion of which sound is carried into the ear. In the same way, to harmonize the thoughts and imaginations of men the presence of the stimulating breath of the Holy Spirit is necessary. When that is present there will be produced heavenly airs and joyous harmonies in men's hearts, both in this life and in heaven.

The Disciple, "—Master, sometimes I am conscious that my peace and happiness have departed. Is this because of some hidden sin of mine, or is there some other reason unknown to me?"

The Master, "—1. Yes, this is sometimes due to disobedience, but occasionally I appear to leave My children for a short time and then they become lonely and restless. Then while they are in that condition I am able to reveal to them their actual selves and their utter weakness, and teach them that apart from Me they are nothing but dry bones (Ezek. xxxvii.1-14); so that they may not in a constant state of rest and peace forget their essential condition, and, deeming themselves to be God, fall through pride into the punishment of hell (1 Tim. iii.6; Jude 6; Isa. xiv.12-17). In this way they are trained and educated; and when they humbly and meekly abide in Me, who created them, they will enjoy eternal happiness in heaven.

2. Sometimes it happens that when I enter into My children and fill them with the fullness of the Spirit, they overflow with such divine happiness and joy that they are not able to endure the glory and blessing that is theirs, and so fall into a state of faintness or even unconsciousness. For flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor temporal things those which are eternal, until men are set free from the power of vain mortality and raised into glory (1 Cor. xv.50,53; Rom. viii.19-22). Then shall My will be done on earth in every creature, even as it is done in heaven. Then shall pain and suffering, sorrow and sighing, woe and death be forever done away, and all My children shall enter into the kingdom of My Father, which is joy in the Holy Ghost, and they shall reign for ever and ever (Rom. xiv.17; Rev. xxi.4; xxii.5).