

For Reflection:

Mixed Up Priorities – The “I Am It” Problem

Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to Your name give glory (Psalm 115:1).

The Heavenly Doctrine for the New Church teaches us that there are four possible loves which can rule our lives:

1. Love of the Lord
2. Love of the Neighbor
3. Love of the World
4. Love of Self

All of these loves are within us, and each one is important. The key is to prioritize them in the right order. To enjoy heavenly happiness, loving the Lord and our neighbors must become our top two priorities. Loving ourselves and the world for the sake of higher loves is a good thing, if they are not the main focus of our life.

“I am the Lord, and there is no other; there is no God besides Me” (Isaiah 45:5).

The Lord is the one and only great “I AM”. He tells us this many times in His Word. But how easy it is for each of us to think “I am it” and put ourselves first as our top priority.

What happens to us when we place ourselves first, when we replace the Lord’s “I am” with our own “I am it”? This passage gives a vivid description of the kind of spiritual environment we create inside ourselves when love of self rules our lives.

*This is the rejoicing city
That dwelt securely,
That said in her heart,
“I am it, and there is none besides me.”
How has she become a desolation,
A place for beasts to lie down!
Everyone who passes by her
Shall hiss and shake his fist* (Zephaniah 2:15).

If we love ourselves above everything and everyone else, we are really making ourselves our own god and rejecting the one true God—the Lord. This is why having “mixed up priorities” is so devastating to our spiritual life.

The Lord is merciful and He knows that it takes consistent effort throughout most of our lives to put our loves in the right order. This is a gradual process that takes a lifetime and is called regeneration or spiritual rebirth. Without the Lord’s unceasing love, we would be lost.

But recognizing the spiritual problem with having self as our first priority will help us learn to give glory to the Lord and not to ourselves. He is the only “I AM” and the only true God.