



The Last Judgment

FaithBuilder 2 | Lesson 30 | New Church Day

Lesson Overview

1. Video

Watch *Matthew 24 – Signs of the End of the Age* (6min 16sec) at bit.ly/GCEDEnd

2. Discuss

What is the Last Judgment? When and where did it happen? How are the Last Judgment and the New Church connected? pp. 1-2

2. Activity

What's new? Drama activity about new truth revealed after the Last Judgment pp. 3-5

New Church Concept The Last Judgment

The Gospel writers described the stages of decline and corruption that the Christian church would undergo. Their reference to "a great affliction such as has never existed since the world began and will never exist again" [Matthew 24:21] means an attack by falsities against the truth until there is no truth left that has not been falsified.... This attack came because the church saw God's unity in the Trinity and his Trinity in the unity in three persons instead of one. See *True Christianity*

The word "apocalypse" comes from a Greek word meaning "to reveal or uncover." But today many associate "apocalypse" with a different idea—"a great and terrible disaster and destruction." Which book of the Word is sometimes called "The Apocalypse?" (Revelation) How might using the title "apocalypse" instead of "revelation" change your understanding of what is described in the book?

Watch a video

Matthew 24 presents a vision of what is often called "the end of times" or the "apocalypse." We are going to watch a video that shows the events of Matthew 24 that is illustrated with pictures showing a literal Christian view of its meaning. Watch *Matthew 24—Signs of the End of the Age* at bit.ly/GCEDEnd (6min 16sec). (Enter bitly link in the web browser bar at the top of your screen.)

Discuss

1. Do you think the Lord was being literal when He spoke these words? Or was He speaking in parables? Is Matthew 24 about the world ending, or about events in the spiritual world? The Writings say,

It is impossible for people who remain in the literal sense to know whether things in this chapter were said about the destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the Jewish nation, or about the end of days, called the Last Judgment. People who are in the internal sense see clearly that the end of the church is being talked about here, which end is called the coming of the Lord and the consummation of the age. See *Arcana Coelestia* 3353

This passage also explains the correspondences of different things mentioned.

2. What is a "Last Judgment?" In one sense it means the judgment on every person after death. But judgments also happen on churches, and this is what is being described here.

Believing that the end of the earth is the same as the last judgment, foretold in the Word—where the consummation of the age, the day of visitation, and the last judgment are described—is a mistake. There is a last judgment of every church when there is no longer any faith in it. The last judgment of the Most Ancient Church was when it perished during the flood. The last judgment of the Jewish Church was when the Lord came on earth. There will also be a last judgment when the Lord will come in glory. The earth and the world will not perish, but the church will perish.... Then there will be a new church when the Lord comes in glory, which is also meant by the new heaven and new earth.... See *Arcana Coelestia* 931

New Church Concept Matthew 24

By the consummation of the age and the coming of the Lord in Matthew 24 is meant the end of the Christian Church and the institution of a New Church by the Lord. See *Brief Exposition* 71

"Many shall come in My name, saying, I am the Christ; and shall lead many astray." "Name" does not signify name, nor "Christ," Christ; but "name" signifies that by which the Lord is worshiped, and "Christ" signifies truth itself. Thus it is meant that there would come those who would say, "This is of faith," or "This is true," when yet it is neither of faith, nor true, but false. That they "should hear of wars and rumors of wars" denotes that there would be disputes and strife concerning truths, which are wars in the spiritual sense. That "nation should be stirred up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom" signifies that evil would fight with evil, and falsity with falsity. "Nation" signifies good, but in the opposite sense evil. "Kingdom" signifies truth, but in the opposite sense falsity. "And there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes in diverse places" signifies that there would be no longer any knowledges of good and of truth, and thus that the state of the church would be changed, which is an "earthquake." *Arcana Coelestia* 3353.2

3. A Judgment was needed because mixed groups of good and evil spirits had blocked the way to heaven. People in these societies were a mixture of those who claimed to be good and religious but were actually evil, and simple good people. Good people could not go to heaven because they had been taught false religious ideas and did not know right from wrong. Since good and evil people could not be separated evil people stayed in false heavens above the world of spirits for a long time. These false heavens had a foothold in the world of spirits, and an inner heart in hell. They were like a dark cloud that was so thick it blotted out the light of heaven, which was unable to pass through to the spiritual world or to the earth. Evil people were so successful in rising up against heaven that they seemed to have taken over the spiritual world, and even oppressed the angels in heaven. The Lord had to judge the heavens or no one could have been saved. He carried out this judgment by intensifying His power through the spiritual sun so the higher heavens were drawn closer to Him.

After the last judgment was finished there was joy in heaven and light in the world of spirits.... A similar light also arose with people in the world, from which they had new enlightenment. *The Last Judgment (Continuation)* 30

4. Emanuel Swedenborg has been called an "eyewitness to the apocalypse." He watched judgments in the spiritual world as they happened throughout 1757.

I have been allowed to see with my own eyes that the Last Judgment has now taken place. I have seen the wicked cast into the hells, and the good raised to heaven, thus restoring all to order and so re-establishing the spiritual equilibrium between good and evil, or between heaven and hell. I was allowed to see how the Last Judgment took place from beginning to end; and also how Babylon was destroyed, and how those who are meant by the dragon were cast into the abyss; and then again how the new heaven was formed, and the new church meant by the New Jerusalem was set up in the heavens. I was allowed to see all this with my own eyes so that I could bear witness. This Last Judgment started at the beginning of last year, 1757, and was fully completed by the end of the year. *The Last Judgment* 45

5. In *True Christianity*, Swedenborg's final work we learn that after the last judgment angels were sent out in the spiritual world to spread news of the new revelation for the New Church.

After *True Christianity* was finished, the Lord called together the twelve disciples who followed Him in the world. The next day He sent all of them out to the entire spiritual world to preach the gospel that the Lord God Jesus Christ reigns and that His kingdom will last for ages of ages, as foretold by Daniel (Daniel 7:13, 14) and by the Book of Revelation (Revelation 11:15); also that 'people who come to the wedding feast of the Lamb are blessed' (Revelation 19:9). This occurred on June 19th, 1770. This is what the Lord was referring to when He said, 'He will send out his angels, and they will gather His chosen people from one end of the heavens to the other' (Matthew 24:31). *True Christianity* 791

What’s New?

Swedenborg once had a conversation with angels in heaven about the secrets the Lord was revealing in the Heavenly Doctrine. The following activity is inspired by the description of this discussion in *Conjugal Love* 532.

Procedure: Have one person take the part of Swedenborg, have two people take the role of wise angels (reading their parts together), assign one person to be the narrator, and have others read aloud quotations from the Word that relate to what the Lord revealed at the appropriate places during the play (see attached quotes).

Reader	Reading
Swedenborg	I was once in my spirit taken up to the angelic heaven and into one of its societies. And some of the wise there then came to me and said,
Wise Angels	What news do you have from earth?
Swedenborg	This is new, that the Lord has revealed secrets which surpass in excellence all the secrets previously revealed....
Wise Angels	What are they?
Swedenborg	In the Word and in each and every particular of it, there is a spiritual meaning that corresponds to the natural meaning. Through this inner, spiritual meaning, people are able to be conjoined with the Lord.
Narrator	Hear what the Lord tells us about the spiritual meaning of the Word. [Have people read aloud one or more of the quote cards about the Word.]
Swedenborg	The corresponding elements of which the spiritual meaning of the Word consists have been disclosed.... Knowledge of correspondences—the symbolism of the Word—has now been disclosed by the Lord so that people of the church may be conjoined with Him. Narrator: The angels greatly rejoiced that it had pleased the Lord to reveal this great secret, which for several thousand years had lain so deeply hidden. Narrator: Hear what the Lord tells us about correspondences. [Have people read aloud one or more of the quote cards
Swedenborg	The Lord has also revealed truths about life after death.
Wise Angels	What about life after death? Who does not know that a person lives after death?

What's New? *continued*

Swedenborg	People know it and do not know it. They say that what lives after death is not the person but his soul, and that this lives on as a spirit, of which they harbor an idea as of its being like the wind, not living as a real person until after the Last Judgment.
Wise Angels	What is this you are saying? Who does not know that a person lives as a person after death, the only difference being that he then lives as a spiritual person? What do people know of heaven and hell?
Swedenborg	They have known nothing, but the Lord has now disclosed the nature of heaven and the nature of hell. Narrator: Hear what the Lord tells us about the life after death. [Have people read aloud one or more of the quote cards about life after death.]
Narrator	The angels were gladdened that it had pleased the Lord to disclose such things, so that people would no longer be uncertain about their immortality.
Wise Angels	Has anything else been revealed?
Swedenborg	That the Lord is God of heaven and earth, that God is one both in person and in essence, in whom is the Divine trinity, and that He is the Lord.
Narrator	Hear what the Lord tells us about Himself. [Have people read aloud one or more of the quote cards about the nature of the Lord.]
Narrator	On hearing all this, the angels greatly rejoiced.

Quotations from the Word

Can be read aloud during the play.

	All things in the Word have an inner meaning by means of which they must be understood in a spiritual way (Arcana Coelestia 10406:5).
The Word	The Lord spoke in such a way that every single word contained an inner meaning, since He spoke from the Divine (Arcana Coelestia 9166:8).
	Those who keep solely to the literal sense of the Word acquire no teaching at all from the Word, because they are separated from the internal sense, and the internal sense being the
	The spiritual or internal meaning of the Word is simply the meaning of the letter unfolded according to correspondences, for this makes known the spiritual content that angels in the heavens perceive when a person in the world thinks naturally about what he reads in the
Correspondences	Divine things present themselves in the world by correspondences, so the Word has been written exclusively by means of them (Sacred Scripture 20:3).
	All the miracles recorded in the Word were done by means of correspondences (Arcana
	Human life, from infancy to old age, is nothing else than a progression from the world to heaven; and the last age, which is death, is the transition itself (Arcana Coelestia 3016).
Life after Death	That a person's state of life after death accords with the idea of God he has affirmed in himself is clearly apparent from its antithesis, namely, that a denial of God forms hell (Divine Love and Wisdom 13).
	Let him who wishes to be eternally happy know and believe that he will live after death. Let him think of this and keep it in mind, for it is the truth (Arcana Coelestia 8939:3).
	The Lord's presence is unceasing with every person, both the evil and the good, for without His presence no one lives; but His coming is only to those who receive Him, who are those who believe in Him and keep His commandments (True Christian Religion 774).
The Lord	This New Church...is to worship one visible God in whom is the invisible like the soul in the body (True Christian Religion 787).
	The Lord is present with every person, urging and pressing to be received.....[A person receives Him] when he acknowledges Him as his God, Creator, Redeemer and Savior (True Christian Religion 766).