

General Church Education



The New Church

Lesson 7

The Five Churches

For ages 11-13

The New Church

Teacher Background

The Lord God Jesus Christ made His second coming, not in person, but in the Writings for the New Church, recorded by His servant Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772). The new doctrine restored a true idea of God, disclosed the inner meaning of the Word, and revealed what happens to us after death. Soon after Swedenborg published the final work, *True Christian Religion*, people formed New Church organizations in London and America.

Focus Points

- The Lord Jesus Christ made His second coming through the Writings for the New Church.
- The Writings reveal the nature of the Lord, the Word and life after death.
- Throughout the world, readers of the Writings started New Church organizations and spread the message of the Lord's second coming.

Readings from the Writings

“The Lord’s second coming, is not in person, but in the Word, which is from Him and which He is.” *True Christian Religion* 776

“The whole of Revelation from beginning to end prophesies the Lord’s second coming, His conquest of the hells, the creation of a new heaven of angels and then the establishment of a new church on earth. All these things were there foretold, but they have not been revealed before the present time.” *True Christian Religion* 116.4

The Lord’s second coming is taking place by means of a man to whom He has shown Himself in person, and whom He has filled with His spirit, so he may teach the doctrines of the new church which come from the Lord through the Word.... The Lord has sent me to perform this function. He opened the sight of my spirit, thus allowing me to see the heavens and the hells, and also to talk with angels and spirits.... From the first day of my calling, I have not received any instruction concerning the doctrines of that church from any angel, but only from the Lord, while I was reading the Word. See *True Christian Religion* 779

After this work 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.... This occurred on June 19, 1770. *True Christianity* 791

Teacher Activity Overview

The student lesson offers the following activity choices:

Projects and Activities (see back of book for answers)

Choose one or two.

What Are the Writings About?

The books of the Writings or the Heavenly Doctrine give new meaning to the Old and New Testaments. Match titles of books of the Writings with the ideas they contain.

What's New about the New Church?

The Heavenly Doctrine for the New Church reveals many things that people have wondered about for thousands of years. Learn about five key ideas and think about which are the most important to you. Learn more by asking a pastor or searching online.

Additional Project and Activity Choices for Parents and Teachers

Nebuchadnezzar's Dream and the Five Churches

Discover king Nebuchadnezzar's dream and its relation to the Five Churches by cutting out, assembling, and arranging five cubes to illustrate the story. Print on sturdy paper to use throughout these lessons. Online at <https://newchurchvineyard.org/file/project-nebuchadnezzars-dream-and-the-five-churches-daniel-2-true-christian-religion-760.pdf>

The General Church Seal



The General Church of the New Jerusalem has a seal that pictures a seven branch lampstand, under which is written "Behold I make all things new" (Revelation 21:5) in Greek. Learn the history of the seal at <https://www.newchurchhistory.org/funfacts/index3e1b.html?p=343>. See also <https://newchurchvineyard.org/file/coloring-page-the-general-church-seal.pdf>

New Church Flag



The General Church also has a flag. It is red and white, symbolizing the Lord's love and wisdom. For a coloring page, see <https://newchurchvineyard.org/file/coloring-page-the-new-church-flag.pdf>

The New Church

Vocabulary

theology—the study of God and religious beliefs

Anglican—Church of England

Trinity—three aspects of the Lord

Introduction

Near the end of the Lord’s earthly life He told His disciples that He would return “with power and great glory” (Matthew 24:30). Many people expected that this would happen quickly and that Jesus would come back in person. Yet it took almost two thousand years for this to occur and occurred when people no longer knew the true meaning of the Word. And instead of coming in person, the Lord came again through a new revelation.

The Lord prepared for the New Church to come by giving prophecies in the book of Revelation, such as the beautiful visions of the woman clothed with the sun and the holy city New Jerusalem. The Lord also prepared for this coming by increasing access to the Bible, which brought greater religious freedom. Then during the Enlightenment, many people, including Emanuel Swedenborg, made new scientific discoveries. In fact, the Lord chose Swedenborg to reveal the new doctrine due to his scientific training and his lifelong study of the Word.

Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772)

Emanuel Swedenborg was born in Stockholm, the capital of Sweden. He was a curious and talented man who longed to know about the natural world. So at a time when most wealthy

people took up careers in theology or the law, Swedenborg studied science. After a long and successful career in mining, the Lord appeared to him at the age of fifty-six and told him to think more about spiritual things.

In response, Swedenborg studied the Word with even greater interest. As a result, the Lord could open his spiritual eyes, allowing him to see into the spiritual world. His scientific training helped him remember and write down what he saw so that others could understand it. In this way, he explained what the Lord wanted people to know so they could lead happy lives to eternity. Swedenborg did not claim to have come up with these ideas himself, but said he was a “Servant of the Lord Jesus Christ”. He did not seek a personal following or mention starting a church.



Emanuel Swedenborg

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emanuel_Swedenborg#/media/File:Emanuel_Swedenborg.PNG [Accessed 6 June 2025]

The New Revelation

From 1749 to 1771, Swedenborg published eighteen theological works. We call these books the Writings or the Heavenly Doctrine. In the last book Emanuel wrote,

‘from the first day of my calling I have not received any instruction concerning the doctrines of that church from any angel, but only from the Lord, while I was reading the Word’ (*True Christian Religion* 779).

The three-fold Word for the New Church consists of the Hebrew Old Testament, the Greek New Testament, and the Latin Writings for the New Church. The Writings compare the truths for the New Church with the rock that smashed the image in King Nebuchadnezzar’s dream and grew until it filled the earth. It is the “Crown of Churches” and will stand forever.

The New Doctrine

The new doctrine restores an accurate picture of the Lord God Jesus Christ. It shows that the Trinity is not three separate Persons, but is like the trinity of soul, mind and body in each person. It reveals that Lord speaks to us through the Word, and that the Word has life due to the layers of spiritual meaning hidden within it. It also shows that faith is not only a matter of believing in God, but of obeying Him. On top of that, it discloses that after death people live as angels or evil spirits, and that those who are happily married in this world can remain married to eternity.

The Books of the Writings

The Writings are written in several styles. The longest work, *Arcana Coelestia* or *Heavenly Secrets*, explains the deeper meaning of Genesis and Exodus and describes many wonderful things Swedenborg saw and heard in the spiritual world. Similarly, *Apocalypse Revealed* explains the internal sense of the book of Revelation and explains that Revelation is about the coming of the New Church. The short work *Heaven and Its Wonders and Hell* provides a detailed look at the life after death. It describes what happens when we die and explains how people live in heaven and in hell. This information makes the spiritual world a real place and helps people know what to expect when they die.



Divine Love and Wisdom and *Divine Providence* explain how the Lord created the world, and how He leads us in freedom. *Conjugal Love* reveals the nature of true marriage love.

Swedenborg’s last work, *True Christian Religion*, gives an important overview of everything we need to know to lead a good life.

Swedenborg published these works in England and Holland because these nations had greater religious freedom than other parts of Europe at that time.

Interest in the Writings

People began to show interest in the new doctrine shortly after its publication. Then in 1783 Robert Hindmarsh (1759-1835), a printer, advertised a reading group in his home. Within two years, the group dedicated itself to translating the Writings into English and printing them. Several years later, the group decided to worship in the light of the new doctrine. Its members were concerned that staying in the Christian church risked mixing the new doctrine with the corrupted doctrine of the Christian church. Hindmarsh therefore registered the General Conference of the New Church in London, England, on 31 July 1787.

Nevertheless, some people disagreed with the decision to start a church. The most outspoken of these was the Rev. John Clowes (1743-1831), an Anglican rector. Clowes believed New Church teachings would spread faster if they “permeated” Christianity unseen. Consequently, Clowes taught the new doctrine at St. John’s parish in Manchester and brought many people into the New Church.

In 1783, James Glen, a Scot, received a copy of *Heaven and Hell* at one of Hindmarsh’s meetings in London. He accepted the doctrine immediately and took copies of the Writings to South America the following year. During the journey he stopped in Philadelphia and lectured on the New Church. These lectures helped to establish the Swedenborgian Church of North America.

The New Church Spreads

During the 1800s many educated people read the Writings. This changed the way people thought, wrote, and created art. Some people sponsored education for all children, paving the way for the public schools we have today. Others, such as the nurseryman John Chapman (1774-1845), also known as “Johnny Appleseed”, promoted New Church ideas by passing out pages of the Writings as he spread apple seeds throughout the American Midwest.

In 1877 New Church members who wanted a more distinctive form of worship, education and social life launched the Academy movement in Philadelphia. Twenty years later, in 1897, members of this movement formed the General Church of the New Jerusalem, or the General Church. Today, this organization has congregations and schools throughout Europe, Asia, America, Africa and Australia. It also hosts online groups so that people who live far from a congregation are able to gather for worship and discuss the Writings. In 1937, some members of the General Church formed the Lord’s New Church Which is Nova Hierosolyma. This organization also has ministries in Africa, Europe and the United States.



Activity Overview

Projects and Activities (answers at back of book)

Choose one or two.

What Are the Writings About?

The books of the Writings or the Heavenly Doctrine give new meaning to the Old and New Testaments. Match titles of books of the Writings with the ideas they contain.

What's New about the New Church?

The Heavenly Doctrine for the New Church reveals many things that people have wondered about for thousands of years. Learn about five key ideas and think about which are the most important to you. Learn more by asking a pastor or searching online.

What Are the Writings About?

The books of the Writings or the Heavenly Doctrine give new meaning to the Old and New Testaments by revealing the meaning that is hidden within them. They also tell us that the spiritual world is all around us and explain how we enter this world when we die. Match the titles of the books of the Writings with the contents within them. Latin names, which are sometimes used for English translations, are in italics. Look at the lesson if you need help.

Book of the Writings	Contents of the Book
1. Secrets of Heaven <i>Arcana Coelestia</i> (1749-1756)	a. describes how the Lord created the world.
2. Heaven and Its Wonders and Hell <i>De Caelo et Eius Mirabilibus et de Inferno</i> (1758)	b. gives an overview of everything we need to live a good life. It is the last book of the Writings that was published.
3. Divine Love and Wisdom <i>Sapientia Anglica de Divinio Amore et de Divinia Sapientia</i> (1763)	c. explains the deeper meaning of the book of Revelation. It is about the coming of the New Church.
4. Divine Providence <i>Sapientia Angelica de Divinia Providentia</i> (1763)	d. tells us what true marriage love is like.
5. Apocalypse Revealed <i>Apocalypsis Revelata</i> (1766)	e. explains the deeper meaning within the books of Genesis and Exodus and describes the spiritual world. It is the longest book of the Writings.
6. Conjugal Love <i>Delitiae Sapientiae de Amora Conjugiali</i> (1768)	f. is about how the Lord leads us in freedom while still guiding and protecting us.
7. True Christian Religion <i>Vera Christiana Religio</i> (1771)	g. states what dying is like and describes what life is like in heaven and hell. It is the most popular book of the Writings.

What Is New about the New Church?

Based on an article by the Rev. Daniel W. Goodenough

The Heavenly Doctrine, given by the Lord through Emanuel Swedenborg, teaches many things that people have wondered about for thousands of years. Who is God? Is He Human? What does He want from us? How should we serve Him? Will He raise us up when we die? How? When? Do people live after death? What does being saved mean? And how does all this connect with our daily life? Does God care about the things we do? Do our lives have any meaning to God? Many people wonder the same things today.

Read big ideas that are new for the New Church, then learn more about them in the fine print.

Big Idea	Fine Print
There is One God, the Lord God Jesus Christ.	The Lord explains who He is plainly and directly so all may know Him as our God.
The Lord speaks to us in His Word.	The Word tells us the Lord’s ways so we can have a relationship with Him and find the beautiful hidden truths in the Old and New Testaments.
The Lord wants us to be happy.	The Lord tells us what life in heaven is like, so we can use our lives on earth to get ready for true happiness, which comes from loving the Lord and others.
The Lord raises us up into the spiritual world when we die.	We are raised up into the spiritual world as soon as we die and live forever in either heaven or in hell depending on what we love.
The Lord tells us how we can work for true married love.	The Lord wants us to have permanent conjugal love, a love between two married people who will grow to love each other more and more for ever.

Which of these ideas are important to you?

What else do you want to learn about? Ask your pastor, or search for answers online at <https://newchristianbiblestudy.org/swedenborg/>

Answers

Lesson 7

What are the Writings About?

1. e, 2. g, 3. a, 4. f, 5. c, 6. d, 7. b.