Judgment After Death and Digestion



When King Belshazzar profaned, he died. How does the Lord judge our actions? Many believe in a judgment after death when people are condemned to hell, or raised to heaven. The New Church offers a new idea, "Hell is *in* an evil person and heaven *in* a good person. After death everyone comes into that hell or into that heaven with which they had been associated while in the world" (*Arcana Coelestia* 8918). After death good and evil are separated because good and evil cannot be mixed either in heaven or in hell. All remaining evil is removed from those entering heaven, and all remaining good is removed from those entering hell. The Writings compare this process with digestion. Explore the sorting process that takes place by sorting foods and reading a comparison between human digestion and the preparation for eternal life.

1. King Belshazzar's profane act brought quick judgment. Was this a positive or a negative thing? Explain your answer.
2. What is the ultimate goal of judgment or punishment? To make a person pay for what they've done? To bring about change for a better life?
3. We constantly make judgments—about what we wear, eat, and do. But some judgments can only be made by the Lord—e.g. if a person is going to heaven or hell. After death good and bad loves are separated as people are prepared for eternal life in heaven or hell.
4. Bring out foods to sample. Invite students to snack as you continue talking. Foods we eat are like ideas we take in. Good and true ideas, like nutritious foods, strengthen us. False and bad ideas are like junk food, which may appeal, but can eventually be harmful. We often hear that it is healthier to mostly avoid junk food. It is always important to avoid false ideas.
5. Heaven is in a human form, which the Writings call the Grand Man. People in hell live outside the Grand Man and symbolize things that are full of disease. (See *Arcana Coelestia* 2996.)
6. *Optional*: Watch *How the Digestive System Works—Emma Bryce* (about 5 minutes) at bit.ly/HowDigest. This TedEd video traces food's path through the digestive system. (Use case and space sensitive bitly links in the browser bar at the top of your page.)
7. Hand out copies of *The World of Spirits and Digestion* (p. 2). Read and discuss.

Materials Needed

various foods, napkins, copy of *The World of Spirits and Digestion* p. 2 for each student
Optional: device to show video

Prepare in Advance

Purchase and prepare food. A variety of foods with higher and lower nutritional values will encourage thinking about the spiritual value of ideas we take into our minds.

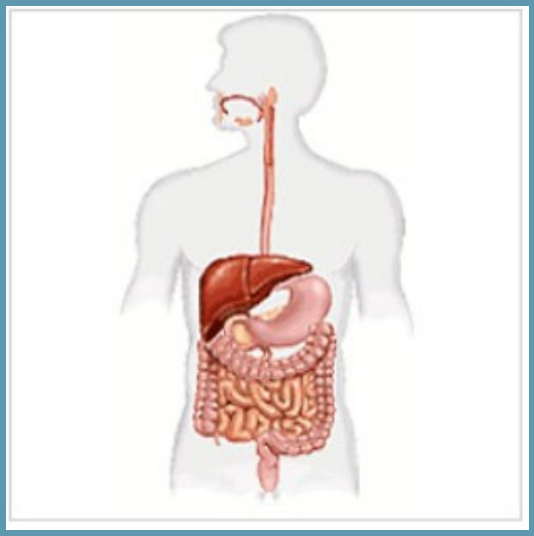
New Church Concept Judgment

The Lord says, "Judge not, that you be not condemned." (Matthew 7:1) This cannot mean judging someone's moral and civil life but judging someone's spiritual and heavenly life. One is not permitted to judge the inner mind or soul within—what a person's spiritual state is and so their fate after death, because it is known to the Lord alone. Nor does the Lord reveal it until after death, in order that everyone may do what they do in freedom, and that good or evil may consequently be from them and so in them, and the person thus live their own life and be their own person to eternity. See *Conjugial Love* 523

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The World of Spirits and Digestion

The Writings compare the journey people take when they are being prepared for heaven or hell to the way food is processed in the alimentary canal. People who have completed this journey are either assimilated as angels into the Grand Man like nourishing food, or rejected as evil spirits to hell. The Writings describe this process.



When a person dies and enters the next life, his or her life may be compared with food which is received in a gentle manner by the lips and then passed down through the mouth, throat, and esophagus into the stomach. The whole process is modified by the person's character, which was formed during the person's lifetime by the things he or she did.

To begin with, the treatment most spirits receive is mild. They are kept in the company of angels and good spirits. This is pictured by what happens to food, when at first it is touched gently by the lips and then tasted by the tongue to see what it is like. Food that is soft, containing what is sweet and oily is received instantly through the veins and carried into the bloodstream. Food that is hard, and contains things that are bitter, disagreeable, and of low nutritional value is harder to break down and is sent down through the esophagus into the stomach where it is refined by various methods and violent actions.

Food that is even harder, even less agreeable, and of even less value is forced down into the intestines and at length into the rectum where the first hell is situated, and is then finally expelled and becomes feces.

A person's life after death is like this. At first a person is kept in outward things. A person who has led a decent life on the outside is among angels and upright spirits. But once the person is no longer restricted to them, what the person had been like inwardly—what the person was like as far as his thoughts and affections were concerned, and at length so far as his core purposes were concerned—is revealed. Those purposes determine the life that lies ahead for the person.

See *Arcana Coelestia* 5175

For Reflection

Choose one or two foods—perhaps one with high nutritional value and one with low nutritional value. Discuss how these might relate to the ideas we take into our lives, e.g. sugary drinks taste good, but can rot teeth and have little nutritional value. Compare this with the way teasing someone may seem like fun, but afterwards you might feel rotten that you have hurt a friend.

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