

CHILDREN IN HEAVEN

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Lessons: Matthew 28:1-8; Heaven and Hell 329-332 (portions)

When children hear the Easter story of how the Lord was cruelly taken by the soldiers and killed, it must make them very sad. The Lord when on earth was teaching people about love and how to get along with their neighbors, but there were those who did not understand His story and showed their anger by eventually killing the Lord's body.

Those who loved and understood the Lord's message carefully placed His body in a sepulcher, which was actually a cave carved out of stone. Later, some of His followers came to His grave to share their love, scarcely able to believe that such a wonderful person could be treated so cruelly.

But, as you know, they arrived at the sepulcher and found the great stone covering the doorway had been moved aside, and they were greeted by an angel from heaven. The words that the angel spoke were perhaps the most important words that anyone has ever heard before or since. The angel said, "He is not here. He has risen, as He said."

What that meant, children, was that everyone who is born in this earth (or any earth) will eventually leave their body behind and rise to a spiritual world, there to live to eternity. For those who could not believe this wonderful news, the Lord reappeared to many of His disciples and followers, telling them the same happy news. He wanted the whole world to know that everyone whose body dies will still survive as a person in a spiritual body.

So when you hear the Easter story told once again this holiday, keep in mind that it is to remind us all of the wonderful news the Lord told us through the mouth of one of His angels at the sepulcher. It means that whenever one of our dear friends or relatives finally leaves this world, we know that they are not really dead, and that they will wake up in the spiritual world to be greeted by angels. It matters not whether they live to old age or whether they are taken to the other world as children. No one ever really dies, no matter what his age when one leaves his body behind.

To make sure we completely understand this message, the Lord let a man look into that world beyond the grave. This man, Emanuel Swedenborg, was allowed to talk to and learn from friends he knew, who had died and left their bodies behind. He was also able to tell us what life will be like in the spiritual world. He talked to people who had been living there for hundreds of years. He talked to

some people who had died just a few days before. And he was able to see and talk to little children who had died at an early age.

You must wonder what would happen to you if you were to die while still a child. Well, Swedenborg was able to tell us exactly what will happen. He saw little children being taught by wonderful angels that were like their mothers. They were cared for and loved in a most special way. He watched them at play, where they were laughing and playing games. He saw them in bright gardens, in lovely homes, and all wearing beautiful clothes. He was there long enough to see them grow from childhood to adults. Wherever they went they were surrounded by people who loved them and cared for them.

If a baby was taken to the other world before he learned to talk in this one, Swedenborg saw that angels taught them how to speak and to walk. He also learned that every child was eventually taken to heaven. There were no exceptions. He also learned that children there loved the Lord because they knew how much the Lord loved them. He loves us all, whether young or old, even while we are on this earth—no matter where we are or what we are doing—whether awake or asleep, the Lord, with His angels is protecting us and loving us every moment.

As you hear the familiar Easter story being read this month, keep in mind the reason why you are being told about it. The message is that, like the Lord Himself, everyone is taken into the care of angels as soon as they leave their body behind in this world. So you can say, when someone you know and love leaves this earth, “He is not here, he has risen.” That is the message of the Easter story. That is the joy we feel in our hearts as we sing the songs about that event. Knowing this, we never have to fear again the fact that all of us must eventually leave our natural body. All will awaken to the company of angels, sent to greet us by the Lord Himself. *Amen.*