

His Name on Our Foreheads

by the Rev. Lawson M. Smith

“And they shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads.”

Revelation 22:4

Do you want to see the Lord’s face? What do you think His face would be like if you could see it? Surely we would see a very warm, radiant love and a wonderful brightness in His eyes. John saw the Lord’s eyes like flames of fire because the love shining through was so bright. We might also see something of the Lord’s great, deep wisdom, the calm orderliness which creates this marvelous universe and sustains our lives every moment.

If we could see His face, we would look to see what kind of Person the God of the universe is. In the Word, the Lord *tells* us what sort of a Person He is, and how to think of Him. The Word in this way is like the Lord’s face, or like a mirror in which we can see His face (see *Apocalypse Revealed* 938:2). The inner truths of the Word’s spiritual sense especially show the Lord to us. These truths reveal His great mercy and love, which do not always appear in the literal sense (see *Arcana Coelestia* 10579:7). We are taught that wherever the Lord’s face is mentioned in the Word, it means His mercy and love, because those are the Lord’s main qualities. Mercy is the main thing an angel sees when he or she sees His face. “To see His face,” the Heavenly Doctrine for the New Church says, “is to enjoy peace and goodness from [His] mercy” (*Arcana Coelestia* 5585:4).

When we think of seeing the Lord’s face, we might remember a story about a time when Jesus was talking to His disciples about humility. He brought a little child into their midst and said, “Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always *see the face of My Father* who is in heaven” (Matthew 18:10, emphasis added). The angels who guard little children are celestial angels from the inmost heaven. Because these angels love the Lord with all their heart, they are more innocent than other angels, that is, more willing to be led by the Lord. They see the Lord’s face—they see His love—far more clearly than the angels of lower heavens. To lower angels the Lord might appear more distant and austere. Because of the limitations of their states, they are not able to see God as clearly the way He really is. But the angels with newborns and little children see His face.

We are taught that infants who die are raised into this highest heaven. All the angels of all the heavens, in the Lord’s eyes, are like one grand human being. All the angels work harmoniously together, like the many parts of the human body. Infants go straight to societies that make up the eyes of heaven, because there they are under the Lord’s direct oversight. He is the only Father of these children. The angels there look most directly to the Lord for guidance in raising His children. When they look to Him, they see His face, and they know what to do.

We on earth also glimpse something of our Heavenly Father’s face, especially in the innocence we see in little children. This innocence comes straight from Him. Because infants have so little sense of self, they receive the Lord’s gentleness and peace purely, without selfishness. Through little children the Lord brings His blessings to the homes where they live. When we hold a little child, we can be touched by the Lord, if we are willing to look carefully and not think too much

about the inconveniences of little children.

In turn, parents can help their children see the Lord. Children cannot see the Lord for themselves. By baptism children are associated with angels in the other world who deeply love and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. This association with Christian angels is a wonderful thing. It is the first use of baptism. By it the Lord provides an affirmative sphere for a child to grow up with.

But children and adults also need to *learn* about the Lord from His Word. Then they have both an affirmative sphere from within and ideas from the Word that come from outside by listening to the stories, looking at pictures, and later by reading. We have freedom to ignore or reject ideas that we hear and read, or we can take them in, think them over, and make them a part of our lives. The Lord wants us to act from *freedom* according to reason in thinking about His Word, accepting it and living by it. Then if we choose to do so, the angels' influence coming from within meets the ideas from the Word from without. We begin to see the Lord's face for ourselves as adults.

The second use of baptism is to be a reminder of what the Lord wants for each of His children: for us to find out who He is, to freely seek His face. Baptism reminds us that we are learning to live a spiritual moral life. Our purpose in life is get to know the Lord and follow Him. As parents we have the wonderful opportunity to help our children see the Lord too. Isn't that what we hope most of all for them, that they will get to know the Lord better and better and be His friends? Then they will have happy lives as useful citizens both in this world and in the next. They will come to see their Father's face for themselves, and we will too.

To see the Lord's face, as Revelation 22 says, His name must be written on our foreheads. Our foreheads represent our love, so to have the Lord's name written there is to have the Lord's love in us. The Lord is always working to inspire us with what is good. In heaven He looks at everyone in the forehead. We can picture Him looking down from above and seeing our foreheads, like a father looking down at his toddlers. He draws the angels toward Himself, away from harmful influences, so that they are always inwardly facing Him, no matter where they turn. The same is true for us in every good state. So the Lord is always looking after us, looking us in the face, and gently turning us to look at Him, as much as we are willing.

Something similar is represented in baptism. A child's forehead is washed with water, and his name is pronounced. The washing stands for purifying our lives by means of the truth. Unclean loves are washed away by a life of obedience to His Word. Then, step by step the Lord's name is written on our foreheads. We hope that a little child's name will be forever associated with the Lord. We hope that his or her name will make people think, "There's someone who follows the Lord." In that sense the Lord's name will be written on their character and reputation.

The water of baptism is beautifully portrayed in the description of the Holy City. "And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb" (Revelation 22:1). This crystal-clear river illustrates many Divine truths, flowing forth from the spiritual sense of the Word. Those who have the Word of the Lord's second coming in the Heavenly Doctrine for the New Church are wonderfully blessed with *clear* truths. They open up the real meaning of the Bible as never before. The Lord shows us a plain path of

life, pointing out the harmful and false things we must avoid and overcome, and the good and true things to aim for and do. They enable us to think truly and deeply about the Lord Himself: we can see His face. This is a wonderful heritage from the Lord. We can make use of it ourselves, and we can help the Lord give it to our children as well.

By virtue of this river of water of life, we can bear fruit in a useful, happy life, like the tree of life, bearing twelve fruits, yielding its fruit every month. As far as we see the truth, and especially as far as we love the truth and use it in our lives, we will see the Lord's face more and more clearly, and the Lord will be with us. His name will be written upon us.

“Blessed are those who do His commandments that they may have power in the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city” (Revelation 22:14).

Amen.

Lessons: Revelation 22; *Apocalypse Explained* 412:6