

General Church Education



Heaven and Hell

John 14:1-4

Lesson 26

Jacob's Ladder Religion Lessons

Level 2: The Lord Is Our Shepherd

For ages 7-8 years

Heaven and Hell

John 14:1-4

Ideas for Parents & Teachers

Heaven and hell have opposite natures. Things in the spiritual world are created according to the affections of the spirits there. Angels in heaven love the Lord and the neighbor and are occupied with useful service. Their surroundings reflect the beauty of their love. Hell is barren and ugly, populated by fierce creatures. Evil spirits hate the Lord and the neighbor, so the things around them reflect their ugly affections.

The Lord is present everywhere—with the angels of heaven and the evil spirits of hell as well as with everyone in the natural world. But He creates each person for heaven and constantly tries to guide us on that path. He wants all of His children to live happily to eternity. Knowing about the reality of the spiritual world helps us realize the importance of our natural life.

Ideas for Children

- The Lord created a natural world and a spiritual world.
- Everything in the spiritual world is created by the Lord according to what people living there love.
- Everything in hell is the opposite of everything in heaven.

From the Writings

The reason why God did not create evil is that He is good itself, and in good God is omnipresent, continually urging and demanding to be received. Even if He is not received, still He does not go away. For if He did, people would instantly die, or rather dissolve into non-existence, since people get their life, and their continued existence, from God. Evil was not created by God but introduced by people, because people turn the good which continually flows in from God into evil, by turning away from God and turning toward themselves. Everyone is predestined to heaven, and no one to hell; but people commit themselves to hell by misusing their free will in spiritual matters. As a result they embrace the ideas wafted from hell. See *True Christian Religion* 490

The internal person is so distinct and separate from the external that it can see things that arise in the external, rule them, and control them. The internal person can also be raised to heaven, even up to the Lord, and so be joined to Him in thought and affection, consequently in faith and love. Furthermore the internal person is so distinct and separate that it is parted from the external after death and lives on forevermore. These characteristics separate the human being from beasts. *Arcana Coelestia* 9231

Nearly everyone who enters the next life from the world imagines that hell is the same for everybody, and that heaven is too, when in fact there are limitless differences and variations in both. Hell is never exactly the same for one person as it is for another, and neither is heaven, just as one person, spirit, or angel is never exactly like another. *Arcana Coelestia* 457

Heaven and Hell

We have been learning about the spiritual world from things that Emanuel Swedenborg saw and heard. The Lord wants us to know about eternal life. He wants us to know we don't really die and that we live forever. You already know that the spiritual world is divided into three parts—heaven, hell and a place between them called the world of spirits. We are told that heaven looks a lot like this natural world, only everything is much more beautiful. The houses, clothes, and even plants and animals match the loves of the people who live there.

Love Makes Our Surroundings

Unlike on our earth, in the spiritual world, what we love is what appears in our surroundings. Angels in heaven love the Lord and their neighbors so they are surrounded by gentle and beautiful things. Evil spirits in hell love only themselves and want to get everything for themselves. So they are surrounded by hard, ugly and poisonous things. What kinds of animals would you expect to see in heaven and hell? Read from the Writings of Swedenborg to find out

what the angels showed him.



An angel said... “I will now show you how all kinds of animals and vegetables were produced by God.” He led me away to a broad green field and said, “Look around.” And I looked around, and saw birds of most beautiful colors, some flying, some perched upon the trees, and some scattered over the field plucking little leaves from roses. There were doves and swans. After these had disappeared from my sight I saw not far from me flocks of sheep with lambs, and of kids and she-goats; and round about these flocks I saw herds of cattle, also of camels and mules, and in a grove, deer with high horns, and also unicorns. *True Christian Religion* 78.1

What kinds of animals did the angel show Swedenborg? (Doves, swans, sheep with lambs, goats with kids, cattle, camels, mules, deer and unicorns.)

Let's read on and find out what kinds of plant life were seen in the various directions of heaven.

The angel said, "Turn your face toward the east." And I saw a garden containing fruit trees, such as orange trees, lemon trees, olive trees, vines, fig-trees, pomegranates, and also shrubs bearing berries. The angel then said, "Look now toward the south." And I saw fields of various kinds of grain, and round about them flower beds containing roses of beautifully varied colors; but toward the north I saw thick groves of chestnut trees, palms, lindens and other trees with rich foliage. *True Christian Religion* 78.1



There were different kinds of useful plants and trees growing depending on which direction Swedenborg looked. Let's read more and find out what animals and plants were seen in hell.

After this we talked... about hell, that no such things are seen there as are seen in heaven, but only their opposites; since the lusts of evil in hell are opposites of the affections of love in heaven. Thus in hell, there are birds of night, such as bats and owls; also wolves, panthers, tigers, and rats and mice; also venomous serpents of every kind, dragons and crocodiles; and brambles, nettles, thorns, and thistles, and some poisonous plants grow; and at times these disappear, and then nothing is seen but heaps of stones, and bogs in which frogs croak. See *True Christian Religion* 78.5

Can you name some of the plants and animals seen in hell? All animals can serve a useful purpose. However, fierce animals and those that appear in the night are found in hell. This is because they represent how the people in hell have turned away from the Lord and are in darkness because of it. Everything in hell is the opposite of heaven.

Did you know that heaven is divided into three parts? The angels in the first or lowest heaven are full of good loves and that is reflected in their surroundings. They want to do what the

Lord tells them. So heaven is a happy place. Angels have nice comfortable houses and wear colorful clothes.

The angels in the middle or second heaven love their neighbors and always want to help others. They love the Lord's truth and so they live in houses and palaces made of stone, because stone pictures truth. Their churches are made of stone too. They also have beautiful clothes to wear.

The angels in the highest or third heaven live on mountains and are closest to the Lord. They love the Lord more than anything and are constantly thankful to Him for all He does. They are wise and love being useful and helping the Lord. They try to make others happy because the Lord wants to bring everyone happiness. Many live on farms with sheep and deer around them. In the highest heaven, angels live in tents or in wooden houses. Their churches are wooden too.

Your Heavenly Home

The Lord is making a home for each one of us. He tells us so.

Read John 14:1-4. In another place the Lord tells us that whether we “make our bed in heaven or in hell,” He will be there with us. The Lord takes care of everyone. Because He loves us deeply, He wants us to come into heaven where He has prepared a beautiful place for us.

How will you know your place in heaven? The Lord and His angels will lead you to the house that is just right for you. You will know it when you see it. It will feel just right to you, and you will love it. This is because it will be a picture of what you love.

The happiness of heaven comes from being useful. There are many ways to be useful in our lives. Each person is created with different talents and abilities. Each one of us can learn to use what we have been given to serve the Lord and the neighbor. And we can know what a wonderful life awaits those who love the Lord.

Discussion Questions

- Do you think the evil spirits from hell would be happy in heaven? Why or why not? (They would be uncomfortable because their surroundings would not match what they love.)
- What would you like your heavenly home to be like? (Answers will vary.)
- What kinds of animals would you like to have around you? (Answers will vary.)
- Can you describe a time when everything seemed almost perfect—maybe like heaven? (Answers may include a time such as Christmas, a vacation or a family outing.)

Activity Overview | Heaven and Hell

Recitation

Learn the recitation by heart.

Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it. Matthew 7:13,14

Song

Angel Song

Listen or download at <https://www.newchurchvineyard.org/resource/song-angel-song/>

Activities

Choose one or two.

- Activity 1 | The Two Great Commandments in My Life
- Activity 2 | Footprints to Heaven
- Picture to color

Additional Activity Ideas

- Watch *What Heaven Is Like* at <https://www.newchurchvineyard.org/resource/video-what-heaven-is-like/>
- Make a miniature heavenly garden in a pot or box using moss, small stones, small flowering plants, and miniatures.
- Make a miniature heavenly garden out of modeling clay or beeswax.
- Eat delicious foods (e.g. fruit, sweet bread) that angels might eat in heaven.
- Angels love to do things that are kind and useful. Do something kind and useful for others, e.g. bake cookies.

Activity 1 | The Two Great Commandments in My Life

Angels in heaven love the Lord and their neighbor above all else. We can try to live like this right now and start on our path to heaven. Draw in pictures or write in words what you can do.

Materials

crayons, colored pencils or magic markers
pencil

Directions

1. Complete the page *The Two Great Commandments in My Life* by drawing a picture of something you can do to love the Lord, and something you can do to love others.

The Two Great Commandments in My Life

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment.
I can love the Lord by

And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.
I can love others by

Activity 2 | Footprints to Heaven

Make the Lord's footsteps your pathway (Psalm 85:13). Create a path of "footprints" to heaven by writing one of the 10 commandments on each footprint.

Materials

colored pencils or magic markers
pencil
tape
a copy of both *Footprints to Heaven* pages

Directions

1. Complete the page *My Footprints to Heaven* by writing one of the Ten Commandments in the space beside each footprint as follows:
 1. You shall have no other gods before Me.
 2. You shall not take the Lord's name in vain.
 3. Remember the Sabbath day.
 4. Honor your father and mother.
 5. You shall not kill.
 6. You shall not hurt marriage.
 7. You shall not steal.
 8. You shall not lie.
 9. You shall not covet your neighbor's house.
 10. You shall not covet anything that is your neighbor's.
2. Color the footprints.
3. Place the two pages together with the title at the top.
4. Tape pages together to create one large piece of paper.

Footprints to Heaven





