

General Church Education



The Heaven of the Silver Age

Conjugal Love 76

Lesson 27

Jacob's Ladder Religion Lessons

Level 2: The Lord Is Our Shepherd

For ages 7-8 years

The Heaven of the Silver Age

Conjugal Love 76

Ideas for Parents & Teachers

Mythology tells about the time before recorded history, a time known as the Golden and Silver ages. We learn more about these times in the first chapters of Genesis and in the Writings. The first people in the Golden Age or the Most Ancient Church were taught by the Lord through an inner perception of truth. But after they made more and more selfish choices their will and perceptions could no longer be trusted and the Lord established the Ancient Church, known as the Silver Age. People in this church were given truth in an outward form. They studied and learned so the Lord could enlighten their minds about spiritual things. They knew the science of correspondences (by which natural objects are related to spiritual things) and could see representatives of truth in the world of nature. They had one language until they began to desire to learn for the sake of gaining power over others instead of helping others. The heaven of the Silver Age is full of good people who loved to learn from the Lord so that they could serve their neighbors. Learning about the Silver Age encourages us to be of use to the neighbor.

Ideas for Children

- Angels of the heaven of the Silver Age love their neighbor above everything else.
- These angels of the Ancient Church love marriage and live in conjugal love.
- These angels are in a special love of growing wise, and they love to learn about truths.
- Angels of the Silver Age saw things in nature as correspondences of true ideas.

From the Writings

When people were first created, they were given wisdom and a love of wisdom for the sake of having it to share with others. It was engraved on the wisdom of the wise that no one should be wise and live for himself alone, unless he was wise and lived at the same time for others. This was the origin of society. Useful services are the bonds of society, there being as many bonds as there are good and useful services, and useful services are unlimited in number.

Useful services are spiritual when they have to do with love toward God and love for the neighbor. They are moral and civic services when they have to do with love for the society or civil state in which a person resides, and with love of the fellow citizens with whom he or she is associated. Useful services are natural when they have to do with love of the world and its necessities. And they are corporeal when they have to do with the love of self-preservation for the sake of higher uses. All these capacities for being useful are engraved on the human spirit, and they follow in sequence, one after another, and when they are combined, one exists within another. See *Conjugal Love 18*

The whole of heaven is nothing but a world of useful service. What is useful service but love of the neighbor in act? And what holds the heavens together except this love? *Conjugal Love 266*

The Heaven of the Silver Age

In the last lesson we learned that there are different parts of the spiritual world. Each part looks different because the things spirits see around them in their world depends on what they love. In this story we will learn more about one part of heaven, the heaven of the Silver Age. The angels of the Silver Age love their neighbor more than anything else. Let's find out what their heaven looks like, what kinds of houses they live in, and where they worship.

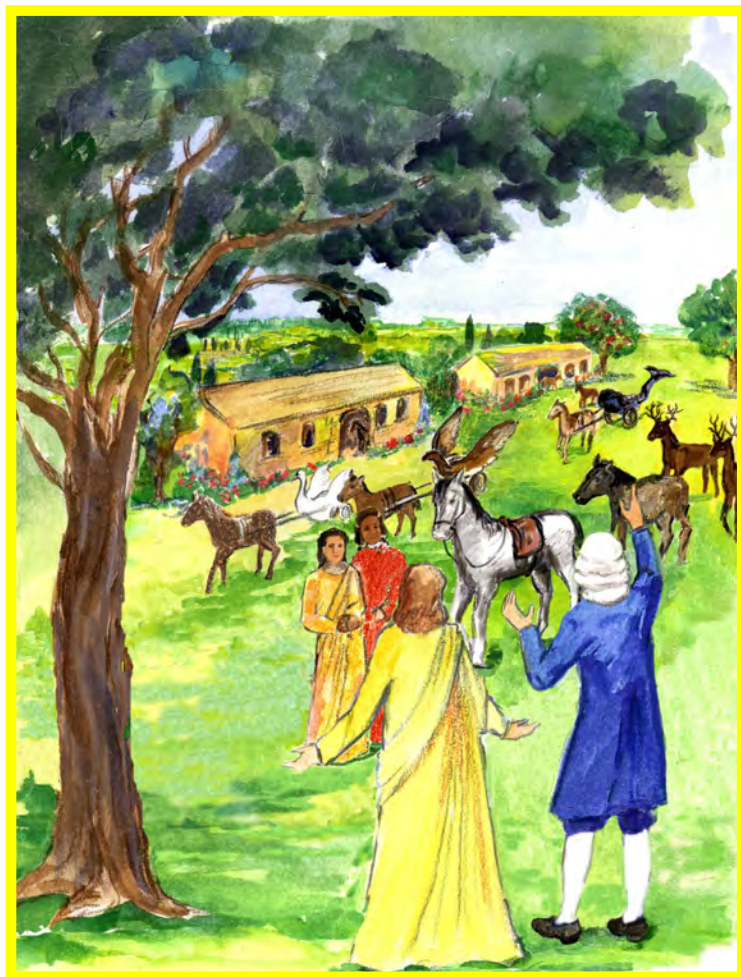
A Community in Heaven

Once when Swedenborg was thinking about marriages in heaven, an angel appeared to him and asked him if he would like to visit the heaven of the Silver Age to learn about the marriages there. When he replied that he would like to go, Swedenborg was taken in the spirit to a hill in heaven. His angel guide pointed out a valley below and then flat land with mountains beyond.

They went down into the valley where they found statues carved from wood and stone in the images of people, animals, birds and fish. Swedenborg asked his angel guide if they were idols. Do you remember what an idol is? (A carved image that is worshiped as a god.) The angel replied that

they were not idols but represented good qualities in people and true ideas. The angels in this heaven have a special love of growing wise. They love to learn about the Lord. True wisdom is the ability to know what is good and true and what is evil and false. When the angels look at the statues, they understand heavenly ideas from the Lord and grow wiser.

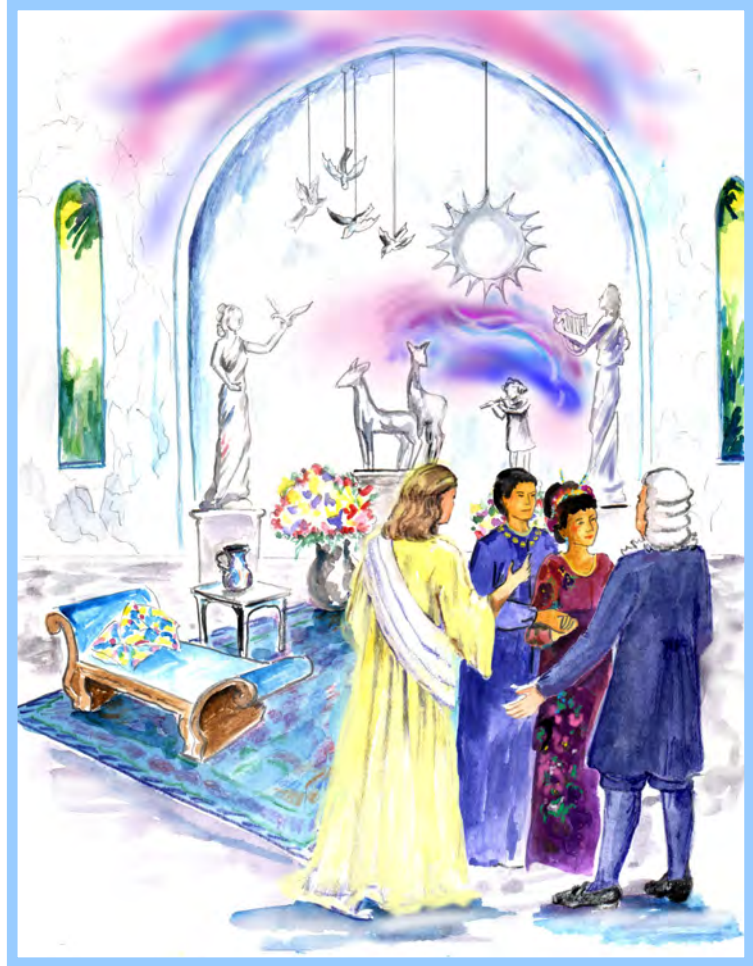
Swedenborg and the angel went on to the flat land of the plain and there they saw horses and chariots, wagons and stables. The chariots were in the shape of eagles, whales, stags with horns and unicorns. When they came near the horses and chariots, they disappeared and instead they saw people talking together! The angel companion explained that the people of the Silver Age appear at a distance like horses and chariots be-



cause these things picture or represent intelligence and understanding. This is another way of saying that the people of the Silver Age have a special love of learning what is good and true.

Next Swedenborg went on to see a city. The angels of this heaven love their neighbor more than anything else and so they live together in communities. Let's read now from *Conjugal Love* and find out what the city looked like and what kinds of houses were there.

We went up a long ascent, and at last saw a city which we entered. And in going through the streets and public places, we took note of the houses. They were like many palaces of marble. In front of them were steps of alabaster and at the sides of the steps columns of jasper. We also saw a temple of precious stone of the color of sapphire and lapis lazuli. *Conjugal Love* 76



What were the houses like? (Palaces made of marble, with fancy steps leading up to them decorated with columns.) Where do the angels of this heaven worship? (A temple made of precious stone.)

Do you know what color sapphire and lapis lazuli are? They are blue stones. So the temple must have sparkled and gleamed in shades of blue like these gemstones! The houses sound very elegant and grand too, don't they? Swedenborg's angel companion explained that the reason for this is because stones also stand for truths. Once again we see that what people love is pictured in the surroundings of their heaven.

Then an angel couple invited Swedenborg into their house so he could see what it was like. The inside was also beautiful with works of art on the walls and small statues of silver. When Swedenborg asked about these, the angel husband told him that they picture many of the qualities and delights that come from conjugal love. They stand for the idea that the husband and wife are so close that they feel as if they are one. The married partners think the same way about things and they love the same things. There is no disagreement or unhappiness as happens when

one person wants one thing and the other person wants another. Marriage is a holy thing and brings the angels much happiness because the husband and wife love each other and love the Lord.

As the angel husband was explaining these things, a lovely rainbow appeared on the wall. It was reddish purple, blue and white. The colors seemed to flow back and forth over each other and then became a splendid flaming red! This amazing rainbow was a clear picture of how conjugal love flows back and forth between husband and wife and gives joy to both partners.

Then the angel host gave Swedenborg a wonderful gift to remember his visit—a cluster of white grapes with leaves from the vine attached. As Swedenborg left, the leaves became silver!

Loving Your Neighbor

What kinds of things do you think these angel couples love? Think about what you have just learned about this heaven. (They love to serve their neighbors and they love to grow wise from the Lord.) Yes, angels delight in their work from a love of being useful, not because they love themselves more than others or because they want to gain more possessions. And they love truth because truth teaches us how to be useful. We are told that there are more ways to be useful in heaven than can be counted. Think about some of the jobs that are done here on earth and how people help one another in daily life. There are even more ways to be useful in heavenly communities.



Discussion Questions

- What is a job that you might like to do in heaven? (Answers will vary.)
- Can you think of any kind of art work that might inspire people to love their neighbor? (Answers may include things like pictures that show adults reading to children or helping them in some way, pictures of people planting gardens or doing their jobs faithfully, or statues of heroes who have helped their country or saved their village from danger.)
- What qualities of heavenly communities would help communities on earth? (Loving the neighbor and helping each other in daily life. Husbands and wives loving and helping each other.)

Activity Overview | The Heaven of the Silver Age

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

If Thou but Ask the Lord to Guide Thee

Listen and download at <https://www.newchurchvineyard.org/resource/song-if-you-but-ask-the-lord-to-guide-you/>

Activities

Choose one or two.

- Activity 1 | Create a Symbolic Sculpture
- Activity 2 | Grapes from Heaven
- Picture to color

Additional Activity Ideas

- Make a rainbow by putting a prism in bright sunlight.
- Create a rainbow by squirting mist from a spray bottle in bright sunlight.
- Make a milky rainbow in a shallow dish, such as a pie pan. Put ½ inch (1.5cm) whole or 2% milk in the dish. Use a dropper to add a few drops of food coloring. Add a drop or two of dish soap to the pan and watch what happens!
- Use chalk to create a rainbow on a driveway or pavement outside.
- Eat grapes.

Activity 1 | Create a Symbolic Sculpture

People who lived at the time of the Ancient Church learned to think about things in heaven when they saw something here on earth. For example, when they saw the sun, they thought of the Lord. When they saw clean water they thought of the Lord's truth. Whenever they saw an animal, a tree, a mountain or a river, or the sun, moon, or stars they thought of something that had to do with the Lord or heaven.

The people of the Ancient Church sometimes made statues of animals and people to keep in their homes or temples to help them think more about true ideas from the Lord.

Think of your favorite animal or think about one of the statues from our story when Swedenborg visited the heaven of the Silver Age. Create a silver sculpture and place it near your copy of the Word.

Materials

silver modeling clay *or* water-based clay in any color
optional: silver spray paint, or glue and silver glitter

Directions

1. Create a sculpture to represent a spiritual idea, for example:
 - horse (understanding of the Word)
 - lamb or sheep (innocence—willingness to follow the Lord)
 - lion (power of the Lord's love fighting through us from the Word)
 - bird (thoughts)
 - fish (facts)
 - grapes (wine = spiritual intelligence)
 - fruit (useful acts)
2. If you have used a clay that is not silver, allow the sculpture to dry and harden and then use spray paint to make it silver, or spread glue on the sculpture and cover it with silver glitter. Allow to dry.

Activity 2 | Grapes from Heaven

Re-create the gift of a cluster of grapes with silver leaves that Swedenborg received from the angels of the heaven of the Ancient Church.

Materials

aluminum foil

tape

stiff paper

scissors

crayons, markers or colored pencils

Grapes from Heaven template printed on stiff paper (*option*: if you do not have stiff paper, mount the template on thin cardboard, e.g. a cereal box, using glue)

option: florists wire (to create tendrils), a pencil (to twist the wire around), tape

Directions

1. *Option*: If you do not have stiff paper, mount the *Grapes from Heaven* template on thin cardboard.
2. Color the grapes green or purple. Leaves should not be colored.
3. Cut around the outer edges of the cluster of grapes and leaves.
4. Cover the leaves with aluminum foil to make them look shiny and silver. Attach the foil with tape.
5. *Option*: Create a few tendrils by winding florists wire around a pencil. Tape the tendrils to the back of the grapes so that the tendrils show when looking at the project.

Grapes from Heaven Template

