

General Church Education



Swedenborg Explores the Spiritual World

True Christian Religion 78

Lesson 33

Jacob's Ladder Religion Lessons

Level 5: The Lord Is Our King

For ages 10-11

Swedenborg Explores the Spiritual World

True Christian Religion 78:1, 2, 5

Teacher Background

Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772) was a successful scientist and philosopher when he responded to the Lord's call to become a revelator. His rich professional background enabled him to use scientific and philosophical reasoning as he wrote the Heavenly Doctrine for the New Church. However, he also loved the Word and saw it as the source of truth. He had a thorough knowledge and understanding of the Old and New Testaments and had studied them from childhood. The Lord miraculously opened Swedenborg's spiritual eyes so that he could be awake in the spiritual world while writing down his experiences in the natural and be a vehicle through which the Lord could give the Heavenly Doctrine for the New Church.

The Heavenly Doctrine says that the Lord taught Swedenborg directly and through angelic messengers. He learned that the plants, animals and homes he saw in the spiritual world reflected the types of angels and spirits living there. As with all faiths, the understanding of higher truth is not subject to scientific proof, however the Writings provide many reasons for the truth of the statements to be found there.

Focus Points

- The Lord prepared Swedenborg to become a revelator by his work and reading the Word.
- Swedenborg's study and love for the Word laid the most important foundation for His journeys to the spiritual world.
- Swedenborg saw many wonderful sights in heaven and many ugly things in hell.

Readings from the Writings

"I bear true witness that the Lord has shown Himself in the presence of me.... He opened the sight of my spirit, thus admitting me to the spiritual world, and allowing me to see the heavens and the hells, and also to talk with angels and spirits; and this I have now been doing for many years without a break. Equally I assert that from the first day of my calling I have not received any instruction concerning the doctrines of that church from any angel, but only from the Lord, while I was reading the Word." *True Christian Religion* 779

The Lord has revealed to me the spiritual sense of His Word, for it is through the spiritual sense and in no other way that He is present in the Word. See *True Christian Religion* 780

"It has been given me to see, and from it to perceive clearly what comes from the Lord and what from angels. What has come from the Lord has been written; what has come from the angels has not." *Apocalypse Explained* 1183.2

Teacher Activity Overview

The lesson offers the following choices:

Recitation

Learn the Lord's Word 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 straight is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.” (Matthew 7:13,14)

Projects and Activities (see back of lesson for answers)

Swedenborg Explores the Spiritual World True or False?

Circle the best answer.

Explore the World

Although you are not able to explore the spiritual world, the Lord has given you five senses to explore the natural world. Go for a walk. Quietly explore the wonder of the natural world. Answer some short questions about your walk.

Song: Jesus Is My Friend Most Precious

Listen to or learn a song that Emanuel Swedenborg sang when he was a child. Online at <https://www.newchurchvineyard.org/resource/song-jesus-is-my-friend-most-precious/>

Additional Project and Activity Choices

Questions about the Spiritual World

Emanuel Swedenborg asked the angels many questions about the spiritual world. Read how they answered his questions and come up with questions of your own. Online at <https://www.newchurchvineyard.org/file/activity-asking-questions-about-the-spiritual-world.pdf>

Names in Heaven

Everyone in the spiritual world has a name that reflects their qualities. What would you like your heavenly name to represent? Online at <https://www.newchurchvineyard.org/file/activity-names-in-heaven.pdf>

Write a Bio-Poem about Swedenborg

Use the information you have learned to write a Bio-Poem about Swedenborg. Online at <https://www.newchurchvineyard.org/file/activity-write-a-bio-poem-about-swedenborg.pdf>

Swedenborg Explores the Spiritual World

True Christian Religion 78:1, 2, 5

Vocabulary

mortal—a person born on earth who will enter the spiritual world after death

existence—to come into being or be alive

mental picture—a picture in your mind

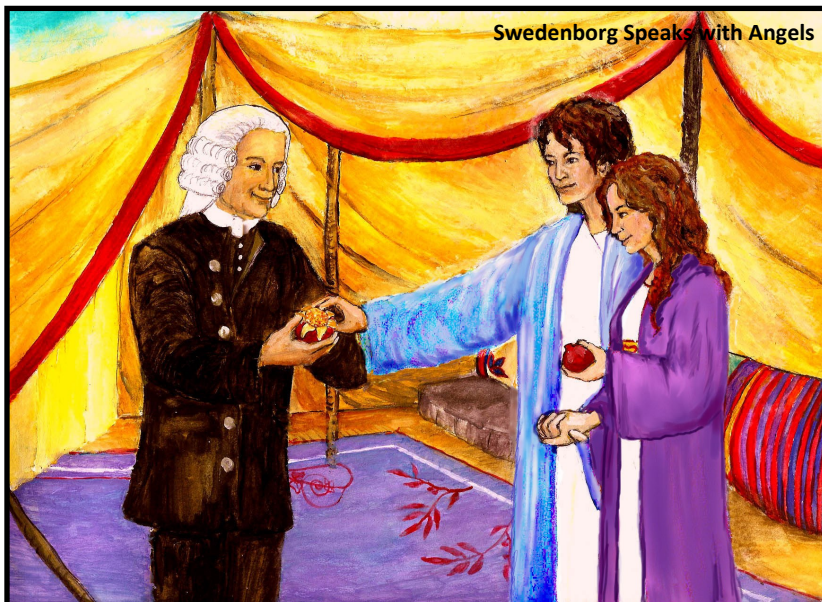
The Lord Teaches Us

How is it possible for us to know anything about the Lord? How can we learn His plans for us? How can we know about the Lord's heavenly kingdom? How do we know right from wrong? The Lord gives us the answers to these questions in His Word. The Word is the Lord speaking to us right here on this earth. That is why we say that the Word is God-with-us. The Word also teaches us about how to live a good life in this world, and about how to become an angel in His heavenly kingdom.

The Word for the New Church is the Old and New Testaments and the Heavenly Doctrine of the New Jerusalem given by the Lord through Emanuel Swedenborg.

Emanuel Swedenborg's Preparation

Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772) was well prepared to be an explorer of the spiritual world. He was a very talented scientist and philosopher. As a scientist he could think about the Lord's created world in an intelligent and informed way. As a philosopher he did much re-



search and was aware of the big questions people ask about life and the world. Most importantly, Swedenborg loved the Word and regarded it as the most important source of truth.

Though there were many smart and religious people alive at the time Swedenborg lived, the Lord chose him to become a revelator. Therefore, the Lord and angel messengers spoke to him and al-

Lesson 33 • Swedenborg Explores the Spiritual World

lowed him to see into the spiritual world. Do you think the Lord would have allowed this if Swedenborg might have misused the extraordinary experience? No, Swedenborg could be trusted to report exactly what he saw and heard.

Swedenborg Sees Into Heaven

You might have heard that people on earth have a spiritual body that lives in the spiritual world, while their earthly body lives on earth. Our spiritual bodies have eyes, ears, noses and every other part that our earthly bodies have. Almost all the time we live on earth we are not aware of our spiritual body. Most people have to wait until they go to the spiritual world to become aware of their spiritual body at all.

However, Swedenborg was given a wonderful gift no other mortal has ever had. He was awake in his spiritual and his earthly bodies at the same time. That means he could experience the sights, sounds, feelings, and smells of the spiritual world while he lived on earth. As you can imagine, he was continually amazed, just as we are when we go to a new place that is different from anywhere we have ever been before.

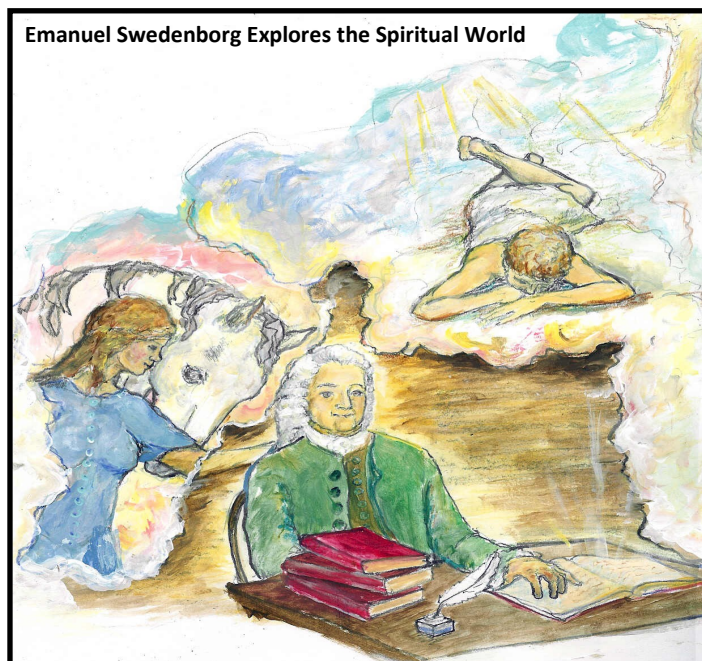
Sights in the Spiritual World

Swedenborg saw animals and plants in the spiritual world. They looked like the things we see on earth. But in other places the Writings tell us that plants and animals are even more beautiful in heaven than they are on earth. The colors and shapes of the things Swedenborg saw were brighter and more miraculous than any we see in our world.

After seeing these things, the angel told Swedenborg that each animal and plant he saw was created from the thoughts and feelings of spirits near them. He then found out that even the houses, furniture, and clothes he saw in the

spiritual world existed because of the spirits' thoughts and feelings. In fact, as spirits' thoughts and feelings change the things around them suddenly change too. If that happened on earth we would be very uncomfortable, but spirits are used to it.

Unlike the angels, evil spirits often have unkind and selfish thoughts and feelings. So, while Swedenborg was in hell, he saw creatures, that lived in slimy pits, that tore other animals apart and that loved darkness. He saw thorny, twisted plants. Even the sun is dimmed with thick clouds, because evil spirits do not like light.



It is important to understand that the Lord did not create these evil things. Evil came into existence because people gradually turned away from the Lord and began to love themselves more than others and more than Him.

Learning in the Spiritual World

Think of the kinds of questions you might ask if you could visit heaven. You can imagine that Swedenborg had many questions. The Lord also had much he wanted to tell him. Even though Swedenborg had not learned the language



of the spiritual world, he could understand and talk to most of the spirits he met there. All of us will speak this language when we get to the other world. But Swedenborg needed more than a common language to understand how the spiritual world works.

Swedenborg sometimes needed angels or other spirits to help him figure things out. On many occasions an angel guide took him around the spiritual world. Similarly, people on earth sometimes hire a guide or read a guide book when they visit a new country.

The Word is a “Guide Book”

Swedenborg read the Word from beginning to end many times. Although the Word does not describe the things that Swedenborg saw it gave him the knowledge he needed to understand what he saw in the spiritual world. It did not surprise him to find out that plants and animals exist there because of the thoughts and feelings of the spirits. He was able to understand and appreciate all of the amazing things he saw because he studied the Word and worked hard to understand the message of the stories.

Reading the Word will also prepare us for life in the spiritual world. The Old Testament and New Testament contain many stories of people who were taught about the Lord. We can learn from their experience. In the stories we see how obedience and love to the Lord resulted in good things, and disobedience resulted in hardships. While the Lord was on earth He re-taught many of the old laws and also new ideas about how to live a good life. He also began to talk about heaven to help raise people’s thoughts above worldly things. Much of what the Lord taught Swedenborg and had him write down in the Heavenly Doctrine is for adults to appreciate and understand. But what we have learned today can build a mental picture of the spiritual world. However, each time you read about the Lord in His Word and try to understand and follow what He is teaching, you are preparing for your chance to explore and live in heaven.

Activity Overview

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 straight is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it..” (Matthew 7:13,14)

Projects and Activities (answers are at the back of this lesson)

Choose one or two.

Swedenborg Explores the Spiritual World True or False?

Read ten statements and write a T for true or an F for false on the line next to each statement.

Explore the World

Although you cannot explore the spiritual world, you have five senses to explore the natural world. Go for a walk. Quietly explore the wonders of nature. Then answer questions about your walk.

Song: Jesus Is My Friend Most Precious

Listen to or learn a song that Emanuel Swedenborg sang when he was a child. Online at <https://www.newchurchvineyard.org/resource/song-jesus-is-my-friend-most-precious/>

Swedenborg Explores the Spiritual World True or False?

True Christian Religion 78

Decide if each statement is true or false. Write T for true or F for false next to each statement.

1. ____ The most important things we need to know about life are taught in the Lord's Word.
2. ____ Swedenborg's work as a scientist and philosopher prepared him to reveal the Heavenly Doctrine.
3. ____ Swedenborg was able to use his spiritual body while he was still alive in his natural body.
4. ____ Everything in heaven is more beautiful and perfect than it is in this world.
5. ____ A spirit's surroundings correspond to his or her thoughts and feelings.
6. ____ When Swedenborg visited heaven, he often had an angel guide.
7. ____ Swedenborg was extremely familiar with the Lord's Word.
8. ____ Reading the Word prepares us for life in the next world.
9. ____ Education prepares us to read and understand what the Lord revealed to Swedenborg.
10. ____ Swedenborg's first name was Emanuel.

Explore the World

Emanuel Swedenborg explored the spiritual world and came back and told us about what he had seen and heard. The Lord has given you natural senses to explore the natural world. Go for a walk. Quietly explore the wonder of the natural world, then discuss or write your answers for the questions below.

Where did you go?

What animals, birds, or insects did you see?

What plants, shrubs, or trees did you see?

How do you think what you saw compared with the things that Swedenborg saw in heaven, or in hell?

Answers

Lesson 33

Swedenborg Explores the Spiritual World True or False?

1. T, 2. T, 3. T, 4. T, 5. T, 6. T, 7. T, 8. T, 9. T, 10.