



Map the Spiritual World

FaithBuilder 4 | Lesson 11 | Eternal Life

Lesson Overview

1. Read

The story of Lazarus and the rich man.

2. Discuss

The story gives a picture of the nature of the spiritual world. What is it like?

3. Activity

Draw a map of the relative locations of heaven, the world or spirits and hell, p.3.

New Church Concept World of Spirits

Just as the world of spirits is a state halfway between heaven and hell within us, it is a halfway place. The hells are underneath it and the heavens above it. All the hells are closed on the side that faces that world, accessible only through holes and crevices like those in rocks and through broad gaps that are guarded to prevent anyone from coming out without permission.... Heaven too is bounded on all sides, and the only access to any heavenly community is by a narrow way whose entry is also guarded. *Heaven and Hell* 428

Jesus once told the story of two men who had died. One was named Lazarus, and the other is simply called a ‘rich man.’

“There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate, desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham’s bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

“Then he cried and said, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.’ But Abraham said, ‘Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.’

“Then he said, ‘I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father’s house, for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.’ Abraham said to him, ‘They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.’ And he said, ‘No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’ But he said to him, ‘If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.’” Luke 16:19-31

Discuss

1. What details about the spiritual world are given in this story?
2. What is another name for the “great gulf” that is fixed between Lazarus and the rich man?
3. From a New Church point of view, what misconceptions about the life after death might this story convey?
4. The rich man begged to go back and tell his brothers the consequences of their choices in the world. Would his idea work? Why did Abraham suggest it would not work?

**New Church Concept
Mind and Spirit**

For most Christians the story of Lazarus and the rich man gives the most complete picture of what the after-life is like. The Writings give a much more complete picture of heaven, hell and the world of spirits. People have used descriptions from the Writings to come up with ways of mapping the spiritual world. Use what you have learned about the spiritual world to draw a diagram that pictures how you think heaven, hell, the world of spirits, and the natural world fit together. Where do you picture the Lord fitting in with this? Draw your diagram below. When you have finished, go to p. 3.

There are two doors in each of us, one facing hell and open to evil and false things from hell, the other facing heaven and open to good and true things from heaven. The door of hell is opened for people who are involved in what is evil and its consequent falsity, though just a little light from heaven flows in through the cracks, which enables us to think, reason, and talk. On the other hand, the door of heaven is opened for people who are focused on what is good and therefore on what is true. There are actually two paths that lead to our rational mind, one from above or within, through which the good and the true enter from the Lord, and one from below or outside through which the evil and the false infiltrate from hell. The rational mind itself is at the intersection of these two paths, so to the extent that light from heaven is let in, we are rational; but to the extent that it is not let in, we are not rational even though we seem so to ourselves.

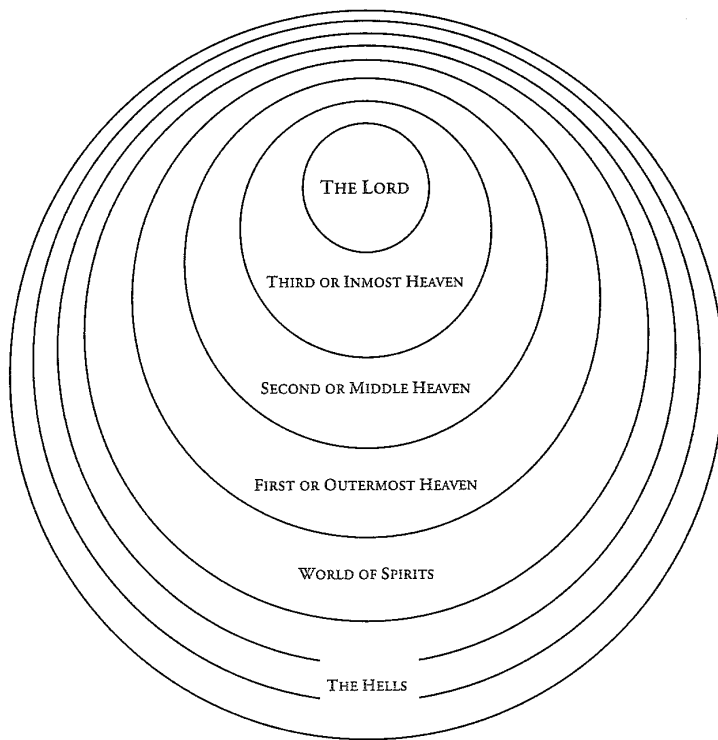
While our rational mind is in the process of being formed, it is responsive to the world of spirits. What is above it belongs to heaven, and what is beneath it belongs to hell.... Looking upward is looking toward the Lord.... Looking downward, though, is looking away from the Lord toward the opposite center, the center toward which everything in hell faces and gravitates.
Heaven and Hell 430

Map the Spiritual World

Compare your diagram to the diagrams below.

1. Where do people living in the natural world fit into the picture?
2. Which map gives you the clearest idea of the spiritual world?
3. How do these diagrams affect your mental picture of the spiritual world?

Diagram A



Adapted from the New Century Edition *Heaven and Hell* (West Chester, Pa.: Swedenborg Foundation, 2000), page 13. Used with permission.

Diagram B

