

General Church Education



Family Lessons: John 11

Raising Lazarus

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Raising Lazarus
John 11

FAMILY TALK: THE RAISING OF LAZARUS

For so many in the world, the subject of what to expect after death has been merely a great *question*. How fortunate we are in the New Church to have the great *answer*. The book *Heaven and Hell* says at the beginning that many ask, “Who has come back from that world and told us?” And doubts trouble even “the simple in heart and the simple in faith.” It is for this reason that it was granted to Swedenborg to see and hear, to converse with angels, and to describe it all “**in the hope that ignorance may thus be enlightened and unbelief dispelled**” (*Heaven and Hell* 1).

What a very common thing death is. If you keep in mind how many people there are on earth, you will realize that many people die every single day. “**Whoever goes into a calculation will find that several thousands die every day**” (*Heaven and Hell* 415).

It is a normal part of the story of human life. We know that when the Lord was in the world, He brought back three people from the other world — that is, brought them back to life in this world. One was a twelve year old girl. With her parents and some disciples watching, the Lord took her by the hand and said, “**Maiden, I say to you, arise.**” In another case, the Lord brought back to life the son of a widow as he was being carried to the grave. But the most dramatic such event was the last one — the raising of His beloved friend, Lazarus.

Hearing of his death, the Lord came to see his grave. As we read in verse 38, “**It was a cave, and a stone lay against it.**” A crowd of people were watching, including the two sisters of the man who lay buried there. They hesitated to take the stone away from a grave that had been closed for four days, but the Lord said that “**the glory of God**” would be seen. And when he called, “**Lazarus, come forth,**” the man walked into the light.

Many believed that day, and that family was brought together with rejoicing. The Lord, who restored a twelve year old girl to her parents and who restored a son to his mother, did these things that we might know about them. And we should now know that He is always bringing loved ones together after death, but not in this world. He brings them together in the other world where life has a new beginning. By making this known to us, He is telling us:

“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die.”

Because there are so many examples of people who have come close to death and who have even been clinically “dead” for a short time, a number of books have been produced that tell what some of them have remembered.

A beautiful book of this kind is *Life After Life*, by Dr. Raymond Moody. He noticed that the stories people have told of their experience often have common or similar ingredients. We can look at a few.

1) Many people speak of seeing light which does not dazzle or hurt their eyes, but has an unearthly brightness. It is interesting to compare this to what is said in *Arcana Coelestia* 186 “Eternal life is represented to a person who is going into the other world by a bright white light that becomes of a beautiful golden tinge.”

2) Many have seemed to be clinically dead for a very *short* time, but they often recollect a surprising amount. Two things may be noted about the shortness of time. The first is that it is possible in the other world to communicate without words and express more in a minute (*Heaven and Hell* 240, 576).

The more important thing to note is that Swedenborg’s experience of the other world was granted by the Lord over a period of a *long* time. This is one of the ways in which it differs so much from the fragments of near death experiences.

Swedenborg testifies that this was “not merely for a day or a week (*Arcana Coelestia* 70). It was “the daily experience of many years” (*Heaven and Hell* 456); “the living experience of so many years” (*Arcana Coelestia* 8939). Indeed, *Heaven and Hell* was not written until the experience had gone on for “thirteen years” (*Heaven and Hell* 1). And the total testimony of the Writings comes from an experience granted to Swedenborg for twenty-seven years (*True Christian Religion* 851).

3) Another difference is in the matter of *remembering*. Dr. Moody points out that there are probably many aspects of a person’s experience that they no longer remember. The Writings do say that what happens just after death is often like a forgotten sleep. (See *True Christian Religion* 797.) In fact, once a spirit who had forgotten, later remembered and said, “I saw heaven above, and I heard angels there uttering ineffable things; but that was when I first came here” (*True Christian Religion* 80). (The word “ineffable” means *beyond description*.) Because it was Divinely intended that Swedenborg’s experience should be written down, he had angelic help in recalling things to memory. (See *Conjugal Love* 73.) And we notice that it is said, “I was brought into a state . . . nearly of the dying; but with the inner life and thought remaining, so that I might perceive and retain in the memory the things that happened to me, and that happen to those who are resuscitated from the dead” (*Heaven and Hell* 449).

The book *Life After Life* is available from the General Church Book Center
Cairncrest, P.O. Box 743, Bryn Athyn, PA 19009
Telephone (215) 914-4920, e-mail bookctr@newchurch.edu

Raising Lazarus

John 11

LEVEL 1 – ANOTHER MIRACLE

MATERIALS NEEDED

Cheesecloth or a washcloth

A glass jar

Rubber band

Seeds (alfalfa or bean sprout seeds work very well)

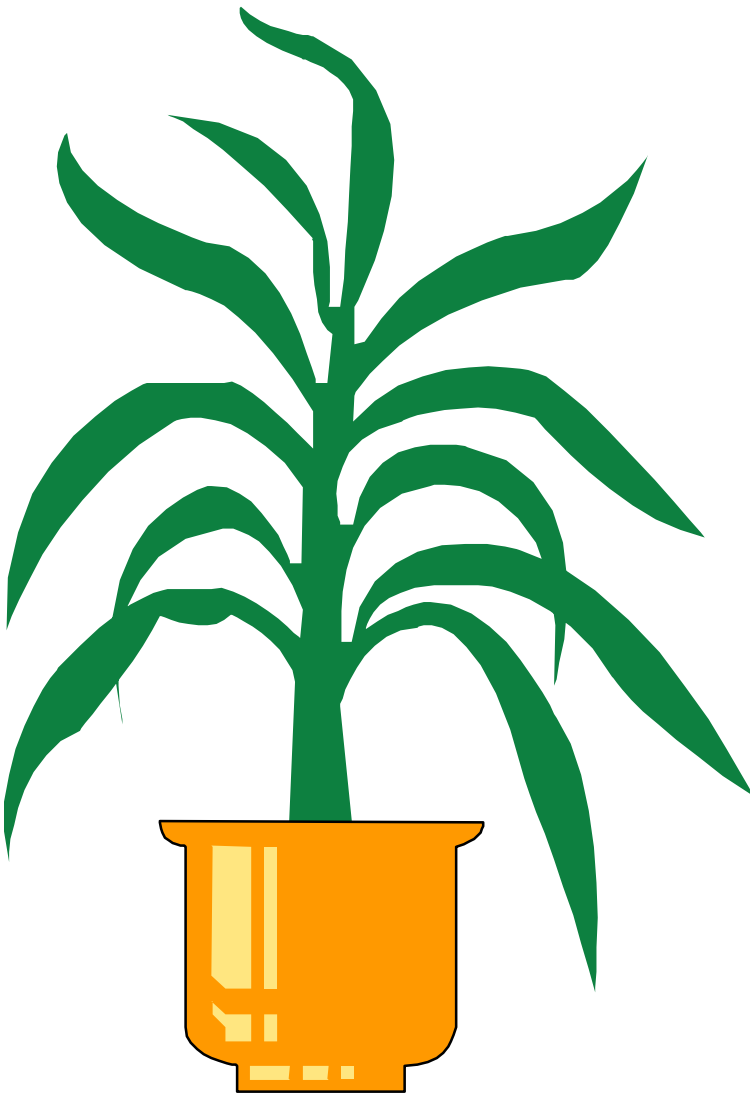
You have listened to the story of how the Lord did a miracle. He brought life back to Lazarus, who was dead.

For your project, you are going to see another miracle. You are going to see tiny seeds come alive. Hold them in your hand and look at them. They look dead. The Lord will make them live.

Here's what to do:

Since seeds are a raw agricultural product it is recommended that you soak the seeds in a 2% bleach solution (1 tsp. bleach in 1 cup warm water) for 15 minutes prior to sprouting.

1. Place the sprout seeds in a clean quart glass jar or similar container.
2. Cover the mouth of the jar with cheesecloth or a washcloth, and secure with a rubber band.
3. Add enough water to completely cover seeds; soak overnight at room temperature.
4. Next day, pour off excess water through the mesh. Add fresh water to thoroughly rinse seeds and drain.
5. Rinse and drain the sprouts twice a day. In between put the jar on



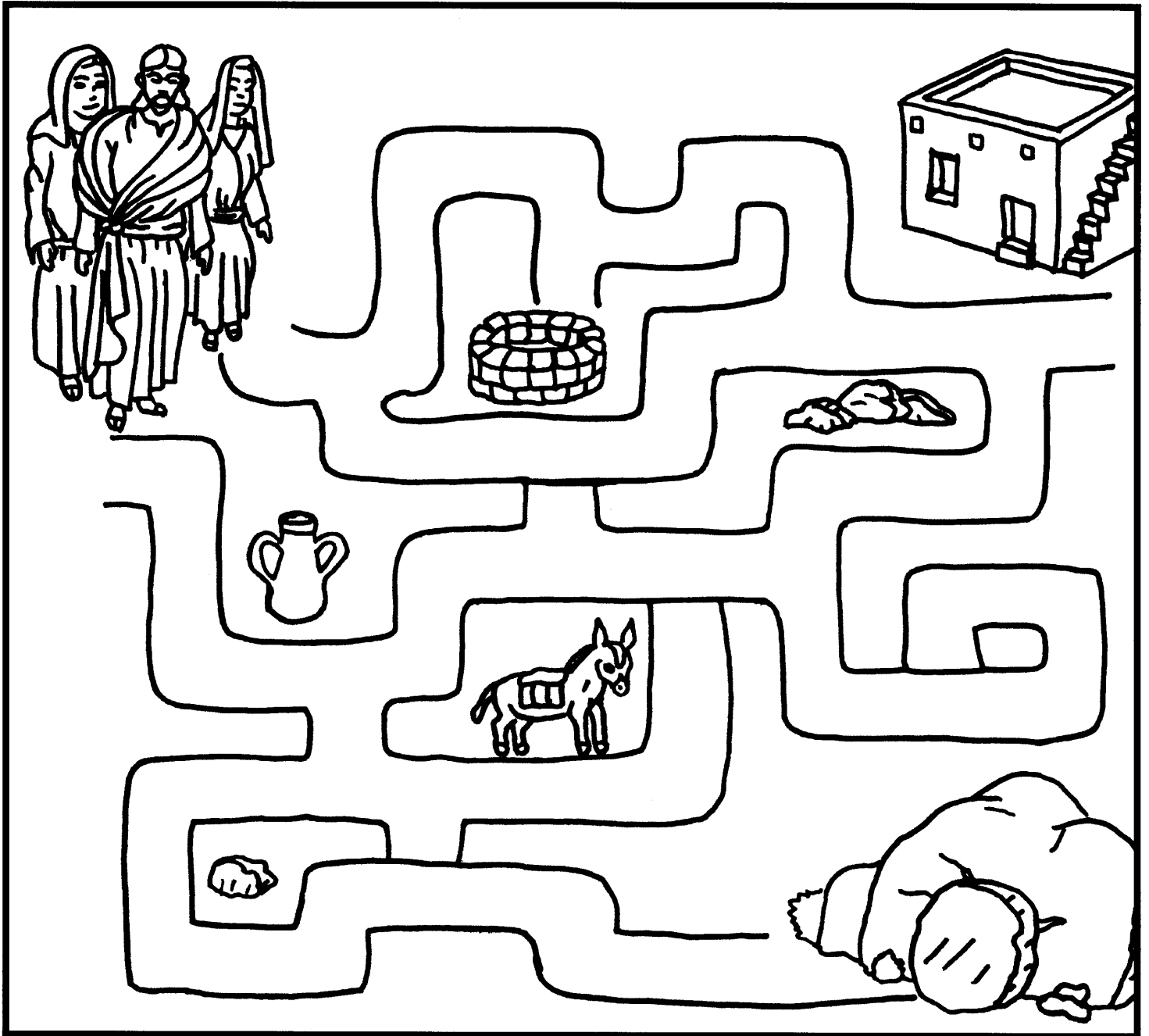
the window sill (set it in a moderately warm area (60°–67°). You will see the seeds begin to sprout in one day. You will be able to see the seeds come alive. You can eat them after you have watched them grow from four to six days. They are good in a sandwich or salad.

Raising Lazarus

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LEVEL 2 – LAZARUS'S TOMB

Help Jesus, Mary, and Martha find the right path to Lazarus's tomb.
Draw a line on the right path. Do not cross any lines. Color the pictures.



Raising Lazarus

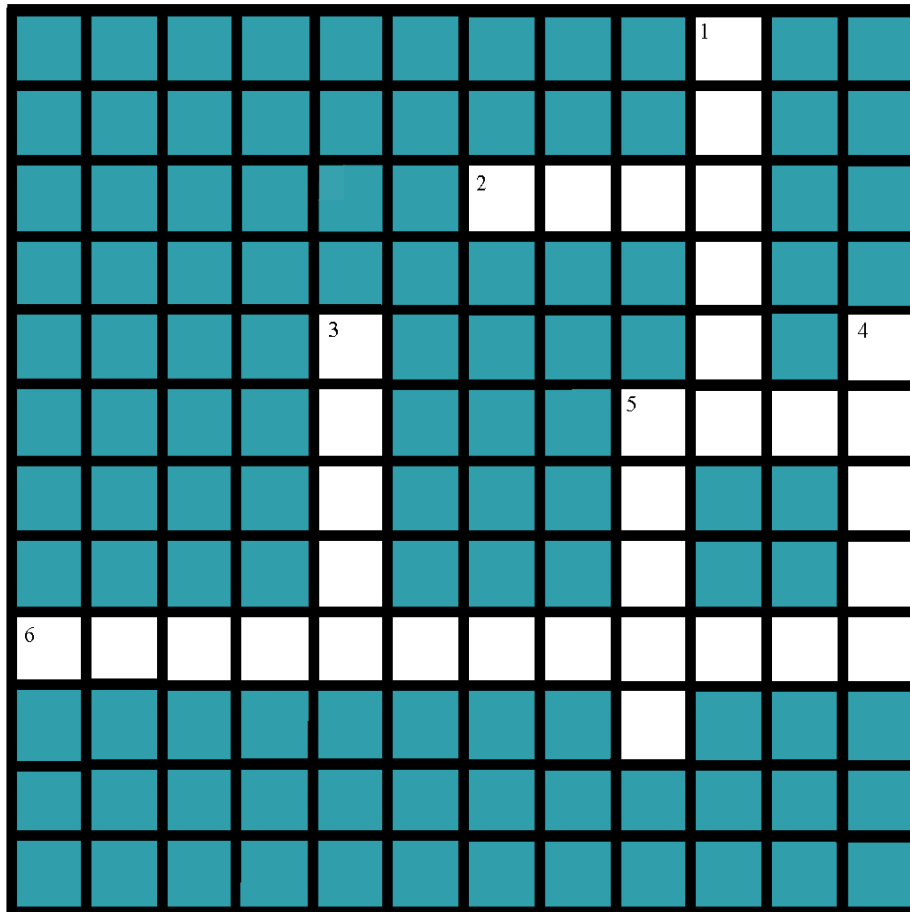
John 11

LEVEL 3 – HE WHO BELIEVES IN ME...

There are two activities for you to do:

- 1) On this page is a crossword puzzle for you to do.
- 2) On page 2 are some questions for you to answer. Color the picture if you wish.

CROSSWORD PUZZLE



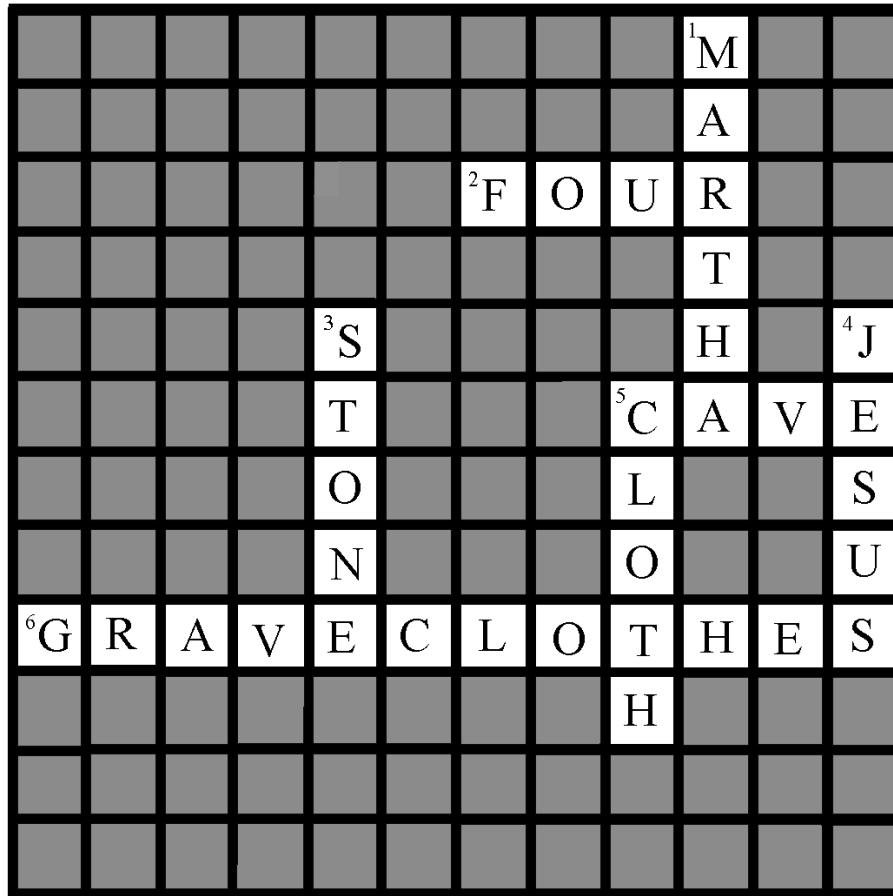
ACROSS

3. The place where Lazarus was buried
5. Jesus performed this when
7. One of Lazarus' sisters

DOWN

1. This was in front of the door of the tomb
2. One of Lazarus's sisters
4. The town where Lazarus lived
6. Who was Jesus' dead friend?

Solution to Crossword Puzzle



Raising Lazarus – What Happened?

He that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."



If the sentence is true, circle **Yes**. If it is not true, circle **No**.

- | | | |
|--|-----|----|
| 1. Lazarus was dead when his sisters sent for Jesus. | Yes | No |
| 2. Jesus went to their home that same day. | Yes | No |
| 3. Friends tried to comfort Mary and Martha. | Yes | No |
| 4. Jesus told Martha that her brother would live again. | Yes | No |
| 5. Lazarus came out of the tomb when Jesus called him. | Yes | No |
| 5. All of the people who had seen the things Jesus did, believed in Him. | Yes | No |

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LEVEL 4 – WHAT IS IT LIKE TO AWAKE IN A NEW WORLD?

“Thought and affection are man, not his body.”

(Heaven and Hell 445)

Our body has life from our spirit—from our thought and love, as a glove has life from the hand that moves it.

When the use of the body has been served, the spirit is removed from that body and man is said to die. (It is as if the hand was taken out of a worn glove. The glove lies there motionless.)

The man himself does not die, but is merely separated from the body and lives. The dictionary describes dying as ceasing to exist. The Word describes dying as resurrection. Man only passes from one world into another world.

Life after the body dies

First you are going to do a guided visualization activity.

Then do the activity on page 4.

This is an exercise that the family can do together. It is best done in a group of three or more. Provide a time afterwards for an outlet to share the experience, and at the same time respect the need to feel private about what others have experienced.

Arrange yourselves in a circle or what is comfortable for your family or class. (Around a table, at the end of family worship, but somewhere you can clearly communicate with each other.)

Have one person moderate and read to the group what is written below. This is taken from *Heaven and Hell* 445-452.

Moderator: We are going to try to imagine something of what is written in Heaven and Hell 445, the passage that says:

“man does not die; he is merely separated from the bodily part that was of use to him in the world.”

Everyone close your eyes and concentrate on your breathing. (30-second pause.)

Become aware of your breathing. (5-second pause.)

You are calm and have a sense of peace. (5-second pause.)

Can you sense the beating of your heart? (10-second pause.)

“There is an inmost communication of the spirit with the breathing and with the beating of the heart, the spirit's thought communicating with the breathing. . . .”

Now you notice your respiration slowing down and an inner breathing. With your eyes still closed, notice angels at a distance and two near your head, seated. They are two loving angels that communicate good and comforting thoughts.

(5-second pause.)

Can you smell the pleasant fragrance? (10-second pause.)

What is it? (5-second pause.)

It is strange: the angels do not actually speak; they are silent and yet they are communicating their thoughts with you. (7-second pause.)

The angels are attentive; they watch your face and your expressions. You are thinking of eternal life, and you feel happy about what you will experience. There is a pulling and a drawing forth of your thoughts, the interior of the mind, from your body by the Lord. (5-second pause.)

Try to be separated from your body with your thought. Look back at yourself, a little from above your body. Observe your body from a distance and notice how still your body appears. Change your position and look again—at your face (3-second pause), hair (3-second pause) and clothing (3-second pause).

Now angels sent by the Lord from the spiritual kingdom join you. Up to now we have only seen things from this world and experienced our thoughts. These angels will help us to see light. It appears they are rolling off a coat from the left eye toward the bridge of our nose. Slowly, with our eyes still closed, we can see light . . . dimly at first, now more clearly. It is a heavenly hue. (5-second pause.)

Now there is something being softly uncovered from the face and we feel in a spiritual state. (5-second pause)

We feel bathed all around in love and warmth. The angels allow us to see the light, that we are now a spirit. They attend to us and do for us what we need. (5-second pause.)

They answer our questions. (5-second pause.)



In the distance you come into the light and see all the beautiful things that you would see in this world, only more vividly—flowers, trees, birds. Look! There beside the path is your favorite flower. In the distance you are surrounded by the beautiful outdoors. (10-second pause.)

There are homes in there as well, and coming toward you are angels. They are recognized by you as someone that you knew quite well in the world, but have died. (5-second pause.)

You are so happy to see them and they are happy to welcome you. They beckon to show you this lovely new world.

It is time now to return to your physical body. You can now open your eyes as from a restful sleep. (Silence - 10-second pause.)

Application

1) *First discuss some of the details of what each person imagined.*

What trees and flowers did you see?

Who did you see that greeted you?

What kind of houses did you notice in the distance?

2) Tell (or write) what you know about each of the following:

- ❖ children in heaven
- ❖ work in heaven
- ❖ homes in heaven
- ❖ worship in heaven
- ❖ one of the memorable relations (something Swedenborg was allowed to see in heaven)



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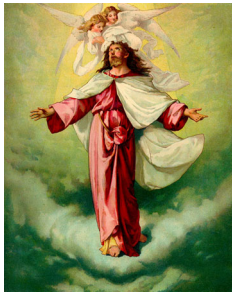
John 11

LEVEL 5 – “LOVE” AND THE 11TH CHAPTER OF JOHN

There are certain things about love you may have never noticed. Your project this time is to become aware of what you were not aware of before.

“Love” is a word particularly common to the Gospel of John from chapter 11 onward. Indeed, in these last chapters of John, “love” is mentioned more times than in the whole of the three other Gospels combined.

It is a fundamental New Church teaching that love is our very life. And all our life is from the Lord. The Lord is Life Itself. He is the **“I AM”**. Look at the ways the Lord refers to Himself in the gospel of John:



“In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.” (*John 1:4*)

“I am the resurrection and the life.” (*John 11:25*)

“I am the way, the truth, and the life.” (*John 14:6*)

Our purpose here is not to get very profound, but simply to notice some things about “love.” In the beginning of John 11, the Lord’s love for Lazarus is emphasized. Word comes to the Lord that the one He *loved* was sick. Read verses 3, 5, 11, and 36. Notice the way love is emphasized.

When the Lord told a story about a poor person who did not have the truth, he gave the man in the story the name “Lazarus.” It is a way of showing us how much the Lord loves all people, including those who don’t have the truth (the Gentiles). (See *Sacred Scripture 40*, *Arcana Coelestia 9231*, and *Apocalypse Explained 137*).

The shortest verse in the Bible is in the story of Lazarus, *John 11:35*.

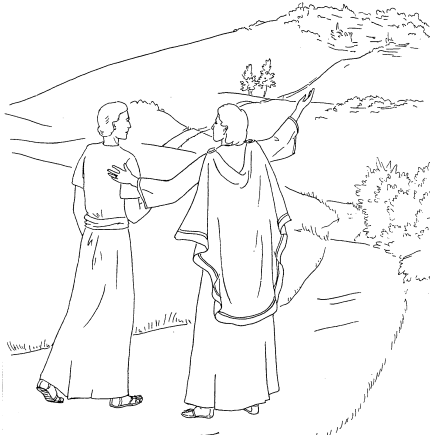
“Jesus wept.”

The Jews who saw the Lord then were impressed with the Lord’s evident love for Lazarus. They said,

“See, how He loved him.”

Awakening after death

The story of Lazarus is about the Lord's raising someone from the dead. And it is the chapter in which the Lord says so clearly that those who believe in Him will never die. Let us, then, consider the typical waking up after death, paying special attention to "love."



As you know, someone awakening after death is attended by angels. We are told that these angels **"love everyone and desire nothing more than to be of service"** (*Heaven and Hell* 450). That is one of the powerful experiences of our first awakening in the spiritual world, the experience of being loved.

When one experiences the strength of angelic love, they are really experiencing the Lord's love. The Writings emphasize how loving angels are, but they emphasize even more that *all* of an angel's love comes from the Lord (AC 6135, 4735).

The message of the gospel of John

The message of the Gospel of John is of the Lord's love and our being in that love. In chapter 15 He says,

"As the father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in MY love. (John 15:9)

"...love one another as I have loved you. (John 15:12)

And then the Lord says ...

"I have called you friends..." (John 15:15)

The word translated "friend" is taken from the word "love." It means a loved one, as when the Lord said of Lazarus, "Our friend, Lazarus, is asleep."

After saying these things about love and "friends," the Lord instructs us to:

"Love one another as I have loved you."
(John 15:12)

Another awakening experience in the spiritual world



**“And I, if I am lifted up from the earth,
will draw all peoples to Myself.”**

(John 12:32)

Swedenborg experienced this “pulling” or drawing forth of his spirit to be awakened in the other life, and he was told that what he felt was from the Lord. He described it as *a living and mighty attraction* (AC 179).

Let us see the way Swedenborg described this experience in the *Spiritual Diary*:

It has been granted me to know, and today indeed by experience, that the one and only cause of man’s resurrection is the love, consequently the mercy of God Messiah towards the human race—that He wills to save each and every one. . . . Love has in itself such an efficacy that it cannot otherwise be expressed than as an attraction (SD 322).

It is nothing else than a living and mighty attraction, since the power of His mercy is of such a nature that it wills to draw all men into eternal happiness, thus to Himself. I have also on one occasion so manifestly felt such a living attraction that I can know with certainty that there is such a force, and what it is like (SD 1104).

And so, in the Gospel of John, you have seen the clear message of the Lord’s love.

**The Lord is love itself and mercy.
He wills to save every one, and by His mighty power
to draw them towards heaven, that is, towards Himself.**

(*Arcana Coelestia* 1038)

