

General Church Education



**FAMILY LESSON: REVELATION 20 & 21**  
**THE JUDGEMENT**  
**AND THE HOLY CITY**

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Family Lesson 34 - C

*The Judgment and the Holy City*  
*Revelation 20 & 21*

**FAMILY TALK:**  
**A NEW HEAVEN AND A NEW EARTH**

by the Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss

Lesson: Revelation 20:11-15 and 21:1-8

This lesson starts with the picture of the Lord sitting on a white throne. He has come as a Judge. All the people who have died are raised up and stand before His throne. The evil people are sent into a fire that burns forever, and the good people are taken into heaven.

When people die, do they lie in their graves until some last day? Do they get judged by the Lord, and get thrown into a lake where they burn forever if they are evil? No. Sometimes people have thought that this is what will happen after death, and it makes them sad. It makes them think of the Lord as a frightening God who would let people burn up forever to punish them.

The Lord doesn't do that. He doesn't want to punish anyone. The fire that is spoken of here stands for the fire of bad loves. Some people give in to hatred, and are cruel to others, even kill them. Some people want money so much that they steal it. These feelings are like fires that burn inside of them. If they don't turn back to the Lord, these "fires" will burn inside of them forever. The Lord does everything He can to change them, and to persuade them to be loving people. Unfortunately some people choose not to follow Him and to love evil instead.

The lesson also says that the good people are raised up into heaven. In fact, this story is telling about the time when the New Church was started. It was while Swedenborg was alive. At that time the evil people in the spiritual world were judged, and the good people were taken into a special heaven, called "the New Christian Heaven," where they would be most wonderfully happy forever. That is why John said, "**And I saw a new heaven and a new earth.**"

"**And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away.**" What a beautiful, grand sight he saw. John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was shown many things in the spiritual world. Right at the end of these visions the whole heaven and earth seemed to change, and then, coming down from that new heaven was a most beautiful city. It was the New Jerusalem. John must have been standing on the earth and seen it come floating down from heaven. How do you think he felt when he saw it? His heart must have been full of wonder and excitement because the Lord had let him see this great city.

Then all of a sudden the picture changed—for a moment. He saw in the place of the city a most beautiful bride—a young woman who was about to get married. Have you seen a lovely young woman who is dressed for her marriage? She often wears a shining dress of white, with a long train. Her hair has been arranged especially for the wedding, and she has a crown on her head, and a veil across her face. She carries flowers in her hand. But the most lovely thing about her is the look on her face as she turns to the man she loves, the man who will shortly be her husband. Her face is full of love for him, for this is the happiest day of her life, and she knows that she will be happy forever, for she will be with him always.

Why did John see these two pictures in the same place? The Writings for the New Church tell us the answer. They say that both these pictures stand for the New Church which the Lord has now given to us. The Holy City stands for the teachings of the New Church. It is a great and strong city, with high walls to protect it, with twelve gates that are open for all who want to come in and live in it, with streets made of gold and a river and a “magic” tree in the middle of it. All these things tell of the wonderful teachings that are in the New Church—teachings that will help us to know the Lord and to follow Him.

But the picture of the bride is a picture that makes us happy. It makes our hearts feel glad. This is how we should feel about the New Church too. For the Lord has built His New Church so that He can be very close to us, and bring us great happiness. His Church is often called His Bride. For when we turn to the Lord, then He fills His church with love and happiness. It is a special happiness, such as people know when they are in love. It is a happiness that will last forever.

So the Lord’s New Church appears like a city—a strong city, a safe and good city to live in. That is because the teachings of the church are great and wonderful, they make us safe, and help us to live good lives.

But His church also appears as a bride—a most beautiful bride, dressed for her wedding with her husband. This is because the New Church brings the Lord very close to us, and brings us a most wonderful happiness which will be ours forever.

Remember, then, these two pictures. They are wonderful ones, shown us by the Lord two thousand years ago. They tell us how His church is strong and safe, and how it is beautiful. You will find that this is true as you go through your life and come more and more into His church.

***The Judgment and the Holy City***  
***Revelation 20, 21***  
**LEVEL 1 – HOLY CITY NEW JERUSALEM**



**Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.**

**Instructions for project:**

*(A parent will have to do most of the cutting)*

1. Cut out the bride on page 2.
2. Cut out the veil on page 2.  
Cut a slit in the veil along the dotted line.  
Be careful to stop where the dotted line stops.
3. Cut out the bouquet on page 2.  
Cut the left side of the tab on the heavy black line. This will allow the tab to fit behind the hands so that the bride will seem to carry the flowers in her hands.
4. Have your child adorn the bride with the veil and bouquet.



THE CHURCH IS WONDERFUL AND BEAUTIFUL LIKE A BRIDE IS WONDERFUL AND BEAUTIFUL

***The Judgment and the Holy City***  
***Revelation 20***  
**LEVEL 2 – THE BOOK OF LIFE**



All your life you can be practicing for heaven. Every good thing you do and kind thing you say or think is written down in the Lord's Book of Life.

Your project is to make a sample Book of Life showing good things you will do in your life.

1. Begin with two pieces of paper, at least 8.5" X 11" large.  
Hold them together and fold them in half, so that you have a four-page booklet measuring 5.5" X 8.5"
2. On the cover write "Book of Life"  
Add a picture or border to make it beautiful.
3. On each page of the book draw a picture of something you would like the Lord to find in your life when He looks at the Book of Life.
4. When your book is finished, show it to the people you love. And remember:

***Now it is your job to make these pictures come true!***

***The Judgment and the Holy City***  
***Revelation 20-21***  
**LEVEL 3 – GETTING TO HEAVEN**

The talk for this lesson has two parts to it. The first tells of the dead who were raised up and judged according to their deeds. The second speaks of the new heaven made up of those who were worthy, and the New Church on earth called the Holy City, New Jerusalem, to which all good people on earth are called.

There are also two kinds of people mentioned: those who failed to get to heaven, and those who succeeded. This is a basic lesson in all of life — to get something important we need to “qualify.” We need to “pass the test.”

There is a test for everything in life. If a person wants to become the leader of his country, he needs to prepare for that important job, and show people that he can do it properly. If they believe he can, then he has “passed the test.” If a person wants to be a doctor he has to study for many years so that he knows how to heal people. Only when he has passed medical school can he be rewarded with the thing he wants—to be a doctor.

The most important test of all is to learn to obey the Lord in our life here on earth. If we do, we will be able to go to heaven. Those who refuse to obey Him simply aren’t ready for heaven. It is sad, but it is true. A person who isn’t prepared to study to be a doctor cannot be allowed to graduate. He may want to be a doctor, but unless he does the work and passes the tests, it would be foolish to let him treat patients. He might hurt them badly. So a person who refuses to follow the Lord’s rules cannot live in His heaven. He will hurt the people who live there.

**Application**

On the next page are two lists.

On the left hand side is a list of things a person may wish to do or become.

On the right hand side is a list of the things he must do to “pass the test.”

The left hand list is not in the same order as the right hand one.

Draw lines connecting the statements in each side that match.



**A PERSON WANTS THIS:**

**HE/SHE NEEDS TO DO THIS:**

Get a college education

Learn how to act

Go to the Olympics

Master the skills of football

Become a baker

Learn to speak Italian

Feel at home in Italy

Pass an entrance examination

Have people's trust

Finish architectural school

Become an architect

Save a lot of money

Make the football team

Earn the love of someone of the opposite sex

Fly to Brazil for a fabulous vacation

Learn how to cook

Get a part in a play

Pass the Olympic trials

Get married to the person of their dreams

Make a practice of telling the truth

Were you able to match the list on the left with the correct item from the list on the right? Check with your parents to see if you did.

Remember, all the things that matter in life need to be earned. And the most important thing in all of life - getting to heaven - needs to be earned too. We have to do what is needed - become the kind of people who can be happy there.

But remember also that the Lord very much wants us to "pass the test." He does everything He can to make sure it happens. The rest is up to us.



***The Judgment and the Holy City***  
***Revelation 20***  
**LEVEL 4 – TWO PARTS TO THE SECOND COMING**

**MATERIALS NEEDED**

The Word or Bible

*This lesson has two parts. The first part describes the judgment of all people in the spiritual world, and the second part the coming of the New Church which is represented by the Holy City. There must be a judgment before a new church can be established.*

*John’s vision of the great white throne describes very vividly what this judgment was like. Let’s look at this description and figure out exactly what it means.*

How were the small and great judged? (Rev. 20:12,13)

What \_\_\_\_\_ are \_\_\_\_\_ works?

Is \_\_\_\_\_ lying \_\_\_\_\_ a \_\_\_\_\_ work?

Is \_\_\_\_\_ making \_\_\_\_\_ fun \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ another \_\_\_\_\_ person \_\_\_\_\_ a \_\_\_\_\_ work?

List three works which could lead a person to be cast into the lake of fire and three works which could lead to getting a person’s name in the Book of Life:

WORKS WHICH LEAD TO  
THE LAKE OF FIRE

WORKS WHICH LEAD TO  
THE BOOK OF LIFE

Read over the list you made. What kind of love makes a person do the things which lead to the lake of fire?

What kind of love makes a person do the things which lead to having his name written in the Book of Life?

Did you find that when people are only thinking of themselves and loving themselves, they do bad things?

Did you find that when people are thinking of others and the Lord and love others and the Lord, they do good things?

Read *Rev.* 20:14. What is being cast into the lake of fire called?

Also read *Rev.* 21:8. What happens to the kind of people described in this verse?

What are these people who have a second death breaking?

Does any one person do all good things or all bad things?

*All people have good and evil in them. When people die their good loves and evil loves must be separated. If the person is mostly evil he casts himself into the lake of fire which is the love of evil, but if he is mostly good his name will be in the Book of Life and he will go into heaven.*

*This separation of good from evil is what is happening in the judgment described in Rev.20 verses 11-15. Look at Rev. 21:1. Read it over again.*

What was there after the judgment?

Once this was formed then what could happen? (Rev. 21:2,3)

**Read these verses from Revelation 21:3-7.**

In these verses the Lord makes many promises to those who learn the truths of the Lord's Word and live them.

*And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.*

*And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."*

*Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful."*

*And He said to me, "It is done!" I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts.*

*He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be His God and he shall be my Son."*

***The Judgment and the Holy City***  
***Revelation 20***  
**LEVEL 5 – THE LAST JUDGMENT**

To many people who do not know about the New Church, the Last Judgment must seem puzzling or even frightening. Some believe that it will happen here on earth, with good people rising from their graves and living on earth forever with the Lord.

In order to find out what new things the Lord has revealed about the Last Judgment, you will need to refresh your memory by reading in the Word from *Revelation*, Chapter 20, verses 11-15. Also read the passages from the Writings below, and then answer the questions on page 2.

“Jehovah God or the Lord never curses anyone, is never angry with anyone, never leads anyone into temptation, and never punishes, let alone curses someone. It is the devil's crew who do such things. Such things cannot possibly come from the fountain of mercy, peace, and goodness. The reason why here and elsewhere in the Word it is said that Jehovah God not only turns His face away, is angry, punishes and tempts, is that people may believe that the Lord rules over and disposes every single thing in the world, including evil itself.”

*(Arcana Coelestia 245)*

“Earth and heaven in chapter 20, verse 11, mean those who pretended to be Christians, but in internals were devils. They had made a place for themselves in the spiritual world, pretending to be a part of heaven. It is therefore said that at the last judgment, those `heavens,' which they had made for themselves, were dissipated.”

*(Apocalypse Revealed 865)*

“And the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life. By books are not meant books, but the interior parts of the minds of those who are judged. By `the books' is meant the interior parts of the minds of those who are evil, and are judged to death, and by `the book of life,' those who are good, and are judged to life.”

*(Apocalypse Revealed 867)*

“And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This signifies that the wicked at heart, who in themselves were devils and satans, and yet in externals like men of the church, were cast into hell among those who were in the love of evil.”

*(Apocalypse Revealed 872)*

## **Questions**

As you read, think about the answers to the following questions, and then write them down.

1. Who was sitting on the great white throne of judgment?
2. Why did some people flee away from Him? (See AR 865)
3. What is meant by the books by which everyone was judged, and by the Lamb's book of life? (See AR 867)
4. What does the "lake of fire," into which people are thrown, truly mean?  
(See AR 872)
5. Is it the Lord who casts us into a lake of fire? (Read *Arcana Coelestia* 245 carefully and give the answer it seems to teach).
6. Can you explain why there has to be a hell? Think about it, put your answer in your own words, and then discuss it with your parents.
7. Read Revelation, Chapter 21, verse 4. Ask yourself, "Do I really believe that there can be a heaven where there is no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, nor pain?" Think about the quality of life in such a place. If there is a God, surely He would want His children to live there.