



Three Hells

FaithBuilder 4 | Lesson 10 | Eternal Life

Lesson Overview

1. Watch a video

Watch *What Is Hellfire?* (1min 35sec) online at bitly.com/WhatIsHellfire

2. Discuss

Compare love and fire.

3. Read

Learn about the three hells, pp. 1-2.

4. Activity

Identify the loves of hell by looking at a variety of statements, p.3.

New Church Concept Natural Love

Natural love separated from spiritual love is opposed to spiritual love. The reason is that natural love is a love of self and love of the world, while spiritual love is a love of the Lord and love of the neighbor. A love of self and the world looks downward and outward, while a love of the Lord looks upward and inward.... As natural love can by degrees ascend and become spiritual, so it can also by degrees descend and become sensory and carnal. *Divine Love and Wisdom* 424.1,2

Watch a Video

Watch *What Is Hellfire?* online at bitly.com/WhatIsHellfire (1min 35sec). (Enter bitly link in the browser bar at the top of your screen.)

Discuss

1. The video opens with Swedenborg's statement, "Love is spiritual fire." What properties make fire good as well as bad?
2. While we live in the world influences flow into our minds from heaven and from hell. What are constructive ways we can deal with selfish passions when we become conscious of them?
3. How can bad loves harm us if we do not control them?

Read

The Lord loves everyone in equal measure. "He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust." (Matthew 4:45) What makes angels in heaven close to the Lord and devils further from the Lord is the way in His love is *received*. Angels in the highest or celestial heaven receive the Lord's love most fully. Angels in the middle or spiritual heaven receive it less fully, and angels in the lowest or natural heaven receive to an even lesser degree. The three heavens picture three levels of the human mind which can be opened towards the Lord and spiritual life.

Unlike angels, devils in hell love themselves and the world more than the Lord and so receive little of His love. Their loves are the opposite of heavenly loves.

There are three levels of hell which are perversions of the God-given levels of the mind and stand in opposition to the three levels of heaven.

As all things in hell are in opposition to the things that are in heaven, so it is with the love there. Diabolical love, which is death itself, is distinguished into two kingdoms—one in which love of self reigns, and another in which love of the world reigns. In the love of self, evil uses as regards their source, which is self, are involved, and in love of the world evil uses as regards their object are involved. These uses because they are done from self, are also done for the sake of self, for all love returns as in a circle to the source from which it comes. *D. Love* 10.2

New Church Concept Three Levels of Mind

Devils in the highest or mildest hell love worldly things and place their hearts in riches. They constantly disobey, and do not want to do what is right.

They pour all things of their will and intellect into the world, greedily and unscrupulously acquiring riches and regarding no useful end in them or stemming from them other than that of having them. *Married Love 496*

They see the insanities of evil from a rational sight of them, and yet are carried away by their delights, like small boats in the current of a river. *Married Love 442.*

Devils in the middle hell love worldly things and love to dominate others through wealth and power.

They love only gratifications of the senses, placing their heart in luxuries and pleasures of every kind. *Married Love 496*

They immerse all things of their will and so of their intellect in the enchantments and delusions of the senses, indulging in these only. *Married Love 496*

They see and judge only on the basis of the physical senses, spurning rational considerations contrary to their impressions and misconceptions, and rejecting them as of no account. *Married Love 442*

Devils in the third or lowest hell are in evils from the love of self. They love to dominate others simply because they love themselves more than everyone else.

While in the world they had a supreme love of ruling from a love of self, and enjoyed at the same time an elevation of the intellect beyond that of others. See *Divine Love and Wisdom 424.3*

They immerse all things of their will and so of their intellect in their person, regarding themselves as though in a mirror from the standpoint of others and loving only their own particular selves. See *Married Love 496*

They love only themselves and place their heart in a quest for acclaim. *Married Love 496*

The stark ugliness of evil is reflected in the homes, animals, and plants of hell. Depending on the quality of their evil loves, devils live in caves, swamps, ruined cities, huts, or deserts. Sometime they roam dark forests like wild beasts (*Heaven and Hell 586*). Despite this, the Lord is present with the devils in hell. He controls the attacks of hell and restrains their madness, maintaining a balance between heaven and hell. Angels are sometimes sent to stop the insanities and riots, and their presence brings hell under control (see *Heaven and Hell 543*).

People are distinguished from animals by the fact that their minds are divided into three planes, into as many planes as there are heavens, and by the fact that they can be raised from the lowest plane to... the highest one. To this end human beings have been granted the capability of elevating their understanding to that point. However, if the love of the will is not elevated at the same time, they do not become spiritual, but remain natural.

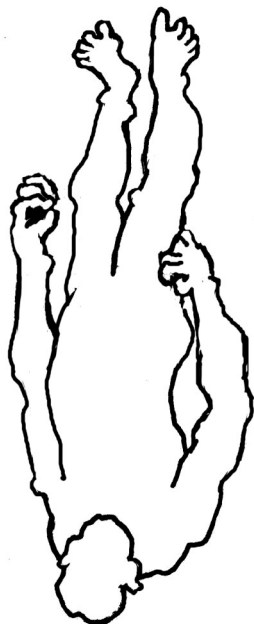
Natural people are of three degrees. In the first are those who love only the world, placing their heart in riches. They are called natural. In the second degree are those who love only gratifications of the senses, placing their heart in luxuries and pleasures. They are sensory. In the third degree are those who love only themselves, placing their heart in a quest for acclaim. They are called carnal because they immerse all things of their will and intellect in the body, regarding themselves as though in a mirror from the standpoint of others and loving only themselves. Those who are sensory, on the other hand, immerse all things of their will and their intellect in the enticements and delusions of the senses, indulging in these only. And those who are natural pour all things of their will and intellect into the world, greedily and unscrupulously acquiring riches and regarding no useful end in them or stemming from them other than having them. See *Married Love 495-496*

The Grand Monster

Those who are motivated by love of self, love of the world, and their own evil desires are outside the Grand Human—indeed they are in hell. They do not correspond to any organs or members within the body but to various defects and diseases.... They hate their neighbor and are ruthless in their interactions with them. When they do good it is because the law requires it or because it will benefit them in some way. See *Arcana Coelestia* 4225

Evil spirits in the next life, are distinguished into separate communities just as good spirits are. But they are joined and held together by their having similar delusions and evil desires, so that they act together in persecuting truths and goods. So they have a common interest to hold them together. But as soon as that common interest ceases to exist one rushes at another, and their joy then consists in torturing one or more of their companions. *Arcana Coelestia* 1322

People living in hell are not part of the Grand Human. They live instead in a monstrous human form with a structure ordered by various levels of commitment to evil. The lowest hell (which makes the head) is formed by people who love themselves above all others and who wish to rule over other people. People who live here are called devils and evil genii. People who love the world and who want to dominate others from this love are in the middle hell. They are called satans and evil spirits. People living in the highest or mildest hell are faithless and love to be disobedient.



Recognizing the Three Hells

The following statements illustrate the selfish attitudes of the three hells. Which of these statements seem to fit with the love of self—the love of the lowest hell? Which ones reflect the love of the middle hell—the love of the world? Which ones show a love of disobedience—the love typical of the mildest hell? Indicate your choice by putting **H** (highest or mildest hell) **M** (middle) or **L** (lowest) next to each statement.

I don't care what you think!	I don't have to do that	I want it, so I should have it!
Everyone should listen to me	It's mine—don't touch it	The rules don't apply to me
I hate you	I'll die if I don't get it!	It's not my turn!
I'm the most important person	I'm not listening to that	It doesn't matter what I do here
I'm going to kill her	Do as I say!	I don't care what the Bible says