

WHERE HEAVEN IS

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Readings: John 14:2-9; Heaven and Hell 7-8

People often wonder where heaven is. Perhaps you have wondered about this yourself. To help you understand the answer, think for a moment about another question and how you would answer it. If I were to ask you, "Where is your home?" you might answer by telling me your address—the name of the street you live on and the number of your house. But if you think about it, you can see that there is another much more important answer to the question of where your home is. Your home is where your family is. The love of your family is what makes your house a home, not the place. Wherever your family is, that place is your home.

Now, the same thing is true about heaven. It is the Lord's love that makes heaven. Wherever that love is felt, that is where heaven is. The beautiful houses the angels live in, and the beautiful scenery which they see around them, are not what make heaven. The fact that they feel the Lord's love and know that He is near them and watching over them every moment is what makes heaven. And the love the angels all feel for one another, which they receive from the Lord, also makes the place they are heaven. This is the source of all their happiness. And that joy in their hearts, which they share with one another, is what makes heaven.

You can see, then, that heaven is really inside the angels, in their hearts and minds, and not outside them. This is what the Lord told His disciples when He said, "the kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:21). When the Lord rules in a person's heart and mind, then that person receives the Lord's love and has heaven within him.

In our reading from the Gospel of John, the Lord spoke to His disciples about the time, which He knew would come shortly, when He would be taken away from them. "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:2-3). The place the Lord prepared for His disciples was in heaven, and the Lord prepares a place in heaven for each of us. And He also prepares *us* for that place, so that we will be ready to come into it. As the Lord teaches us in the Heavenly Doctrine for the New Church, people are received into heaven who had received heaven into themselves during their lives in the world (see *Heaven and Hell* 420:2).

And how does the Lord prepare us for heaven? He does it by means of His Word. In the Word the Lord speaks to us and teaches us how to live so that we can come into heaven, and so that heaven can come into us. The truths of the Word show us how to live so that we can receive the Lord's love and rejoice in it, even as the angels do. The Word also tells us how the Lord forms His kingdom within us, so that when we leave this earthly life we will be prepared to live among the angels in the presence of the Lord forever.

Amen.