

**ISAIAH**

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*Lessons: Isaiah 6 & 7*

In the seventh chapter of Isaiah, honey is mentioned twice. We just read about the first time. There Isaiah, talking about the Lord as a child, prophesied: “Butter and honey shall He eat, that He may know to refuse the evil and choose the good (*Isaiah 7:15*). Later in the chapter Isaiah goes on to say: “Butter and honey shall every one eat that is left in the land” (*Isaiah 7:22*).

What do you think honey means spiritually? Honey is sweet and delightful. To angels, spiritual “honey” is the good things people do to make life delightful. Let’s talk about choosing between evil and good, but first let’s see why butter is mentioned as well as honey. Adding the idea of butter to the idea of honey is a way of saying that it is something that will last, not something that will quickly pass away. If something is only fun or delightful for a very short time and then it is gone, then it is not very valuable. The Lord said once that people should not labor for the food that perishes, but for that food which endures to everlasting life (*Arcana Coelestia 680*).

If heaven is called a land flowing with milk (from which butter is made) and honey (see *Arcana Coelestia 5620:9, 6857*), then we can see that milk, or butter, and honey mean much enjoyment that really lasts and does not pass away and that heaven is a place of lasting happiness. Given a choice between honey and vinegar, the sweet or the sour, the good or the evil, heaven or hell, which would we choose?

We would choose heaven. We would choose the lasting delight rather than choose what might be fun for a short time. Choosing between delights brings us to a true story. There was once a man who had thought much about heaven and hell ever since he was young. When he woke up in the spiritual world, he had a very strong wish to know the quality of heaven and the quality of hell. He prayed to the Lord that he might be given to know and understand this. An angel was sent to him, and the angel told him that if he went around and asked and found out what *delight* is, then he would know about heaven and hell (*The True Christian Religion 570, Conjugal Love 461*).

Imagine being told that if you found out what *fun* is, then you would know what heaven and hell are. Well, this man started going around and asking people in the world of spirits what delight is (or what fun is). Some said that this was a strange question. They said that all fun or all delight is the same.

But the man was wise enough not to accept that as an answer. Isn't it true that some people think that being very mean and cruel is fun? Well, then, that proves that fun is not all the same. There is good fun or good delight, and there is also evil delight. And when you taste good delight, spiritual butter and honey, you start to know about choosing good and refusing evil.

Did you know that there is a wonderful quiet force drawing us all in the direction of heaven? It may be compared to a river which carries us along. Because it is the Lord's Providence, and because the Lord is in it wishing to give us true delight, we may compare it to a river of honey and butter. We do not see the flowing of the Divine Providence, but we should take joy in knowing that it is there from the Lord's love of bringing us to happiness.

But how do we find this wonderful river of spiritual butter and honey? How can we know if the Lord is leading us? In looking for an answer to this question, think of the prophet Isaiah. The prophet Isaiah was called by the Lord. The Lord spoke to him, and asked him to become His prophet. The Lord wanted Isaiah to do special things for Him. The Lord also calls each of us. There is a voice of His love inside us that, if we pay attention, we can hear. A voice of love, the way we feel about things. But even though the Lord called Isaiah, Isaiah had to answer. The Lord's call would have meant nothing had Isaiah not answered it. So it is with us. We must want the spiritual honey that the Lord can give us. We must want to respond to the Lord's love when it is inside us. We must want to do what the Lord teaches us to do in His Word. We must have the courage of the prophet Isaiah, the courage to speak out, even to the Lord.

And what did Isaiah say when the Lord called him? Listen to the answer as found in the Lord's Word. Isaiah is speaking. "Also I heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then I said, 'Here am I, send me'" (*Isaiah 6:8*). What special words. What important words! Do we have the courage to say the same thing when we hear the Lord calling us, asking us to obey His commandments, asking us to do what He teaches in His Word? Do we have the courage to respond with those simple words, "Here am I, send me"?