



What Is Heaven Like?

Lesson Overview

1. Video

Watch *What Heaven Feels Like* online at bitly.com/HeavenFeelsLike (1min 51sec) and discuss.

2. Read

What does it take to become an angel? What does heaven look like? What do angels do? What surprised Swedenborg? pp.1-2

3. Critical Thinking

Read statements about life in heaven and decide whether they are true or false. p.3

New Church Concept All Can Go to Heaven

The idea that only those people born in the church are saved is an insane heresy. People born outside the church are just as much human beings as those born in it, being from the same heavenly origin, with equally living and immortal souls. They have religion, too, on which account they acknowledge that there is a God and that they must live rightly. Anyone who acknowledges God and lives rightly becomes spiritual in his own degree and is saved. *Divine Providence* 330.5

FaithBuilder 1 | Lesson 7 | Eternal Life

Watch a Video

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1. When have you felt happiest? Was your happiness shared by others?
2. What does heaven feel like?
3. If each angel shares the happiness of all others, and all others feel the happiness of each individual can angels have separate identities? Or do all angels feel more or less the same as everyone around them?

How Does a Person Become an Angel?

Jesus told many parables about the kingdom of heaven to help people understand what heaven is like and what heavenly happiness is based on. One parable teaches that people in heaven value acting according to the Lord's commandments.

“Whoever...breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.” Matthew 5:19

The Lord also offered the following insight into the qualities that are valued in heaven:

“Assuredly...unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.” Matthew 18:1-4

“To be converted and become as little children” means to look to the Lord with a humble heart and recognize our need for His leading and care. This is the innocence of wisdom that angels have. The Lord knows that this is not easy for us, because we love to feel that we are acting freely and independently; that we are in charge of our lives. But in the long run, we will actually become *more* free if we look to the Lord's leading and love what is good, because evil really enslaves us.

Everyone in heaven looks to the Lord and wants to make others even happier than they are. Angels are people who loved the Lord and others while on earth, and they acted on these loves again and again. When woke up in the world of spirits after death, they were ready to be prepared for life in heaven. The Lord promises a heav-



What Heaven Is Like

As a result of what I have seen over so many years I can report as follows. The spiritual world contains countries just as the natural world does; there are plains and valleys there, mountains and hills, springs and rivers. There are parklands, gardens, woods and forests, There are cities containing palaces and houses. There is writing there and there are books. There are administrative offices and businesses. There is gold and silver, as well as precious stones. In short, every single thing to be found in the natural world exists there too, but those in heaven are immeasurably more perfect. But there is the difference that everything to be seen in the spiritual world is created instantly by the Lord, as for instance are the houses, parklands, food and so on. These are created to correspond to the interiors of angels and spirits, that is, to their affections and the thoughts that spring from them. Everything, however, which is to be seen in the natural world comes into being from seed and so develops. *True Christian Religion* 794

Movement in Heaven

All motion in the spiritual world is the effect of changes of inner states.... This is how I have been led by the Lord into the heavens.... This happened to my spirit, while my body remained in the same place. This is how all angels move about, which means they do not have distances; and if they do not have distances, they do not have space. Instead they have states and their changes. *Heaven and Hell* 192

What Will I See in Heaven?

Swedenborg witnessed wonders in heaven. He saw beautiful landscapes, houses, and gardens. He saw gentle and useful animals like horses, sheep, deer, doves, and swans (see *True Christian Religion* 78). He found that everything good that is in the natural world is also in heaven, but it is much more perfect there (see *True Christian Religion* 794). And everything he saw there was bathed in the brilliant light of heaven. This light is from the Lord who is seen as the spiritual Sun by the angels.

What Do Angels Do?

Many people think of heaven as a place of eternal rest. Angels do experience great peace and joy, but their lives are also very active. They worship the Lord, read the Word, and discuss spiritual things—but that is just the beginning. Every angel does some useful service within their community. In fact, the Writings say that being useful is the key to heavenly happiness.

The angels in heaven have all happiness from uses, and according to uses, so that to them uses are heaven. *Arcana Coelestia* 7038

Because the Lord gives each person unique gifts, each angel has something special to contribute to the variety of heaven. Angels also relax together. They have fun playing sports, putting on plays, playing music, and celebrating special events.

Angel Homes

Angels in heaven are married and live as husband and wife in their own homes. Each home is uniquely suited to the couple and is made of materials—wood, stone, precious metals, gems—that symbolize what they love. Angelic homes range from simple tents to magnificent palaces. Homes are surrounded by amazing gardens, with leaves that glisten as if they were made of silver, fruit that appears to be made of gold, and rainbows of color in the flower beds (see *Heaven and Hell* 185).

Communities

Angelic communities vary in size. Large communities may consist of hundreds of thousands of angels (*Heaven and Hell* 213). Each community has its own unique function within the kingdom of heaven. A community may educate children, welcome newcomers, watch over people in the world, restrain evil spirits, or do some other essential use (*Heaven and Hell* 391). There is an amazing variety of uses in heaven, and the angels experience immense joy in serving others.

Surprising Facts

All angels speak a common language. By listening to a person's tone of voice angels know what the speaker loves, and by listening to the articulation they understand the person's inner thoughts (*Heaven and Hell* 234-245).

Things appear to be in a place and in a space in heaven, but a person's location can change without them moving. It is similar to the way a person's thoughts can wander. Two people who want to see each other and are in a similar state will appear to be close to each other. But people whose thoughts disagree and who love different things might become invisible to each other (see *Heaven and Hell* 192, 194).

True or False?

Circle **T** for True or **F** for False for each of the following statements. Discuss your answers.

T F Angels are people who lived on earth at one time.

T F People have sometimes seen angels.

T F Only people who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ can go to heaven.

T F It doesn't matter how I live my life. As long as I believe in the Lord, I will go to heaven.

T F In heaven I will experience eternal rest and peace.

T F Communities in heaven are made up of people who love the same kinds of things.

T F It doesn't matter what I believe. If I live a good life, I will go to heaven.

T F Angels live as married couples in heaven.

T F I will choose my home in heaven.

T F My choices to do what is right or wrong during my life will affect my life after death.

T F Angels enjoy lives of useful service.

T F In heaven everyone gets along—even people who don't have much in common.

T F You don't have to be married to go to heaven.

T F If I go to heaven, I will live there to eternity.

T F The purpose of the human race is so that there can be a heaven.

T F Only people who believe in the New Church to go to heaven.

T F The Lord is in heaven.

T F To go to heaven a person must resist loving themselves and worldly things the most.

T F I will only see people I want to see in heaven.