



What Is Hell Like?

FaithBuilder 1 | Lesson 9 | Eternal Life

Lesson Overview

1. Video

Watch *What Are Heaven and Hell?* online at bit.ly/WhatAreHeavenAndHell (1min 54sec) and discuss.

2. Read

Why do people go to hell,?
What do devils look like?
What makes them happy?
How does the Lord rule hell?
pp. 1-2

3. Focus Points

Read a variety of statements on hell and human choice. Decide which statements are true and discuss. p.3

New Church Concept Devils

Hell consists of caverns and workhouses. Satanic spirits there are ruled by falsities and their resulting evils. Devils are ruled by evils and their accompanying falsities. Satanic spirits appear in the light of heaven as cadaverous, and some black, like mummies, while diabolical spirits appear dark and fiery in the light of heaven, or as black as soot. All are monstrous. Yet in their own light, which is like that of burning coal, they appear as human. This appearance is granted to them to enable them to associate with one another. See *Apocalypse Revealed* 153

Watch a Video

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1. How might thinking of heaven and hell as places we go to after death shape the choices we make *over a lifetime*?
2. Would thinking of heaven and hell as mindsets give you more reason to think about the ways you act *on a daily basis*? Why or why not?
3. Hell affects everyone. How do you notice hell affecting you?
4. Does knowing that heaven and hell (*and not you*) are responsible for thoughts that come into your mind make you feel better about your thoughts?
5. How might knowing that you are free to choose to act or not to act on the thoughts in your mind give you greater power over your life?

Why Do People Go to Hell?

During life in the world the Lord gives each person the opportunity to choose whether to act on good thoughts and feelings that flow into their minds or selfish and evil thoughts and feelings that flow in. People who mostly choose loving the Lord and others over a lifetime go to heaven after death, while people who love themselves most go to hell. While it may appear that the Lord “sends” people to hell, this is far from the reality.

The Lord is leading every spirit toward Himself through angels and through an inflow from heaven, but...spirits who are absorbed in evil resist strenuously and virtually tear themselves away from the Lord. They are drawn by their evil—by hell, that is—as though it were a rope. Because they are drawn and want to follow because of their love of evil, it follows that they freely cast themselves into hell. *Heaven and Hell* 548

Do People Stay in Hell Forever?

Just as angels live in heaven to eternity, evil spirits remain in hell because they continue love being selfish and hurting good people for ever.

They cannot be taken out of hell, because it cannot be given them to will good to anyone, but only from fear of punishment not to do evil, the desire to do it always remaining. See *Arcana Coelestia* 7541:2-3

What Do Devils Look Like?

In the afterlife each person’s body looks like what he or she loves most. Since

How God Rules Hell

Overall, the hells are governed by a general outflow of divine good and divine truth from the heavens through which the general effort that flows out of the hells is restrained and controlled. There is also a specific outflow from each heaven and from each community of heaven.

Specifically, the hells are governed by means of angels who are given the ability to look into the hells and check the insanities and riots there. Sometimes angels are sent there, and their very presence brings matters under control.

In general, though, all the people in the hells are governed by their fears, some by fears sown and still in place from the world. However, since these fears are not adequate and gradually weaken, they are governed through fears of punishment, which are the primary means of preventing them from doing evil. There are many kinds of punishment there, milder or more severe depending on the evil being restrained. Most of the time, the relatively malevolent spirits are in power, having gained control by their experience and skill; and they are able to keep the rest in servile obedience by punishments and the fears that these give birth to. These dominant spirits do not dare go beyond fixed limits.

We do need to realize that the only way of controlling the violent rages of people in the hells is through fear of punishment. There are no other means. See *Heaven and Hell* 543

angels love the Lord and others above everything their beautiful human form reflects these loves. But devils value worldly and selfish things more than anything else, and so their ugly appearance reflects these warped loves.

When love of the world forms the head, a person is hunchbacked. But if love of self forms the head, he is like a person standing on the palms of his hands with his head down...but if the love of the world or of wealth forms the head, he appears from heaven with a pale face like that of a corpse, and a yellowish circle about the head. And if love of self, or of ruling over others, forms the head, he appears from heaven with a dusky-glowing face and a white circle about the head. See *True Christian Religion* 507:2,3

Devils appear normal to others in their community but when the light of heaven shines on them, others see them as a true reflection of their evil loves. Some devils are forms of contempt for others. Others are a picture of hatred and cruelty (*Heaven and Hell* 533).

What Makes Devils Happy?

People who choose to live in hell are happier in hell than they would be in heaven but their happiness does not last and is unfulfilling. Devils can only feel happy when they are selfishly dominating others.

It is granted everyone to experience the delight of his evil, provided he does not molest people moved by a delight in good. Yet because evil cannot help but hurt good, as evil has in it a hostility toward good, therefore to keep them from doing harm such people are removed and cast down into their places in hell, where their delight is turned into something undelightful. See *Divine Providence* 324:8

Devils are frustrated because they can't harm the Lord and the angels, but sometimes they are allowed to act out their evil loves on other evil spirits. They enjoy punishing others—but are sometimes on the receiving end as well.

For example, devils are happiest when they are able to punish, torture, and torment one another. They know how to introduce painful sensations just as if they were in the body, and also dreadful and horrible delusions, as well as fears and phobias. See *Arcana Coelestia* 695

Does the Lord Love Devils?

The Lord is as lovingly present with the devils in hell as He can be. The devils themselves reject the Lord and block out the light and warmth of heaven. In order to maintain a balance between heaven and hell and to protect the devils themselves the Lord controls the attacks of hell. He sends angels to stop terrible things from happening and to bring things under control (see *Heaven and Hell* 543). Since devils reject the Lord's love the Lord cannot lead them by obedience to what is true. Instead, He governs hell through fears and punishments.

Focus Points

Circle answers that you think are true and discuss them with your group.

1. If I experience difficult times in my life, it may be because
 - a. I am disobeying the Ten Commandments.
 - b. I am making bad spiritual choices.
 - c. the Lord has abandoned me.
 - d. the hells constantly want to draw me away from the Lord.

2. Devils in hell appear to be
 - a. deformed or dead.
 - b. in the form of their own evil.
 - c. close to the Lord.
 - d. happy.

3. There is a hell because
 - a. the Lord loves human freedom and lets people choose to love evil more than good.
 - b. Satan is as powerful as the Lord.
 - c. the Lord cannot prevent people from putting themselves ahead of others.
 - d. devils need a place to live.

4. The Lord will not save me from going to hell if I choose to go there because
 - a. He loves my freedom.
 - b. that would be going against His rules of order.
 - c. I would be unhappy in heaven.
 - d. I deserve to be punished for my evils.

5. If a person goes to hell after he dies, he will
 - a. live there for ever.
 - b. live there for a while, and then be free to go to heaven.
 - c. repent and go to heaven.

6. Devils cannot cause people to go to hell because
 - a. they cannot force people to choose evil.
 - b. people are constantly being protected by the Lord and His angels.