



When a Child Dies

Lesson Overview

1. Think for a Minute

What do people believe about babies going to heaven?

2. Read

Children who die grow up in heaven. They do not automatically become angels, but must choose heavenly life, pp. 1-2.

3. Plan an activity

Based on heavenly learning, p. 3.

New Church Concept Learning to Resist Evil

Several times when little children have been with me and the spirits with me could not refrain from making them talk. This desire is innate in spirits. But I noticed that the little children were resisting, not wishing to talk in this way. This refusal and resistance were accompanied by a kind of indignation, I have often perceived; and when an opportunity to talk was given them they would say nothing except that "It is not so." Little children are so tempted like this so that they may become accustomed to resisting, and may begin to resist falsity and evil, but also may learn to permit themselves to be led by no one but the Lord.
Heaven and Hell 343

FaithBuilder 2 | Lesson 8 | Eternal Life

Think for a Minute

Can babies go to heaven? Many people are confused about this question. How you answer this depends on how you answer the following questions.

1. Are people good or bad—or neither good or bad—when they are born?

Some believe people are born in sin—not because of anything they have done, but because Adam sinned and so everyone is a sinner. So since we are all sinners, babies go to hell unless they are saved by faith or by the church. This idea is called Original Sin. The New Church teaches that no person inherits the sins of others; every person is responsible for his or her actions. *We have the inclination* to be selfish (sin) and must learn how to love the Lord and others, but we are not born bad per se.

2. Do babies only go to heaven if they are baptized?

If you believe that only the church or your faith can save you, then babies who have not yet been baptized are not saved. Instead, they are in 'limbo' (a natural state of joy) forever. They cannot go to heaven and experience deeper heavenly joys. The New Church teaches that baptism does not save a person, it is a sign of entry into spiritual life. So all babies go to heaven whether they are baptized or not.

3. Does God just decide whether a person will go to heaven or hell?

Some believe God decides whether a person will go to heaven or hell. This idea is called predestination. People who believe in predestination think that God chooses a group of people, called his "elect", and that they will go to heaven. Everyone else goes to hell. The New Church teaches that God wants all people to go to heaven. So people who die as babies definitely go to heaven.

Read

The Writings are clear that all babies who die go to heaven.

Every child who dies, no matter where he or she was born, within the church or outside it, of devout or irreverent parents, is accepted by the Lord after death, brought up in heaven, taught according to the divine design and filled with affections for what is good and through them with direct knowledge of the truth; and then, being continually perfected in intelligence and wisdom, all such individuals are led into heaven and become angels. *Heaven and Hell 329*

When babies or children wake up in the spiritual world they are the same age that they were in the world. To start with babies are still babies, and children are still children, but they grow up just like children in the world. They live in families and are cared for by parents.

As soon as children are reawakened (which happens immediately after their death), they are taken to heaven and given to female angels who had loved children tenderly during their physical lives and had loved God as well. Since in this world they had loved all children with a kind of maternal tenderness, they accept these new ones as their own, and the children love them as their mothers as though this were inborn in them. Each such angel has as many children as her spiritual maternal nature wants. *Heaven and Hell* 332

Like children growing up in this world they grow up to become young adults, but they do not grow old. They learn to talk and walk and find delight in the heavenly ideas that flow into their minds, however this happens much more quickly than on earth.

As they grow up they move to other heavens where they are taught by instructors.

Children are taught especially by images suited to their natures, images that are unbelievably lovely and full of wisdom from within. In this way, there is gradually instilled into them an intelligence that derives its essence from goodness. *Heaven and Hell* 332

They see plays and beautiful enactments of stories in the Word and so are led to think about what is true and good. They read the Word, accepting what is good and true more easily since their minds are not closed off through choosing evil. As they become older, they play games, participate in sports, cultivate gardens, enjoy clothing, learn to do various kinds of work and make things for others.

As adults, they do not automatically become angels. Like children who grow up on earth they may experience temptations to do evil and must *choose* heaven.

I have talked with angels about whether children are undefiled by evils, inasmuch as they have no actual evil as adults have. But I was told that they are equally in evil...but like all angels, they are withheld from evil and held in good by the Lord so they think they are good from themselves. Little children who grow up in heaven are sometimes let down into their inherited evils and stay in them until they know, acknowledge and believe the truth of the matter. The son of a king who grew up in heaven was let down into that life of evils into which he was born. He then realized that he had a disposition to domineer over others and he had inherited this evil from his parents. When he had been brought to recognize this he was again received among the angels with whom he had been before. In the other life no one ever suffers punishment on account of his inherited evil, because it is not his evil, that is, it is not his fault that he is such. He suffers only on account of actual evil that is his, that is, only so far as he has appropriated to himself inherited evil by actual life. See *Heaven and Hell* 342

New Church Concept Growing up in Heaven

There is a difference between people who die as children and those who as adults. People who die as adults take their worldly memory with them. This serves their thought after death as an outermost plane, since thought inflows into it. After death a person becomes the way they lived in the world. Children who are educated in heaven do not have such a plane, but have a spiritual-natural plane and so cannot be in such gross affections and thoughts, since they derive all things from heaven. Moreover, these children do not know that they were born in the world, but believe they were born in heaven. They only know about spiritual birth through the knowledge of what is good and true. Since these are from the Lord they believe themselves to be the Lord's own, and love to be so. It is possible for people who grow up on the earth to become as perfect as the state of little children who grow up in heaven, if they put away the loves of self and the world, and receive in their place spiritual loves. See *Heaven and Hell* 345

Plan an Activity

Children who grow up in heaven play games, tend gardens, and wear beautiful clothes. They learn to make things for others as well. If there is time, do one of the following.

Design a Heavenly Bedroom, Garment or Garden

The Writings describe how girls are raised in heaven. Design a heavenly bedroom, garment, or garden based on the following descriptions given here in *Spiritual Experiences* 5660-5665.

Three, four, or five, are kept together; and each one has her own room, and in it her bed; near that, is a tiny little chamber for their clothes and for necessaries. There is also given them a cupboard with cases, or drawers so that they may put away in them things which they value. In these they take much delight, and store such things up in them.

Girls are kept at their work, which is embroidery worked upon white linen. They embroider flowers and such things; and the things they produce by their labor are either for their own use, or they give them to others: they do not sell them.

Girls receive garments with which they clothe themselves every day; and are given nicer clothes for feast days.

And they also have a little garden, and as long as they are maidens, there are only flowers in them; but no fruits until they become wives.

When they see spots on their clothes, it is a sign they have done something which ought not to be done. The spots cannot be washed out. When they find out what they have thought and done wrong, they see their blemishes and their evils. If they then get the better of the evils the spots disappear from the clothes by themselves. Similarly when they see in their chamber that one of their clothes is missing, they immediately know that they have something wrong. If they do not what is wrong a wife comes and tells them. If they see that there is a new garment in their room they then inwardly rejoice, because they know that they have done well.

Make up a Heavenly Game or Sport

Children growing up in heaven play sports and games. Make up a game that emphasizes heavenly values, such as cooperation, mutual aid, having a useful goal. List any rules you think are important. Or, think about a sport or game you play and make up a set of heavenly rules for it.

Plan a Play or Representation

Children in heaven are taught by plays and dramatizations. Think of various ways you could dramatize stories in the Word for young children, e.g. puppets, shadow puppets, plays, etc.

As an alternative, you could design a puppet, doll or do a painting that depicts a heavenly truth, e.g. marriage, the Lord as the center and sun of heaven, the Lord's resurrection.