

Choosing hell

God does not send people to hell, and hell is not a punishment for having done bad things. It is a choice that some people make. You might ask why anyone would choose hell instead of heaven. Think of selfish people on earth who are uncomfortable with, or just don't want to associate with those who exhibit charity. Serving others does not make these selfish people happy. Similarly people who do not love God and the neighbor in the afterlife would rather live with like minded people in a place where selfishness, greed and jealousy are more acceptable. So God provides a place where they can freely choose not to love Him or others. The punishments they experience are from their own love of evil.

Choosing heaven or hell on earth

We begin choosing heaven or hell here on earth. Whenever we get a good feeling from helping someone else, or enjoy something beautiful in nature, we get a taste of what heaven is like. And, whenever we are dissatisfied with our life, feel jealous of others or want bad things to happen to them, we know what hell is like. We need to develop an appetite for heaven by learning what God wants us to do and not do.

When people die, they wake up in the spiritual world feeling safe and happy, and go on living forever. Death is only the beginning of a new life.

"O Lord, You have searched me and known me. Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend into heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there.

If I take the wings of the morning, And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, Even there Your hand shall lead me, And Your right hand shall hold me."

Psalms 139:1,7-10

Little Angels

Swedenborg's Writings for the New Church have much to say about what happens to children when they die.

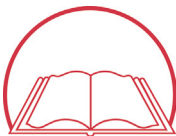
"Every child who dies, no matter where he or she is born, within the church or outside it, of devout or irreverent parents, is accepted by the Lord after death, brought up in heaven, and become angels."

Heaven and Hell 329

For more on this topic, read *Heaven and Hell* by Emanuel Swedenborg

The New Church

www.newchurch.org



Life After Death



New Church Perspective Series

Life After Death

Everyone who lives will someday die. We wonder what will happen after we die. Is there really a life after death? What is heaven like? Hell? How can I get to heaven? Why would I end up in hell? What are angels? . The New Church offers many new ideas about this.

In the Bible God tells us that our lives will continue after death.

"But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? God is not the God of the dead but of the living." Matthew 22:31-32

"Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise." Luke 23:43

God, as Jesus Christ, lived in this world was crucified, and rose three days later from the dead. He appeared to His followers and taught them as He walked and ate with them This way, they would believe what He said earlier:

"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live." John 11:25

"My kingdom is not of this world." John 18:36

What happens when you die?

All people are born to become angels after they die, because God loves everyone and wants them to live forever with Him in heaven. Emanuel Swedenborg's Writings tell us a lot about what it's like to wake up after we die, what heaven is like, and what hell is like. The world we go to after death is called the "spiritual world."

What is the spiritual world like?

Imagine someone who has died waking up in the spiritual world. He or she wakes up feeling safe, healthy, and happy and is greeted by angels; maybe even someone they know. At first the person thinks they are still in this world, but soon realize that it's the spiritual world. Life appears to be a lot like it was on earth, but slowly it becomes clear that the spiritual world is even more real.

During their stay in the world of spirits, people continue their preparation for either heaven or hell which was begun on earth. This choice is up to each individual - it is not decided by God. While God invites everyone into heaven, and deeply hopes we will choose to be with Him, He allows us to make our own decision in freedom. Jesus said:

"In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." John 14:2

Choosing heaven

If we love God and want to live a life of usefulness and charity to the neighbor, we will choose heaven. People in heaven are married, have jobs, enjoy celebrating together, worshiping with one another and doing good things for each other. The angels are happier than we can even imagine!

"Heavenly joy is so great as to be beyond description."

Heaven and Hell 409



"All in heaven take joy in sharing their delights and blessings with others."

Heaven and Hell 399



"If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full." John 15:10-11