

THE LORD IN HEAVEN

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Lesson: Revelation 4

John was called the disciple whom Jesus loved, and while Jesus was on earth he often saw Him and talked with Him. In our story today, however, John for the second time saw Jesus in heaven. Earlier in the book of *Revelation* it is said he saw Him in the midst of the seven golden lampstands. Now he saw Him sitting on a wonderful throne in heaven, with a green rainbow around His throne and a sea of glass in front of Him, and 24 elders (that means older people) sitting around Him. Between the elders and the Lord were four living creatures—one like a calf, one like a lion, one like an eagle, and one like a man.

John saw the Lord in heaven. That makes him a very lucky man, because very few people have seen the Lord in heaven, and been able to tell us about it. Swedenborg was one of those few people, and he is able to tell us in the Writings for the New Church what the Lord looks like when the angels see Him.

What would the Lord look like if your spiritual eyes were opened now and you saw Him in heaven? Probably like John saw Him—He would be wearing a shiny white robe, and a golden girdle would be around His chest. His eyes would seem to be flaming, because He loves people so much and He sees so clearly.

Do you know what the look on His face would be? Would He be stern or cross or serious? The Writings tell us the answer. They say that the Lord's face is "mercy, peace, and every goodness." His face is mercy—He is very gentle with and sorry for anyone who is unhappy. His face is peaceful—you would feel a gentle glow from it that made you feel peaceful too. His face has every goodness in it. If you could look at it you would probably be unable to speak because you would feel such goodness coming forth from Him and touching your heart.

Sometimes the Lord appears in heaven for the angels to see, and when He does that is how He looks. And their hearts are filled with wonder and love because they always knew the Lord was goodness itself and kindness itself, but when they see Him they realize that He is good and kind far beyond what they had imagined. We are told that when angels see the Lord like that they fall down on their faces before Him. He is so wonderful they feel they are not good enough to look at Him.

In fact, John did that. When he first saw the Lord he fell at His feet as if dead, and the Lord raised him up and spoke to him, and told him to write the book of Revelation.

In the story we are reading the Lord came down into heaven to help all the good people of heaven and earth. He came down because evil people had been hurting the good ones, and there had been much unhappiness. Therefore He sat on a throne as a judge, one who would make sure that the evil people who had been doing this no longer had the power to hurt anyone who was good.

How do you think He looked to the evil people? I think He tried to look like He always does—someone who is merciful and peaceful and completely good. But the evil people didn't like that because good people help each other. The evil people didn't want a God near them who would stop them hurting and ruling over others. They felt He was in the way. They felt He was a nuisance. They were afraid of the great power of His goodness. They probably thought of Him as a harsh, stern God who didn't love them at all. It wasn't true, but He was going to stop them doing evil things, and they loved doing evil things. Therefore He seemed to be their enemy. They couldn't see the wonderful love in His face, and His mercy, and His peace, and His goodness.

But you can. If you close your eyes tonight and say the Lord's Prayer, try to have a picture of Him in your mind. Try to see Him on that throne, with a white, shining robe on and a golden girdle around His chest. Picture His face — the most gentle and peaceful and good face you can possibly imagine. And when you have that picture in your mind, tell yourself that the Lord looks even better than that. Try to feel His mercy, and His peace, and His goodness reaching out to you — for He is truly right there with you, and He can and will give you these things, if you ask.

Then pray to the Lord that He will lead you; so that one day you will actually see His face in heaven and feel the wonder which John felt. And which Swedenborg felt, and which all the angels feel when they see Him looking upon them, and know how much He loves them.