

HEAVEN  
and Its Wonders  
AND  
HELL

*Drawn from Things Heard & Seen*

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## [Author's Preface]

**I**N the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, we find the Lord<sup>d</sup> talking to his disciples about the close of the age, the last time of the church.<sup>a,\*</sup><sup>2</sup> At the end of his prophecies concerning the sequence of states of its love and faith,<sup>b,3</sup> he says:

Immediately after the suffering of those days, the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then the sign of the Human-born One<sup>t</sup> will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will lament. And they will see the Human-born One coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a trumpet and a loud voice, and they will gather his chosen ones from the four winds, from one end of the heavens all the way to the other end. (Matthew 24:29–31)<sup>5</sup>

When people understand these words according to their literal meaning, they can only believe that all these things are going to happen just as this meaning describes them, at that end of time called the Last Judgment.<sup>6</sup> This does not mean only that the sun and moon will be darkened and that the stars will fall from heaven, that the sign of the Lord will appear in heaven, and that he will be seen in the clouds with angels blowing trumpets. It also includes matters prophesied elsewhere, statements that the whole visible world is going to be destroyed and that afterward a new heaven and a new earth will come into being.

a. On the close of the age as the last time of the church: 4535, 10672 [10622].

b. For explanations of what the Lord said in Matthew 24 and 25 about the close of the age, his coming, and thus the gradual destruction of the church and the Last Judgment, see the material prefaced to chapters 5–24 [26–40] of Genesis. In particular, see 3353–3356, 3486–3489, 3650–3655, 3751–3759 [3751–3757], 3897–3901, 4056–4060, 4129–4231 [4229–4231], 4332–4335, 4422–4424, [4535.] 4635–4638, 4661–4664, 4807–4810, 4954–4959, 5063–5071.

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\* Swedenborg's footnotes, indicated by superscript letters, comprise references to his previously published *Secrets of Heaven* (1749–1756). Endnotes, containing information helpful to the reader, are indicated by superscript numbers. Text citations in both series of notes refer to Swedenborg's section numbers. See the list of short titles and other conventions on pages 79–84 above. [GFD]

Many people in the church these days are of this opinion.<sup>7</sup> However, people who believe such things are not aware of the hidden depths that lie within the details of the Word.<sup>8</sup> There is in fact spiritual meaning in these details, for they intend not only the outward and earthly events that we find on the literal level but spiritual and heavenly events as well. This holds true not just for the meaning of phrases but even for each word.<sup>c</sup>

The Word is in fact written in pure correspondences<sup>d,9</sup> so that there may be deeper meaning in the details. Questions about the nature of this meaning can be resolved by all the things I have set forth about it in *Secrets of Heaven*.<sup>10</sup> A selection of these may be found also in my explanation of the white horse in the Book of Revelation.<sup>11</sup> It is in this deeper sense that we are to understand what the Lord said in the passage just cited about coming in the clouds of heaven. The sun that will be darkened means the Lord in respect to love,<sup>e</sup> the moon means the Lord in respect to faith.<sup>f</sup> The stars mean insights into what is good and true, or into love and faith.<sup>g</sup> The sign of the Human-born One in heaven means the appearing of divine truth. The wailing tribes of earth mean all the elements of what is true and good, or of faith and love.<sup>h</sup> The Lord's coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory means his presence in the Word, and revelation.<sup>i</sup> The clouds refer to the literal meaning of the Word<sup>j</sup> and the glory to the Word's inner meaning.<sup>k</sup> The angels with a trumpet and a loud voice mean heaven, which is where divine truth comes from.<sup>l</sup>

c. There is deeper meaning in every detail of the Word: 1143, 1984, 2135, 2333, 2395, 2495, 4442, 9049, 9086.

d. The Word is composed using pure correspondences, so that its every detail points to something spiritual: 1404, 1408, 1409, 1540, 1619, 1659, 1709, 1783, 2900, 9086.

e. The sun in the Word means the Lord in respect to love, and therefore love for the Lord: 1529, 1837, 2441, 2495, 4060, 4696, 4996 [4966], 7083, 10809.

f. The moon in the Word means the Lord in respect to faith, and therefore faith in the Lord: 1529, 1530, 2495, 4060, 4996 [4696], 7083.

g. Stars in the Word mean insights into what is good and true: 2495, 2849, 4697.

h. Tribes mean all true and good elements in a single complex, or all elements of faith and love: 3858, 3926, 4060, 6335.

i. The Lord's coming is his presence in the Word, and revelation: 3900, 4060.

j. Clouds in the Word mean the Word in the letter or its literal meaning: 4060, 4391, 5922, 6343, 6752, 8106, 8781, 9430, 10551, 10574.

k. Glory in the Word means divine truth as it is in heaven and in the inner meaning of the Word: 4809, 5292 [?], 5922, 8267, 8427, 9429, 10574.

l. The trumpet or horn means divine truth in heaven and revealed from heaven: 8815, 8823, 8915. "Voice" has the same meaning: 6971, 9926.

This enables us to see what these words of the Lord mean. They mean that at the end of the church, when there is no longer any love and therefore no longer any faith, the Lord will open the Word by disclosing its deeper meaning and will reveal the heavenly contents hidden<sup>12</sup> within it. The particular hidden contents to be disclosed in the pages that follow have to do with heaven and hell and with our own life after death.

Church people these days<sup>13</sup> know practically nothing about heaven and hell or their life after death, even though there are descriptions of everything available to them in the Word. In fact, many who have been born in the church deny all this. In their hearts they are asking who has ever come back to tell us about it.

To prevent this negative attitude—especially prevalent among people who have acquired a great deal of worldly wisdom—from infecting and corrupting people of simple heart and simple faith, it has been granted me to be with angels and to talk with them person to person. I have also been enabled to see what is in heaven and in hell, a process that has been going on for thirteen years. Now I am being allowed therefore to describe what I have heard and seen, in the hopes of shedding light where there is ignorance, and of dispelling skepticism.

The reason this kind of direct revelation is taking place today is that this is what the Coming of the Lord means.<sup>14</sup>

## The Lord is God of Heaven

**F**IRST and foremost, we need to know who the God of heaven is, since everything else depends on this. Throughout the whole of heaven, no one is acknowledged as God of heaven except the Lord.<sup>15</sup> Angels say what he himself taught, namely that he is one with the Father, that the Father is in him and he in the Father, that anyone who sees him sees the Father, and that everything holy emanates from him (John 10:30, 38; 14:9–11;<sup>16</sup> 16:13–15). I have often talked with angels about this, and their consistent testimony has been that in heaven they cannot divide the Divine<sup>17</sup> into three because they both know and perceive that

spiritual one is called “something that corresponds.” It needs to be realized that the natural world arises from and is sustained in being by the spiritual world, exactly the way an effect relates to its efficient cause.

By “the natural world,” I mean all that extended reality<sup>80</sup> that is under our sun<sup>81</sup> and that receives its light and warmth from it. All the things that are sustained in being from that source belong to that world. The spiritual world, in contrast, is heaven, and to that world belong all the things that are in the heavens.

Since a human being is a heaven *and* a world in least form in the image of the greatest (see §57 above), there is a spiritual world and a natural world within each of us. The deeper elements, which belong to our minds and relate to our intelligence and volition, constitute our spiritual world, while the outer elements, which belong to our bodies and relate to our senses and actions, constitute our natural world. Anything that occurs in our natural world (that is, in our bodies and their senses and actions) because of our spiritual world (that is, because of our minds and their intelligence and volition) is called something that corresponds.

We can see in the human face what correspondence is like. In a face that has not been taught to dissimulate, all the affections of the mind manifest themselves visibly in a natural form, as though in their very imprint, which is why we refer to the face as “the index of the mind.” This is our spiritual world within our natural world. Similarly, elements of our understanding are manifest in our speech, and matters of our volition in our physical behavior. So things that occur in the body, whether in our faces or in our speech or in our behavior, are called correspondences.

We can also see from this what the inner person is and what the outer person is, namely, that the inner is the one that is called the spiritual person, and the outer the natural person. We can also see that they are as distinct from each other as heaven and earth, and that everything that happens and comes forth in the outer or natural person does so from the inner or spiritual one.

We have been talking about the correspondence of our inner or spiritual person with our outer or natural one. In what follows, though, we need to discuss the correspondence of heaven in its entirety with the individual human being.

It has already been explained that heaven in its totality reflects a single person, and that it is a person in image and is therefore called the universal human. It has also been explained that for this reason, the heavenly communities that make up heaven are arranged like the members, organs, and viscera in a human being. So there are communities that are located in the head, in the chest, in the arms, and in the particular parts of

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food. It is because of this correspondence that the Lord calls himself the bread of life; and it is also because of this that bread was put to holy use in the Israelite church—they did in fact place bread on the table in the tabernacle and called it “the bread of presence.”<sup>93</sup> Then too, all divine worship that they performed by sacrifices and burnt offerings was called “bread.” Because of this correspondence too, the most sacred worship in the Christian church is the Holy Supper, in which bread and wine are shared.<sup>g</sup>

From these few examples, we can infer what correspondence is like.

We may note briefly how the union of heaven with the world occurs by means of correspondences. The Lord’s kingdom is a kingdom of purposes that are functions<sup>94</sup> or—which amounts to the same thing—of functions that are purposes. For this reason, the universe has been so created and formed by the Divine that functions can clothe themselves in materials that enable them to present themselves in act or in results, first in heaven and then in this world, and so step by step all the way to the lowest things in nature. We can see from this that the correspondence of natural phenomena with spiritual ones, or of the world with heaven, takes place through functions, and that the functions are what unite them. We can also see that the forms that clothe the functions are correspondences and unions to the extent that they are forms of the functions.

In the three kingdoms of earthly nature, all the things that happen according to the design are [outward] forms of their functions or results formed by function for function. This is why the things that occur there are correspondences.

As for us, though, our acts are services in forms to the extent that we live according to the divine design—that is, in love for the Lord and in thoughtfulness toward our neighbor. To that extent, our acts are correspondences that unite us to heaven. In general terms, loving the Lord and our neighbor is being of service.<sup>h</sup>

g. Bread means everything good that nourishes our spiritual life: 2165, 2177, 3478, 3735, 3813, 4211, 4217, 4735, 4976, 9323, 9545, 10686. The loaves that were on the table in the tabernacle have a similar meaning: 3478, 9545. Sacrifices in general were called “bread”: 2165. “Bread” includes all food: 2165. So it means all heavenly and spiritual food: 276, 680, 2165, 2177, 3478, 6118, 8410.

h. Everything good has its delight from its functions and in proportion to them, and this is also the source of its quality; so the nature of the function determines the nature of the good: 3049, 4984, 7038. Angelic life consists of good deeds of love and thoughtfulness, and therefore of being

We need to know as well that it is humankind through which the natural world is united to the spiritual world, that we are the means of the union. For there is within us a natural world and also a spiritual world (see above, §57); so to the extent that we are spiritual, we are a means of union. However, to the extent that we are natural and not spiritual, we are not a means of union. The Lord's inflow into the world and into the world's gifts within us continues even without our aid, but it does not come into our rational functioning.

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Just as everything that is in accord with the divine design corresponds to heaven, everything that is contrary to the divine design corresponds to hell. Everything that corresponds to heaven reflects what is good and true, while what corresponds to hell reflects what is evil and false.

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We may now say something about the knowledge of correspondences and its use. We have just stated that the spiritual world, which is heaven, is united to the natural world by means of correspondences; so it is through correspondences that we are given communication with heaven. Heaven's angels do not think in terms of natural phenomena the way we do, so when we are absorbed in the knowledge of correspondences we can be in the company of angels in respect to the thoughts of our minds. So we can be united to them in regard to our spiritual or inner person.

In order that there might be a union of heaven with humanity, the Word was written in pure correspondences. Absolutely everything in it corresponds.<sup>i</sup> So if we were steeped in a knowledge of correspondences, we would understand the Word in its spiritual meaning and be enabled to

of service: 453 [454]. The Lord—and this holds true for angels as well—focuses on nothing but purposes that are functions in regard to us: 1317, 1645, 5844 [5854]. The Lord's kingdom is a kingdom of functions and therefore of purposes: 453 [454], 696, 1103, 3645, 4054, 7038. To serve the Lord is to be useful: 7038. Absolutely everything in us is formed for some function: 3565 [3570], 4104, 5189, 9297; and everything comes from function; so function is prior to our organic forms through which the functions are exercised, because function arises from the inflow of the Lord through heaven: 4223, 4926. Further, the deeper structures of our mind are formed as we mature from function and for function: 1964, 6815, 9297. So the quality of an individual is determined by the quality of that individual's function: 1568, 3570, 4054, 6571, 6934, 6938, 10284. Functions are causative purposes: 3565, 4054, 4104, 6815. Function is our beginning and end, and therefore our whole humanity: 1964.

i. The Word was written in pure correspondences: 8615. Through the Word, there is a union of humanity with heaven: 2899, 6943, 9396, 9400, 9401, 10375, 10452.