



Home Worship



The General Conference of the New Church

Home Worship for April 2025 prepared by Revd Clifford Curry.

As Easter approaches, the gospel account builds to a climax as those who oppose the Lord and his ministry plot together to destroy him. The sense of tension is increased when we recognize that the Lord is fully aware of the Old Testament prophecies that describe how these last days of our Lord's physical presence on earth will be played out. Isaiah tells us :-

April 6th *"He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering"*
Please read: Isaiah 53v 3 - 7 also Luke 22 v 31- 34 & 54 - 62

AC 9937/5 " 'bearing iniquities', when the Lord is the subject, means fighting constantly for a person against the hells, thus constantly moving them away; for that removal of them goes on unceasingly not only while a person is in the world but also forever in the next life....."

While in the world the Lord overcame the hells by means of conflicts brought about by temptations, and thereby set all things in order; He was stirred by Divine Love to do this, in order that the human race might be saved; and He also thereby made Divine His Human."

In the passages from Luke listed above, we find Peter who declares "Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death" but the Lord knows Peter better than he knows himself and tells him "before the cock crows today, you will deny three times that you know me"!

There is something I feel we can all relate to in Peter. He wants to show the Lord he loves him and really wants to be a devoted disciple. Sadly, confronted by the servant girl and identified as being a disciple of Jesus, who the authorities have just arrested, he disowns Jesus three times – 'thrice' signifying completely. Peter is faced with his own fear and weakness, as his Lord is taken into custody and his own courage and commitment evaporates.

We all face our times of trial and temptation, when being the kind of person we would like to think we are becomes really challenging. Swedenborg describes 'Salvation' as being the Lord providing strength and courage to overcome in temptations. It is about being saved from ourselves, not at some distant time in the future when we enter the next life, but in amongst the hurley burley of today's living.

Living up to the standard we set ourselves we can't do alone. Like Peter, we can too easily fall short without the Lord's saving help and guidance. Peter is the disciple of faith but as Swedenborg reminds us "faith alone" is not enough, and Peter alone and afraid, denies and disowns his Lord. Whilst his love is not strong enough, the Lord's love for Peter has already looked beyond the moment the cock crows. The Lord tells him "*Satan has asked to sift you as wheat*" but goes on "*when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers*" (22v31)

No disciple is perfect. We all have times when we don't want to feel the Lord's eyes on us the way Peter did that day. Salvation is in the Lord's love that says 'when you have turned back!' We can't undo the past, Peter could unsay his denial, but if we truly repent, as he did, there is a way to turn back to the Lord who Swedenborg writes "fights constantly for a person against the hells". We can't change the past but we can change the person we are being now and in the future, and turning back with The Lord's saving help, find salvation.

Prayer Lord Jesus we thank you for the story of Peter's experience as a fallible disciple, reminding us that you know and understand us better than we do ourselves, ready to turn us back to the right way. Thank you for offering us your saving power as we turn to you. Amen.



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April 13th *"See your King comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey,
on a colt the foal of a donkey."* Matt 21 v 5 Please Read: Matt 21 v 1 - 17

AC 2781/8 "Riding on an ass' served to indicate that the natural was subordinate, and 'riding on a colt, the foal of a she-ass' that the rational was so; for 'the foal of a she-ass' is similar in meaning to 'a mule'.... From this - the spiritual meaning of these animals - and because it was the right of the supreme judge and of the king to ride on them, and at the same time so that He might fulfil the representatives of the Church, the Lord was pleased to ride in this way."

"Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord" (Matt 21v 9)

Palm Sunday is indeed a bittersweet moment in the Lord's life on earth, where recognition and rejection are mingled together in a moment those who saw it would never ever forget, especially in the light of the sad and shocking events of His passion that were to follow.

Imagine the crowd, the long line of joyful people winding up the hill towards Jerusalem out of the Kidron Valley. Waving a palm branch, someone says to you "Who is that man, the one on the Donkey – who is he! Jesus! – Jesus who is He??"

At the heart of the story of Palm Sunday is a tale of mistaken identity. The way the people were naming Jesus in their hearts was wrong spiritually. They hadn't realised who He was. The crowd didn't acclaim Jesus for who He was but for **who they thought He was**. (Or for who they wanted Him to be). This was the man who was going to make all their dreams come true. Dreams of earthly prosperity, dreams of liberation from the Yoke of Roman rule, dreams of power, national prestige, international influence. Jerusalem, the centre of the world and Jesus Lord of all. This was their name and they were wrong. Their cry HOSANNA means, Save NOW!..... we want it now, do it now.

We think of disappointment on the road to Emmaus, but Jesus was a disappointment to many well before that. Within days He wasn't the Messiah they wanted, or the Lord they longed for, or the Rabbi with all the right answers. The King to crush the might of Rome was a prisoner in a crown of thorns. He carried not a sword or a spear but a cross. He did not rally His troops to arms with the cry 'destroy them', but instead rallied His disciples to the cause of His heavenly kingdom with the cry **forgive them**, and He still does today!

This story challenges us as to how we name the Lord. Do we really know who He is. Are we ready to accept the King who walks into the most sacred place in the city of my life and turns the tables upside down? Do I still name Him Lord when He does not deliver according to my expectations. Does not satisfy my wants. Does not satisfy my demands but instead makes demands of me - to forgive people, and love and serve them. In other words, to take up MY cross! (Mt 10v38 & Lk 9v23)

Prayer Lord Jesus, we pray that we might trust more fully in the power of your love and the wisdom of your Divine Providence, turning to you as our heavenly King. Asking that you more fully rule in our thoughts and attitudes, cleansing our inner life as you cleansed the temple in Jerusalem that first Palm Sunday. Amen.



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April 20th Easter Day

“Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; He has risen!” - Lk 24v5

Please Read - Luke 24 v 1 - 12

AC 9814/2 “The angels who were seen by the ancients, such as Abraham, Sarah, Lot, Jacob, Joshua, Gideon, and also the Prophets, were not seen by those persons' bodily eyes but by those of their spirit which had been opened then. The fact that they would also have appeared clothed in robes is clear from the angels sitting at the Lord's tomb, whom Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James saw, and who were wearing shining white garments, and in particular from the Lord Himself when seen in His glory by Peter, James, and John, in that His clothing was dazzling white and like the light, The meaning of 'garments' as truths owes its origin to things in heaven, where angels appear dressed in clothes in keeping with the truths they have that spring from good,”

The gospel writers tell us. The seal is blown away, The stone is rolled away, the soldiers have run away. Awesome power shook the ground. Angelic power swept the authority of the might of Rome aside. The guards fall petrified and then flee terrified. The tomb where the brutally murdered remains of Jesus had been laid now stands silent, empty.....

In the early light of dawn a group of grieving women approach the tomb cut into the rock. The women, disciples who loved Him to the last, stand uncomprehending before a victory so immense their grief cannot grasp it. Suddenly men in clothes that shine with the light and glory of the heavens stand beside them and speak words that reach into the heart and soul of their suffering. *“Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here. He has risen!”*

Yes, as the Easter hymn proclaims “the strife was past and the battle won” but the disciples didn't fully realise this at all! They don't believe what the women tell them, it seems nonsense! Our reading ends with Peter going to the tomb, seeing the empty grave clothes, and going away *“wondering to himself what had happened.”* Peter was confused, not convinced, by the women. The wonder of what had happened just left him wondering and his mind wandering. Please now read Luke 24 v 36 – 49. Even when the Lord himself appears the disciples have to be convinced he is really there with them. Amazed and overjoyed they still don't believe to begin with, and Jesus has to prove he is real and not a ghost!

The central message of Easter remains as true today as it was then *“the third day He rose from the dead”*. Jesus is alive! Yes we can read and rejoice in the events of past history as recorded in the Word but more importantly we need to recognize that this resurrection story is about our present reality. Jesus is present by the power of His Holy Spirit in the world today. So this Easter, think of Jesus as alive, speak of Jesus as alive, pray to Jesus as alive and He will live for you. Come alive in you. Open your mind and open the scriptures.... And open the path to PEACE.

Prayer Lord Jesus Christ may your angels of light and love assist us today to grasp anew the greatness and the glory of the reality that Easter proclaims. Living Lord, sweep aside our doubts and uncertainties that we may in our souls believe that on the third day you rose again from the dead, and can believe you “are with us always” as you promise in your Word.



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April 27th *"Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared....." Lk 24 v 31* Please read Luke 24 v 13 – 35 On the road to Emmaus.

AC 1540 "The fact that the internal sense is the Word itself is clear from many things that have been revealed, such asthe Lord Himself, after the Resurrection, taught the disciples what had been written concerning Himself in Moses and the Prophets, Luke 24:27, thus that nothing has been written in the Word which does not have regard to Him, to His kingdom, and to the Church. These are the spiritual and celestial things of the Word, but the sense of the letter consists for the most part of worldly, bodily, and earthly images which cannot possibly constitute the Word of the Lord."

"Then He opened their minds" Lk 24v45

The two walking to Emmaus discuss the tragic events in Jerusalem and the aftermath. The tomb was empty. The disciples hadn't found the Lord they were looking for. Instead they found angel guides! All that is left of Jesus are the clothes he was wearing. It is the same for us, as these clothes correspond to the stories about Him and the truths He taught that we can read in the Word - the literal sense.

Yet the angels claim Jesus is ALIVE not just a dead hero. The truth is that he is far closer to us than the words on any page. The central point of the story of the walk to Emmaus is that Jesus walked with them UNRECOGNISED. The point that is easily overlooked is that Jesus is the Divine and loving Lord who walks with ALL of us, yet all too often unrecognised by us. Why? Because He is not outside us where we can see Him but by His Holy Spirit He is inside, seeking to open our minds, soften our hearts and enable our hands to find the joy of service.

Now please read Luke 24 v 36 – 49

From the moment He rose from the dead on the Saturday – the Jewish Sabbath day – He was inwardly going to be with them all, but although he had explained this, to begin with it went unrecognised. However as soon as their thoughts and conversation focused on Him as He was seen on the road to Emmaus - alive and risen from the dead - they found He was right there with them. He stands there and says *"Peace be with you"*. They are startled and frightened. His response is to show them He's REAL. Really alive, really there, really with them, and He eats the food they give Him.

Jesus is not just alive, He is HERE with us! That is a startling discovery. If you believe He is ALIVE, His promise is *"I will be with you always"*. Open your mind to this promise and the scriptures are opened. They become all about Jesus and how He is with us all, each one. Before his birth the Angel said he would be called Immanuel which means 'God with us'. This is His name because this is who He is. Jesus is the Divine Human in whom is all the fullness of the Godhead bodily – Our Creator, Saviour and Friend. With us always, whether we recognise it or not.

Prayer Lord Jesus Christ may your angels of light and love assist us today to grasp anew the greatness and the glory of the reality that Easter proclaims. Living Lord sweep aside our doubts and uncertainties that we may in our souls believe that on the third day you rose again from the dead - Victorious in every temptation, facing every challenge known to the human heart. Lord Jesus strengthen our souls to overcome our weakness in your strength. Amen



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HOME WORSHIP MAY 2025

Prepared by Revd Robert A Gill

Sunday 4th May – “Tattoos”

Readings: Leviticus 19:23-28; Ezekiel 36:22-28; John 3:1-15; Heaven & Hell 461.

“You shall not.....tattoo yourselves” [Leviticus 19:28]

Love them or loathe them, these days tattoos are to be seen everywhere. Some are discrete and pretty, whilst others are bold and, to my eyes, quite frankly ugly. What is beyond dispute, however, is that many in today’s generation have taken to the tattoo as a fashionable expression of their identity, relationships and beliefs.

Few will know that the Bible takes a negative view of tattoos. However, in Leviticus, tattoos are forbidden for God’s people. What harm was there in a tattoo that caused it to be proscribed in such a summary fashion? One likely explanation is that the religious cults of many neighbouring tribes employed tattoos as signs of devotion to their local god or goddess. Tattoos were also popular as “lucky charms” to ward off evil spirits, or even as a marker to ensure safe passage into the after-life. The Children of Israel, however, were called to worship the Lord alone. For them the worship of other gods was forbidden, together with the superstitions associated with them. By not being allowed to disfigure their bodies with tattoos, the Israelites were clearly being set apart from other idolatrous tribes and their practices.

Today we are living in a different world, in an age of spiritual freedom and rationality. We no longer have to conform to the outward rituals and customs of Leviticus, which were designed to keep rebellious Israel in some kind of order. In this new age we are free to dress and adorn our bodies as we wish, although it is always wise to stay within the bounds of decency and good taste. But this does not mean that the prohibition of tattoos no longer has any relevance for us because in a deeper sense it does.

Even as we live in this earthly body, the Lord is at work creating a new body for us to occupy to eternity. Our readings today draw our attention to this new body:

“No one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.....what is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit” [John 3:3,6];

“A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you” [Ezekiel 36:26];

“People entering the spiritual world, or life after death, are still within a body....but it is their spiritual body” [Heaven & Hell 461:1]; We also read, “Our spiritual body is formed entirely from what we have done out of love or intent” [Heaven & Hell 475].

The formation of our spiritual body is happening even as we live on earth and it is formed in accordance with the loves that rule us. Are we living from the love of self or from the love of the Lord? Or to put it another way, whose mark are we putting on our spiritual body? Many, by their life choices, tattoo that body with “**self**”. But the wise person shuns such idolatry and opens heart and mind to the Lord and His love. With these latter people the Lord is able to form a spiritual body in His divine likeness. This body is the “*temple of the Holy Spirit*” [1 Corinthians 6:19], it is the Lord’s gift to us. We must respect it as such and we should avoid claiming it as our own to do as we like with or disfiguring it with the marks of our own selfish loves.

Prayer: Use **Songs for Worship 138** “*Gracious Saviour, live in me*” and **Lord’s Prayer**.



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Sunday 11th May “Boundaries”

Readings: Deuteronomy 5:6-21; Ezekiel 47:13-23; True Christian Religion 282.

“This shall be the boundary of the land.” [Ezekiel 47:15]

Each summer many towns in the Scottish Borders hold “Common Ridings”. Today these ancient customs are largely fun events and crowds turn out to enjoy them. The tradition dates back as far as the 13th century when times were lawless and people needed to protect their lands and livestock from marauding tribes. Once a year the townspeople would mount their horses and ride round the town boundaries to mark them out. This was a declaration of their ownership of these lands and a warning to other tribes not to try grabbing any of it because it would be fiercely defended.

Ezekiel, working in the 6th century BC, gives us a vision marking new boundaries for the Promised Land. At that time the Jews were exiled in Babylon, but people’s spirits must have been raised by the prophesy that all Israel was to be fully restored to its homeland in Canaan. These new boundaries represented an idealized map of Israel, which looked back to the great days of King David. However, things didn’t quite work out that way and Ezekiel’s prophecy was never more than partially fulfilled. The tribe of Judah did return home to Canaan but the other tribes had by this time largely disappeared as a result of conquest, migration and inter-marriage.

Ezekiel’s vision was never realized, but then it was never meant to be a title deed marking a sovereign state on the map. It was not a political kingdom of which Ezekiel wrote at all but rather the kingdom of God. Speaking of that kingdom, Jesus said, *“The kingdom of God is not coming with things that can be observed...for the kingdom of God is within you”* [Luke 20:20,21]. God is not going to establish His kingdom in an atlas but within our hearts, minds and lives. Like towns in the Scottish borders and like Ezekiel’s map this kingdom has boundaries to mark and defend it.

A healthy and happy human life needs boundaries. We get a sharp reminder of this when the nurse sets boundaries for us in regard to smoking, drinking, consumption of unhealthy foods and exercise. We might wish to ignore these boundaries but we really know that they make sense. They are the boundaries of good health and to cross them invites trouble down the line. The kingdom of God within us also has boundaries beyond which we should not stray if we are to remain spiritually healthy and happy. These boundaries are set for us by the Lord in His Word. They are never more clearly defined than in the Ten Commandments but they are also found throughout the Lord’s Word: *“Any commandment given by Jehovah is intended to be a religious command, something that must be done, if one is to be saved.”* [True Christian Religion 282].

Boundaries that we are forbidden to cross can appear negative and many may say that they are killjoy. But is the nurse being killjoy when she gives us her list of proscribed foods and habits? The *“you shall nots”* come first and the improved health follows. Many who have given up smoking or lost weight speak of how much better they feel and how much more enjoyable life has become. A life that complies with the boundaries set by the Ten Commandments has great benefits. One finds new courage and strength in the face of life’s troubles, one is inwardly at peace with both God and oneself, relationships with others become deeper and more loving. The observation of these boundaries enables the Lord to establish the kingdom of heaven within us.

Prayer: Use **Songs for Worship 326** *“Open my ears to your Word”* and **Lord’s Prayer**.



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Sunday 18th May “Lies”

Readings: Psalm 36; John 8:39-47; Heaven & Hell 131.

“In Your light we see light” [Psalm 36:9]

Never a day goes by without us encountering lies. Watch the News and you will hear many a national leader telling lies to bolster his popularity, or rig election results to ensure his survival. Fraudsters and other criminals tell us lies to get their hands on our money. Many tell lies in order to avoid blame for some mistake or worse to implicate another person. Speaking from experience, I know that the worst lies of all are those told to us by people whom we love and trust. Add in social media and conspiracy theories and it can feel as though the whole world is awash with lies.

Jesus leaves us in no doubt as to where the lies come from, *“Your father the devil.....is a liar and the father of lies”* [John 8:44]. Lies are the offspring of hell. Wherever self-love rules, with its lust for power over others, for self-advantage, for forbidden pleasures and for personal status, lies are bound to spring up. Lies twist things in the liar’s favour and they trip off the tongue with little thought for the damage and hurt they will cause for other people. What is galling for the rest of us is how so many serial liars get away with it time and again. Eminent men who are known liars attract supporters and even adulation. They appear to prosper and benefit from their lies.

How different things are in heaven. Heaven is the dwelling place of God and it is His infinite, generous and unconditional love alone that makes heaven. Wherever God’s love is present it sheds a light of such penetrating clarity that everything previously hidden is now revealed. Thus we read in Heaven & Hell, *“Everyone is recognised in heaven’s light as they really are: a person’s inner self is exposed there in the face, exactly as it is....those who live below heaven really dread being seen in heaven’s light”*[131]. In the presence of God and under the illumination of the light of heaven, liars are unmasked and can conceal nothing. They betray themselves by their tone of voice, facial expressions, and body language. They are unable to deceive, defraud or hurt the people of heaven. Angels can see right through a web of lies. The reality is that the only people liars deceive are themselves.

“In Your light we see light”, writes the psalmist, teaching us that even here in a world awash with a flood of lies, it is perfectly possible for us to enjoy the illumination of God’s love. Our first priority in every part of life needs to be seeking and finding God. Once our hearts are fully open to God’s love and we commit to Him by giving that love back in kindness and helpfulness to other people, He will shed light into our minds. With our mind thus enlightened by God we now are better able to see lies for what they are, whilst also glimpsing previously hidden truths in the Word, in creation, and in the lives of others. I’m not suggesting that we shall never again be taken in by lies in this world. The process of receiving God’s love is a gradual one and so it is little by little that we get better at distinguishing truth from falsehood. Lives openly illuminated by God’s love also reveal themselves to be honest and dependable. As we live this way not only will other people trust and respect us but also the webs of lies around us will lose their power to hurt and deceive us.

Prayer: Use **Songs for Worship 161** *“Holy Saviour truth divine”* & the **Lord’s Prayer**.



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The General Conference of the New Church

Sunday 25th May “Partings” [Reflections for Ascension Day – 29th May]

Readings: John 14:22-31; Luke 24:44-53; Heaven and Hell 494

“I am going away, and I am coming to you” [John 14:28]

Partings are never easy. I live close to the river Clyde, from where years ago many people boarded ships to leave Scotland for a new life in North America. Before embarkation there would be lingering last hugs with tearful relatives on the quayside. In those days, before air travel and the internet, they knew that they would probably never see each other again. The pain of such emotional partings is almost too sad to bear. Yet most, if not all, of us experience similar heartache as we wave goodbye to loved ones leaving home because their lives are moving on. Nor can we escape the inevitable parting when we bid a sad “goodbye” to our nearest and dearest at the crematorium. Life will be incomplete without them.

These experiences perhaps help us to understand the feelings of the Lord’s disciples when He broke the news to them, *“I am going away”*. The words would have come as a shock to the disciples and they must have wondered how they could possibly carry on without Him. Yet this was an experience not to be avoided and just a few short weeks later, *“He was parted from them and carried up into heaven”* [Luke 24:51]. Jesus knew that His Ascension was inevitable, for His ministry of teaching, healing, redeeming and saving must expand ever wider beyond the people of the Holy Land to touch the whole world. It was to enable this that the Lord was seen to leave His earthly companions behind to return to the Father in heaven.

The parting at the Ascension seemed real enough and yet was more of an appearance than a reality. Paradoxically it was about the Son of God coming closer to His people. The Ascension was not the removal of the Lord from the earth but rather a change of state in Him. The Son of God, was now entering into full union with the Father, the Creator, to become one Divine Person. Our God is one person, a blessed trinity of soul, body and action, all embodied in Jesus Christ. Being fully Divine the Lord is now omnipresent, which means that He is present everywhere with everyone at all times. From the mountain tops to the depths of the oceans the Lord is always with us, closer than breathing. His saving power is on tap whenever we choose to ask for it.

We are never parted from the Lord nor, in truth, are we ever really parted from those whom we love deeply and intimately. Even when they die our relationship is preserved on the inner levels of the spirit and, indeed, our thoughts and feelings continue to be influenced by them. Such is the strength of this link that, after our own death, friends and loved ones come to us: *“As soon as we arrive in the other life, we are recognized.....by people we have known in one way or another....we talk with each other and continue to see each other”* [Heaven & Hell 494]. Where the relationship has been one of external friendship it will gradually fade, but where it has been one of deep self-giving love it will remain and the bonds between us will grow ever stronger and deeper.

The Lord never breaks apart those who love and care for each other, even if appearances suggest otherwise. Thanks to His Ascension, our loved ones will come into our lives again in the next world.

Prayer: Use **Songs for Worship 421** *“We praise and bless you”* & the **Lord’s Prayer**.



Home Worship



The General Conference of the New Church

Revd Jack Dunion

Embracing Spiritual Renewal and Growth

Sunday June 1st

The 1st week in the month of June has inspired me to look at themes of renewal, growth, and spiritual enlightenment, which align with the freshness and vibrancy of June in many parts of our world both within us and all around us. One of the scenes most of us will get to enjoy in this the month of June, is the renewed greenery, the fresh growth of plants and the beautiful flowers that spring up all around. June, being a time of renewal and new growth, also presents us with a symbolic representation of the renewal and growth within the human spirit. As we behold the natural world as it bursts into life with the arrival of Spring and Summer, we might also think of how this can mirror spiritual rejuvenation within the human soul. Rather sadly, many people in our world today are led to believe that the secret of happiness lies in having an abundance of material possessions, and having as much as we can acquire. However, such an approach to the pursuit of happiness is very short lived, and we will find that it can only be sustained in the short term through adding more and more external stimulus. But since such stimulus from the material goods we acquire from this world only lasts a short time, we soon find ourselves needing bigger and better things all of the time just to keep us happy. The truth is that in the longer-term, happiness does not lie in the abundance of what we can acquire from this world. No, it lies in being happy and contented with what we already have. As the Lord teaches us in Luke 17:21 *"The coming of the kingdom of God is not something that can be observed.....because the kingdom of God is within you"*. How then, do we find heaven within us? This can easily be done by approaching the Lord each day and thanking Him for the abundance we already have and appreciating that which already exists all around us. Through engaging in spiritual practices such as prayer, meditation, and studying Sacred Scripture we can foster growth and vitality of spirit. For example, we might think of how plants grow stronger and more fruitful with proper care, and we can liken this to the spiritual practices that feed our souls and renew the fruitfulness of the uses we perform for the Lord's sake. Instead of seeking happiness from whatever we can get from this material world, we can lead a life instead that reflects spiritual truths. If we can turn our focus instead to love, kindness, and service and live by these principles, it will serve to strengthen our spiritual foundations, leading to a renewal of our spiritual life. If we read the Word of God with the intention of living as the Lord teaches, the Lord can then breathe new life into us. The way in which nature bursts into life during the spring and summer months, can serve to remind us that as well as a renewal of nature, there can also be an inner renewal of spirit, which comes from the Lord alone. If we approach the Lord with a sense of gratitude for the good things we have, and the good people He has placed into our lives, all of these can and will feel new every morning, and we will find that we have no need for more and better and bigger things. Whatever provisions we have been given, such can hold heaven within them, if only we will seek a renewed gratitude for it within ourselves. June can remind us how the Lord can and will make all things new in their rightful season. If only we will embrace the energy and renewal June brings in a spiritual way, by recommitting ourselves to spiritual growth and the pursuit of divine wisdom. Not that the things themselves will be new, but that our appreciation of them will be renewed daily. It's why the Psalmist asks of the Lord in Psalm 51:10 while highlighting a desire for spiritual cleansing and renewal: *"Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me,"*

Dear Lord, teach us to look to You and Your words as a source of nourishment for our souls that we may renew our appreciation of Your abundant provisions, day by day and hour by hour. As we enter this time of earthly renewal, may it remind us of Your eternal love for us and Your and unceasing care for our eternal as well as natural lives. Amen



Home Worship



The General Conference of the New Church

If you get lost in life!

Sunday June 8th

Dan. 11:40 "At the time of the end, the king of the south shall come into collision with the king of the north". Here, in chapter 11 of the book of Daniel, a battle is set to take place between two kings and their opposing armies. We know that in the internal spiritual sense of the Lord's Word, kings represent different forms of truth, dependent on the context of the story. This is also the case here in the story of our two Kings in the book of Daniel, who are about to come into conflict with one another. We also know that in the Word moving in a particular direction is representative of the progression of certain spiritual states. In our story there are two kings, one coming from the south and one coming from the north. The two different direction in which these two kings are coming (north and south) indicate the potential clashing of two opposing states of truth within the human spirit. To help us make more sense of what is being represented here, let's look at some interesting facts regarding the two opposing directions these kings are coming from. For example, if you ever find yourself lost and unsure what direction you are supposed to go in, did you know there are many different ways in which you can determine this? In particular we should focus on which direction is north. In determining which way is north, this then would obviously allow us to also work out what direction is south, as well as East and West. You can of course, use a compass to determine which way is north. We know how a compass has a small magnetised pointer which gets drawn towards magnetic north. But if you don't have a compass, what can you do? One way to find our direction, one which perhaps helps inform the spiritual meaning of north and south in the Word, is through the use of the sun or the stars. Everyone knows the sun appears to rise in the east, travels through the south and set in the west. As the sun never rises in the north, the north side of nature then never enjoys the sunshine. It is due to this lack of sunshine that moss will often grow only on the north side of trees and rocks. You may want to watch out for this the next time you are out for a walk in the countryside. So, if we look at the trees or rocks and see which side has moss growing on them, we will also know which direction is north. And, by default, we will also then know which direction is east, south and west. In the context of the spiritual meaning then, with the north never enjoying heat and light from the sun, we can see why the north would represent a state where truths are seen in a lesser light, meaning they are seen in what is merely natural light. The reason being that natural light only allows us to see truths in the very dim light of this world, as opposed to truth seen in a higher spiritual light, a higher spiritual light which is here represented by the south. In the book *Arcana Coelestia* 9642[7] we read the following *'The king of the south' means the light of truth derived from the Word, and 'the king of the north' reasoning about truths which is based on factual knowledge.*" We are all hopefully all of the time, growing in relation to our rational thought towards a more spiritually enlightened state. A state we eventually achieve through the accumulation of factual worldly knowledges. This is because it is the accumulation factual knowledge (especially the literal sense of the Word) that builds in us the foundations for learning the higher spiritual truths of the Word, which in turn leads us to draw nearer to the Lord. But, although factual knowledge is "king" in our lives for a time, another time will hopefully come when we recognise that such natural knowledges are merely the means by which we come into the higher spiritual truths of heaven. Sooner or later the king of the south and king of the north must clash and fight it out between them. If symbolically, we begin to desire to move towards a more enlightened south, then knowing where



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and what both north and south are can be very useful! So, if we want to head towards heaven, we must first recognise that the knowledges we are born into and which we first learn on earth, are only a means to an end. The desire and effort to move south as it were, will give rise to a battle within us, during which we confront and fight against our old nature, using the light of truth we have derived from the Word of God. This is what is meant in the spiritual sense of these words: "*At the time of the end, the king of the south shall come into collision with the king of the north*" Dan. 11:40

Prayer

Loving and wise Lord, we acknowledge that You are the light of the world. May Your love be admitted into our hearts so that the light of Your wisdom can shine forth into our understanding, and that whatever we do and wherever we go we will know and recognise Your truth and learn to tread the path You have prescribed for us and which will eventually lead us to heaven. Amen



Home Worship



The General Conference of the New Church

How can a God of infinite Love and Wisdom allow bad things to happen?

Sunday June 15th

Apparently, this has always been a very difficult question for the church to answer. But, like most other things, once the truth of the matter is known, it can then seem really quite obvious. In this case, now that a new revelation has been provided to the human race, the answer has now been made very clear. Through the new revelation, given for a new church in the world, the nature of God has now been made known. It shows that if some wrong behaviours were not permitted, a much worse outcome would be the result. Prior to the new revelation, the church tended to think that God, being all powerful, could prevent evils being committed if He so wished. However, that which has now been revealed and which has to be understood, is that some bad things must be permitted to happen because any alternative would lead to much worse outcomes. It has always been known by the church One, this world is only temporary; two, it is in the world that the things within us are manifested. If the Lord's life was to flow through us unchanged, as it did with the most ancient people, there would be no evil to be seen in the world. But since His love flows through us and is manifested in the world around us then when we choose to change His love into evils, that is what manifests in the world around us. So why then does He allow us to change it? The reason for this is that the Lord must leave us in freedom to choose His life of love; that is the only way we can appropriate it ourselves or make it our own. But in order to provide us with a choice He must allow for the possibility that we will choose our own loves which are the opposite of love and so our evils must be allowed to be manifested in the world. Further, the Lord needs to allow us to find out that in rejecting Him we are choosing a life of misery and unhappiness (spiritual death). But still He must let us know this without taking away our freedom to choose. So the evils which manifest in the world around us must be allowed so we can see the consequences of rejecting Him and begin desiring to be led back to His love; like the prodigal son in Luke 15:11-32. In the book the Divine Providence No. 251[2] we read: "No man can be withdrawn from his hell by the Lord unless he sees that he is in hell and wishes to be led out; and this cannot be done without permissions, the causes of which are laws of the Divine Providence". The Lord created all people for heaven. The physical world is the temporary place where we can make free choices in order to appropriate to ourselves all the blessings of the Lord's life and become angels who are linked to Him in this way: from Divine Providence 27. "The Lord's Divine Providence Has as its End A Heaven (of angels) from the Human Race". If the pain and suffering we and others experience in this temporary world will lead us to an eternity of happiness then this is what the Lord must allow. To take away temporary suffering at the expense of eternal happiness would not be in the least bit wise and therefore it would be impossible for God to do who is wisdom itself.

Prayer

Omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent Lord, who is and who was and who is to come, grant us a vision that looks beyond this temporary world, these short earthly years which are but a fleeting moment when compared to life in Your eternal heavens. We praise You that You have seen fit to create us and seek our eternal happiness and wellbeing. Help us then to trust You and know that whatever may happen in the world around us it is under Your wise and loving providential care and that all things You permit eventually lead to good. Amen



Home Worship



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Spiritual nourishment

Sunday June 22nd

“Very truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you..... On hearing it, many of his disciples said, “This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?” John 6:53,60

It seems quite understandable that the disciples would be disturbed by the Lord's words here. They were so eager for everyone to follow the Lord and believe His truths. But the Lord saying that they must eat His flesh and drink His blood didn't seem to be helping this cause at all. They must have been thinking "why is the Lord speaking like this". In the book Arcana Celestia No. 10243 we read "the Lord spoke by correspondences, thus from the internal sense.....unless the Word of the Lord is understood as to this sense, it is understood but little." In some places it is very clear that the Lord spoke by means of correspondences; saying we are to eat His flesh and drink His blood is a good example. Through correspondences natural things become like a gateway to spiritual things. The natural world, in general, is only a means to us obtaining what is spiritual; it is from the spiritual world that real & everlasting life is obtained. This is why the Lord said in John 6:63 "The spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing, the words I have spoken to you—they are full of the Spirit and life". So how do correspondences work? In this world we invent some very clever things. We do so by taking things that already exist and manipulating their form. But what we can never do is create new life. Take seed for example. We can change it, graft bits on: we can genetically modify it; we can facilitate the reproduction of life, but we can't create the reproductive life in the first place. In fact, science can't even identify where the reproductive life in the seed comes from, let alone create new life. This is because the life in the seed is not to be found on the physical or natural plane at all. It's to be found on the spiritual plane. All we can hope to do is manipulate and reproduce the natural objects which spiritual life gives rise to. It's bit like the shirt on our backs. Science could examine the shirt, right down to the very basic molecular level; but even though it is us who animate the shirt, examining it would never tell people anything about us. But perhaps by observing the style and colour of the shirt someone might tell roughly what age we are, the style and colour we like, maybe even what we had for breakfast this morning! It's a bit like that with natural objects. We could never find the life within a thing by dissecting it; but by observing its function in the light of correspondences we can grasp the spiritual reality behind it which causes it to come into being. This is because spiritual things cause natural things to come into being. In short, natural objects we see only exist by virtue of the spiritual things which give rise to them and so they correspond. The universe then must have been created in this way. God desiring to create beings with whom He can share His life. This desire forms spiritual realities and the spiritual realities clothe themselves with natural things. So, when we eat physical food and drink physical liquid it becomes part of our physical body. This only happens on a physical level to show us what happens spiritually. The Lord as to His human is spiritual food and drink. He actually is that which natural food corresponds to. So by His blood is meant truth and by His flesh is meant good. We are to eat spiritual good and drink in spiritual truth; which is to make His life our own. We do this first by learning His truth and then freely choosing to obey it; if freely chosen it becomes part of our spirit in the same way food becomes part of our body. “Very truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you”

Prayer

Loving Lord, who nourishes our souls and strengthens us for life in this world and in the life to come. Be with us now as we meet with You in worships upper room. May we be filled with awe and wonder at the gift of love and truth which are symbolised by the breaking of bread and the pouring of wine. Your flesh and Your blood given for our salvation. May we ever seek to make Your life our own life by living as You command and giving our lives into Your service and the service of Your people. Amen



Home Worship



The General Conference of the New Church

The Lord can reach all people?

Sunday June 29th

How is the Lord able to be with all people no matter what their inner or outer state? The short answer is that the Lord is with all people through allowing them to adapt His life to suit their own feelings and thoughts. His love which is the life of all people, can be used for evil or good and His truth can therefore be falsified. A person must have the freedom to do either but the life in what they do still comes from the Lord regardless. For example, if a person wants to use the life the Lord gives them to break His commands then the Lord must permit that. If He didn't permit this none of us would have the chance to change by choosing the life the Lord wants us to. The ideas produced in our understanding take the form of what we desire to do and so they appear as falsities. It is for this reason the Word of God is written according to appearances. It is adapted to the state of the mind of the writer as well as the reader. For example, there is an appearance that the Lord punishes people: "It appears to the eyes of the individual as though the Lord vastated, punished, and condemned; and because the appearance is such, it is so expressed according to appearances. Arcana Celestia 1838[2] In reality it is people who bring these punishments upon themselves. All the truths we know are only really appearances of truth, as we read in AC 3365[2] "...it is the rational that receives and acknowledges them (doctrines); but the rational is such that it cannot possibly comprehend Divine things, for it is finite..... For this reason Divine truths from the Lord present themselves before the rational by means of appearances". If we think about it the way in which we understand truth is evolving all the time and since we couldn't possibly comprehend things of the infinite Divine, as said in the quote above, then wouldn't this mean we have the infinite capacity to improve our understanding of truth? In one sense then we are all living in the world of appearances. It is no wonder then the Lord said to the crowd of teacher's and Pharisees who were about to stone the woman caught in adultery "Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her". John 8:7....and as we know they all walked away! In truth the Lord works with all of us and continually tries to lead us out of the evils we are in, as we read in Arcana Celestia 6475[2] "the Lord flows into all.....where the good of charity exists, He is present; and He is also present where the opposite exists, but only in a way that allows Him to give them life, and as far as possible to lead them away from evil." The Lord is working with us all. The Lord said through Luke 6:41 "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?" In criticizing others we only deceive ourselves, because the Lord alone is good. The best we can hope for is to become more and more an image of His is pure love and pure wisdom leading us to treat all those around us with the love compassion and forgiveness that the Lord continually shows to us.

Prayer

Lord of all, as we walk life's path and interact with others grant that we may be slow to judge but quick to forgive, slow to criticise and tear down but quick to praise and build up. Take away anything which would cause division among Your people and unite us all as one church and one world serving under one Lord; as in heaven so upon the earth. Amen