

“Two Last Judgments and Two Times Angels Were Causing Huge Problems”

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The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shined. (Isaiah 9:2)

Prior to both the Lord’s first coming and His second coming, the deep spiritual darkness of the human race came about partially through the imperfect qualities of angels. The Lord had given these angels roles to play and as a result of their inability to wisely fulfill these roles spiritual disaster threatened people on earth and many in the life after death and the problems went on for centuries, gradually getting worse and worse. Why didn’t the Lord intervene? Why didn’t He remedy the problem as it first arose? The answers to these questions can teach us about what the Lord’s priorities are and how He responds to well-intentioned flaws.

To understand why the angels were causing problems will take some background information. First, it is important to know that the Lord did not have to rely on the angels. The teachings for the New Church state:

In everything generally and specifically done by the Lord He acts both directly from Himself and indirectly through heaven. He acts indirectly through heaven not because He needs their help but in order that the angels there may have functions and duties, and therefore life and happiness in keeping with the duties and services they perform. (*Secrets of Heaven* 8719)

Today’s text from Isaiah speaks of the spiritual darkness prior to the Lord’s first advent. This darkness was ended by the great light that the Lord brought through His life in this world. The words of the text are shortly followed by a familiar prophecy of the Lord’s birth.

For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given;
And the government will be upon His shoulder.
And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, God, Mighty Hero,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:2)

Spiritual darkness refers to a time when people are ignorant of the truth and even worse when they do not care about what it means to wisely love other people. Spiritual darkness can happen in an individual human being’s life when that person rejects all the Lord’s efforts to lead him or her to see what is true and good. It can happen almost universally when the people of the Church on earth so twist the meaning and pervert the intention of divine revelation from God that the Church rather than leading people to worship God and live a good life instead leads away from a true knowledge of God and interprets God’s Word in a way that permits the worst evil behavior supposedly with divine impunity. This was a problem with the Lord’s Church on earth, but it also related to a role that the angels were imperfectly fulfilling.

Prophecies for the Lord’s second coming also speak of spiritual darkness. The lesson today from Matthew stated: “Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and

the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken” (Matthew 24:29). It is followed by a promise of the Lord coming again: “Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven . . . and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

The teachings for the New Church explain that the spiritual darkness prior to each advent related to the quality of the Lord’s corrupted Church in this world and also to qualities in the life after death. The life after death or the spiritual world is composed of heaven, hell and an intermediate place called the world of spirits. This intermediate place is where each person after death first becomes conscious. It is a place where, at first, people who have lived good lives and those who have led evil lives are intermingled, like we experience in this world, but when there is order, good people are gradually led to heaven and evil people chose their eternal homes in hell.

The spiritual world is not a completely separate existence from our lives here and now. The teachings for the New Church tell us that while the Lord gives us the sensation that we care about things and think from ourselves, this is an illusion. We are taught:

No one, no matter who-human, spirit, or angel can will and think on her or his own but only from others; and these others cannot will or think on their own but must all do so from yet others; and so on. So everyone wills and thinks from the original source of life, who is the Lord. Nothing that is disconnected comes into existence. Evil and falsity connect with the hells, and when people are immersed in evil and falsity, the hells are the source of their will and thought, their love, desire, and pleasure, and consequently their freedom. Goodness and truth, however, connect with heaven, and when people are devoted to them, heaven is the source of their will and thought, their love, desire, and pleasure, and consequently their freedom. (*Secrets of Heaven* 2886)

Our ability to know what is true and to care about what is good depends on us receiving understanding and love flowing from the Lord, through heaven and the world of spirits to us. Specifically, concerning our ability to understand the Lord’s Word we are taught:

[The Word is inspired because] everything in it, both the narratives and the other parts, contains heavenly qualities (which relate to love and goodness) and spiritual qualities (which relate to faith and truth). In other words, the contents are divine. What the Lord inspires comes down from Him through the heaven of angels and so through the world of spirits all the way to humankind. (*Secrets of Heaven* 1887)

The spiritual darkness prior to the Lord’s two advents came about because the warmth and light of the Lord’s love and wisdom were being stifled in the world of spirits. Prior to both advents the disorder in the world of spirits was due, in part, to the imperfections of angels in heaven. One of today’s lessons spoke of the imperfections of even the best of the angels prior to the Lord’s first advent.

[When the Lord’s love and wisdom flowed through the celestial] kingdom there was no peace, since things in heaven and those in hell could not be brought by means of that kingdom into a state of order. This was because [the Lord’s love and wisdom] as it

passed through that kingdom, could not remain pure since heaven is not pure; so neither was that kingdom strong enough to serve as the means by which all things could be preserved in a state of order. And what is more, as a consequence hellish and devilish spirits were at that time breaking out of hell and ruling over souls who were coming from the world, as a result of which a situation was coming about in which none but the celestial angels could be saved. (*Secrets of Heaven* 6373:1)

What did the Lord do about the imperfections of these angels? We read:

Prior to the Lord's Coming into the world there was among people and among spirits an influx of life from Jehovah or the Lord which came by way of the celestial kingdom, that is, through the angels who were in that kingdom. This was the source of their power at that time. But when the Lord came into the world, and by so doing made the Human within Himself Divine, He took to Himself what had rested with angels of the celestial kingdom, namely that power and control. (*Secrets of Heaven* 6371:2)

If the passage stopped here, one might think that the Lord intervened to take away the role of these celestial angels. This is not correct. The Lord accomplished three things simultaneously through His life in this world. By taking on a natural human body and mind from being born of Mary, He provided an opportunity for the vast communities of hells to repeatedly attack what they sensed was a flaw or weakness in Him. Every time they did, they were defeated and the Lord made His mind another step more perfect. As each community in hell was defeated, they fled from His wisely loving presence to their proper homes in hell. Eventually all the hells were defeated, and the Lord had removed the last limitations taken on by His birth in the world and became perfectly joined to the infinite God who had always been His soul. The teachings for the New Church refer to the process of perfecting Himself as the glorification. At the same time the Lord was defeating the hells and glorifying His Human He was also providing a new order for the heavens (*Apocalypse Revealed* 265). Because the angels themselves learned through the Lord's glorification, we are taught "Angels of [the celestial] kingdom do, it is true, still exercise great power and control, but only in the measure that the Lord's Divine Human resides in them through their love for Him" (*Secrets of Heaven* 6371:2). The Lord did not take away their roles, He waited until the time was right and helped them in freedom to see more clearly how they could serve Him.

Prior to the time of the Lord's second coming, once again the world of spirits was filled with spirits who had led evil lives but partially because of the weakness of the Lord's church on earth they were not having their evils revealed. They were clogging up with the world of spirits and creating fantasy heavens and working to lead astray simple good people who were arriving there. They had the power to stay indefinitely in the world of spirits and create these false heavens because very simple but nevertheless good angels in the lowest heavens were joined to them. We are taught that the simple good people in the lowest heaven and those in the world of spirits paid attention mainly to the external actions of these evil people. They did not have the ability to recognize that what they were seeing was completely insincere behavior. This dangerous joining of evil people in the world of spirits to simple good in the lowest heavens went on for centuries (*Apocalypse Revealed* 866:2). Again, why didn't the Lord intervene? Why did He tolerate this disorder in the world of spirits? The answer is that if the relationship between these false heavens

and the simple good “were torn apart before the appointed time, heaven would suffer at its lowest level; yet the lowest level is the basis on which the higher levels of heaven rest. . . This was why they were tolerated until the final period” (*Last Judgment* 70). The Lord waited until the time came when the true ideas that formed the Lord’s second coming could be revealed and through this, a new light could shine on the interior quality of the evil people who created these false heavens. As soon as the simple good in the lowest heavens recognized the true qualities of these evil spirits they freely and with understanding separated themselves and the false heavens ceased to carry the fantasy of goodness. The images of fiery destruction and earthquakes in the book of Revelation were in reality an unmasking of these fantasies.

In the teachings for the New Church we read that the first law of the Lord’s government is that a person act in freedom in accordance with his or her reason, this means according to that person’s best understanding of what is good and true (Divine Providence 71). When angels have been poorly fulfilling their roles it was not the Lord’s highest priority to step in using His direct divine power to institute a correction. If He had done this before the angels could learn and recognize what needed to be done, great harm would have occurred to them. They might have sensed that they were too flawed to even try to be helpful.

Despite all the spiritual disorder and darkness that occurred leading up to the Lord’s first and second coming, the Lord focused on how and when He could help the angels grow in understanding and freely choose to better serve His will. The Lord is concerned with the happiness and usefulness of us all. He invites us to love one another as He loves us. May each of us grow in our ability to be wisely loving in His image. AMEN.

Lessons: Isaiah 8:21-22, 9:2, Matthew 24:29-31, *Secrets of Heaven* 6371:1, *Last Judgment* 70

Isaiah 8

²¹ They will pass through it hard-pressed and hungry; and it shall happen, when they are hungry, that they will be enraged and curse ^[p]their king and their gods, and look upward. ²² Then they will look to the earth, and see trouble and darkness, gloom of anguish; and *they will be* driven into darkness.

Isaiah 9

² The people who walked in darkness
Have seen a great light;
Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death,
Upon them a light has shined.

Matthew 24

²⁹ “Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ³⁰ Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. ³¹ And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Secrets of Heaven 6373:1

[When the Lord's love and wisdom flowed through the celestial] kingdom there was no peace, since things in heaven and those in hell could not be brought by means of that kingdom into a state of order. This was because [the Lord's love and wisdom] as it passed through that kingdom, could not remain pure since heaven is not pure; so neither was that kingdom strong enough to serve as the means by which all things could be preserved in a state of order. And what is more, as a consequence hellish and devilish spirits were at that time breaking out of hell and ruling over souls who were coming from the world, as a result of which a situation was coming about in which none but the celestial angels could be saved.

Last Judgment 70

[Prior to the Lord's second coming the world of spirits was infested by Christians in name only who resisted the normal process of judgment, staying there for centuries and making for themselves communities or false heavens and leading stray simple good people] There are many reasons why such communities, or such heavens, were tolerated. The chief is that by means of outward holiness and outward honesty and fairness they were joined with the simple good people in the lowest heaven, and with those who were still in the world of spirits and not yet admitted to heaven. In the spiritual world all are in touch with and so joined with similar spirits. The simple good people in the lowest heaven and those in the world of spirits pay attention mainly to externals, yet without being inwardly wicked. If therefore they were torn apart before the appointed time, heaven would suffer at its lowest level; yet the lowest level is the basis on which the higher levels of heaven rest. . . This was why they were tolerated until the final period.