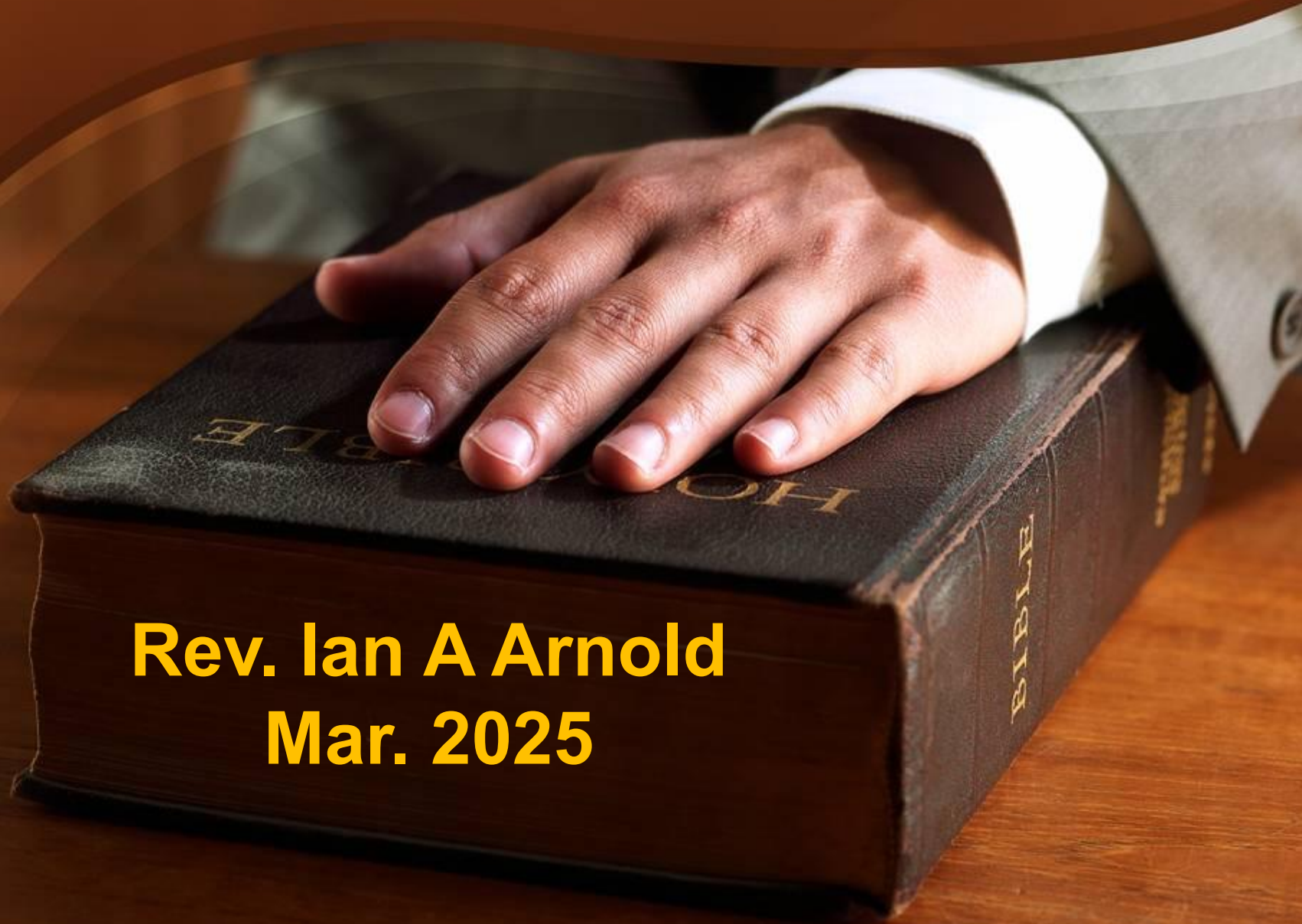


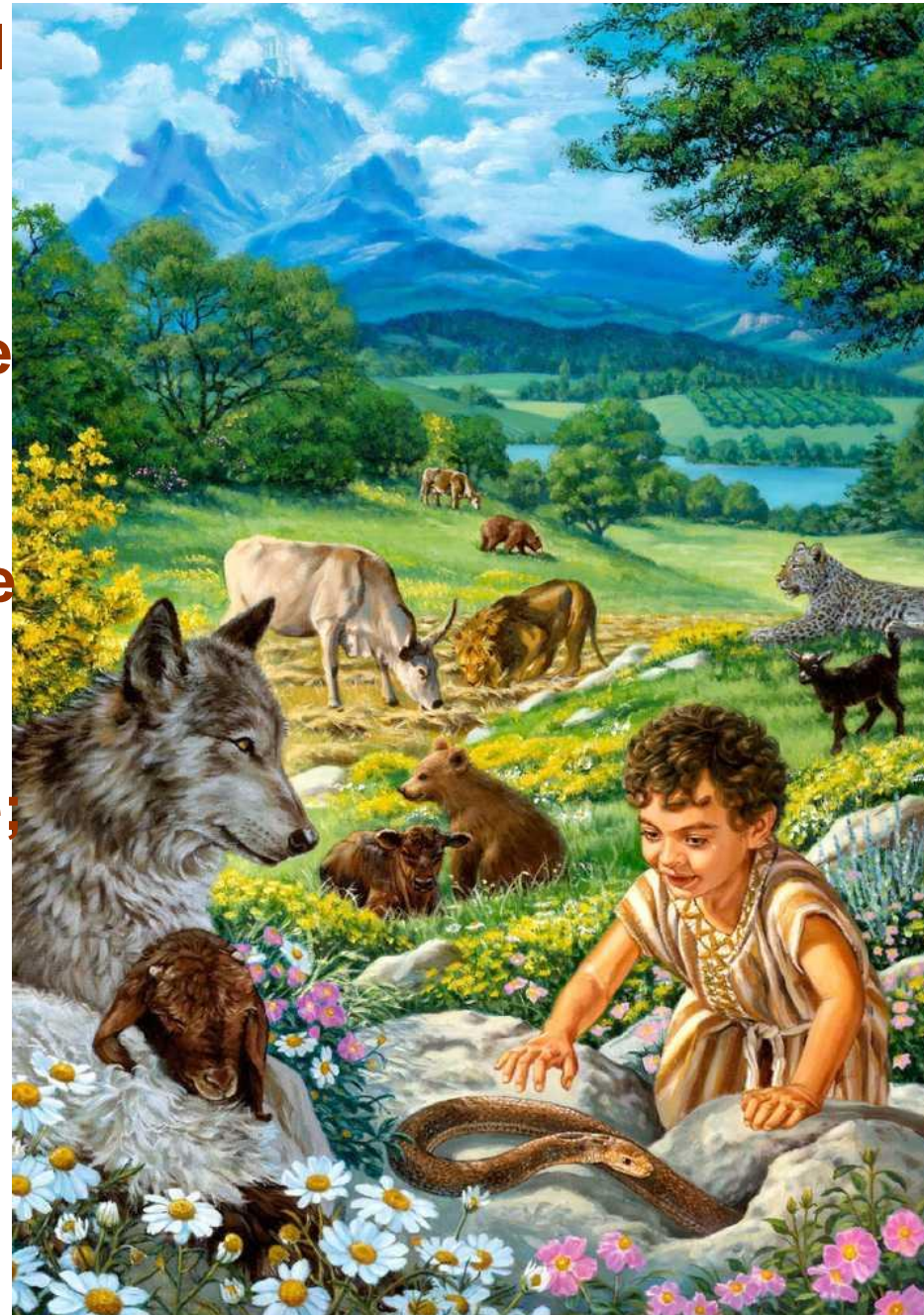
Protection against evil



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Please read, first, **Isaiah Chapter 11: verses 6 &**

7: “The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat. The calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.”



It has been said of Jesus that he was “the most important, the most influential, the wisest, the most ethical and the most consequential person to walk on earth.” (See

[https://enduringword.com/jesus>the>greatest>of>men](https://enduringword.com/jesus/the/greatest/of/men))

It has also been said of Jesus that “no other great leader inspired so many positive changes in the lives of His followers. (See

<https://thelife.com/jesus-impact-the-world>.)

And on another web site I read Jesus described as “this penniless preacher from Nazareth who is irrevocably the very centre of history. And His influence is listed with regard to women’s rights, human rights, humanitarian aid, education, science and changed lives. (See <https://allendalebaptist.org/Jesus-better-world>)

As I read these affirmations of the influence of Jesus I started wondering how much more would be written about Him if it was more widely known that His greatest



He talked about this work but it is apparent that people didn't understand. "In the world", He said, "you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer (take courage) I have overcome the world." (John 16:13)

How puzzled those who heard Jesus say this must have been! He hadn't overcome the visible world. But He had overcome what had been happening in the inner world of everyone, across the world.

And the apostle Paul wrote of such inner work Jesus had engaged in. In his epistle to the Hebrews Paul wrote, "for we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are." (Chapter 4:15).



This is all about battles that were going on within Jesus. And these are summarized in the stories of the devil tempting Him in the wilderness. (Matthew 4 and Luke 4).

In his epistle to Titus, Paul wrote of Jesus that “He gave Himself for us, that he might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify Himself (to better connect with us), zealous for good works.” (Chapter 2:14.)

And the apostle John wrote, “For this purpose the son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.” (1 John 3:5)



Such teachings as these open our eyes to this inner work Jesus engaged in while He was in the world. It was, like we have noted, mostly unnoticed and unseen. And yet – and as we have also noted – it had a more profound and greater influence on the human race than anything else Jesus accomplished or is credited with.

Such spiritual warfare was always anticipated in connection with the coming of the Messiah.

Filled with the Holy Spirit, as he was, the father of John the Baptist gave voice to this reality – this inner work that Jesus would engage in – praising God for taking action so that “we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all that hate us.” (Luke 1:71). And in Isaiah Chapter 42, a wonderful promise concerning the coming of the Messiah, it is unambiguously declared that, “The LORD shall go



The Fall

This is not about taking, literally, the story of Eve and Adam eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But this story does mark a turning point in the early history of the human race when the door was opened to **self assertion, rejection of God and of what God commands**, and so – eventually – to a build-up of evil and the work of the devil (meaning, evil from hell), in our midst. It began small, like a ripple on the surface of a pond. But over countless centuries it built up into a wave threatening to crash in and over the human race, and so to destroy it.



In a little book Swedenborg wrote, titled, “A Brief Exposition of the Teachings of The New Church”, we read, “**Jehovah God came down and assumed the Human in order that He might bring into order all things in heaven and all things in hell, and all things in the Church**; since, at that time the power of the devil, that is, of hell, prevailed over the power of heaven; and on earth the power of evil prevailed over the power of good; in consequence of which a total damnation was at hand, threatening every creature. This impending damnation Jehovah God removed by His Human, which was Divine Truth, and thus He redeemed angels and men.”



Jesus, the Light of the world

As in John's Gospel, right at the beginning, "In (Jesus) was life and the life was the light of men. And the light shone in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it." (Chapter 1:4,5)..

Let's hold on to this: "the darkness did not overcome it."

Jesus brought an amazing light into our midst! Just think of the wonderful things He taught, about compassion and forgiveness; about contentment and respect; about pride and humility; about the value and worth of every individual, whether rich or poor, Jew or Samaritan, sinner or saint; and how He made God real and accessible in a way people had never been taught or shown before. Whereas up until then people had thought of God as remote, on high, inaccessible, ready to judge and to harshly punish, even being capable of doing bad things, now Jesus talked about Him as our loving, heavenly, Father.



This was anticipated for hundred of years beforehand! And this promise is memorably captured in the words the prophet Isaiah was inspired to speak:-

**“Arise, shine; for your light has come! And the glory of the LORD is risen upon you. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and deep darkness the people; but the LORD shall arise over you, and His glory will be seen upon you. The gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.”
(Chapter 60:1,2)**



Redemption

In another of the books of the Teachings of The New Church, we read, “To redeem means to free from damnation, to reclaim from everlasting death, to snatch from hell, and to release the captives and those in bondage from the hands of the devil. **The Lord performed this by conquering the hells and founding a new heaven.**” (“True Christian Religion” 118)

This is not saying that the Lord destroyed the hells. It says he “**conquered**” the hells, or “subdued” the hells. God is not about destroying anyone. But **He did restore order in the hells and throughout the whole spiritual world** so that we here on earth could continue to live **with the ability to choose** good or evil, truth or falsity, what is self-centred or other-people centred.



There is no question but that God, in the person of Jesus, protected the human race from a tsunami of evil.

God continues to redeem each one of us.

Because He successfully did that, then, two thousand years ago, **God is able to protect us, now, from the forces of evil or, the power of the devil.** This is the promise. Such protection is available to us. But there is an all-important part we must play.



There is no one alive who does not experience **conflicting thoughts, desires and feelings**. We all know times when we are pulled one way or pulled in the opposite direction. For example, we know we should do the right thing, such as restrain from criticism or judgement of another person and not share unkind things we have heard about someone, unless it is overwhelmingly necessary and important for us to do so. And yet other thoughts and feelings we have resist this. Few people have written more eloquently about this than the apostle Paul who confessed that “What I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do.” (Romans 7:15).



The two apostles, James and John, who are known to have been quick tempered, once contemplated calling fire down from heaven on the people of a Samaritan village who had refused to welcome Jesus. "Jesus", it is said, "turned and rebuked them." (Luke 9:54,55). They had been with Him now for three years and, we can be sure, He would have hoped they knew better. However, as yet they were **still giving way to unkindness and judgement**. The conflict between different and opposing thoughts and feelings, within them, was obviously not yet resolved.



Inviting protection

Firstly, we can be sure of this that protection against the work of the devil in our lives and the whisperings of evil spirits from hell, **is available to us**. What we need to know is how to avail ourselves of this protection.

Being resolute and steadfast, **determined not to succumb to evil thoughts and feelings** when they come to our awareness, is really, really, important. A battle has started raging and **we are the one who, by the choice we make, will determine what the outcome of that battle is going to be**. It will seem as if we are alone but the reality is that **the Lord is with us**. And if we are sincere and genuine, asking for His help, He will give it to us.

Jesus said, “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for there is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:10).

And, from the Book of Psalms, we have the promise, that “Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning.” (Psalm 30:5)



A measure of **self denial** comes into things. **Old pleasures need to be rejected.** And that can be painful. Psalm 15 begins with a question, “LORD, who may abide in Your tabernacle? Who may dwell in Your holy hill?” And part of the answer given is, “He who swears to his own hurt and does not change.” (Verses 1 and 4)



Secondly, it is important to take our opportunities to build up a resistance within ourselves. Just as you in China will soon be coming out of Winter into Spring, so here in Australia we are coming out of Summer and approaching Winter. And it is certain that there will be a lot of encouragement, and advertisements, to build up our resistance to the inevitable spread of colds and influenza. The apostle Paul, in his Epistle to the Philippians, wrote, “Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy - meditate on these things.” (Chapter 4:8)

If we hold strongly to **good, positive, uplifting,** thoughts they will **contribute significantly to an inner resistance to the inroads of evil.**



When the ancient people of Israel were close to being freed from slavery in Egypt, they were warned that there would be a plague sweep through the land, the death of all first-born. If, however, they painted the blood of a lamb on the door posts and lintel at the entrance to their houses the plague would “pass over” them, and they would be unharmed.(See Exodus Chapter 12, especially verse 13)

A lamb symbolizes - or, corresponds to - innocence. And the painting of the blood of a lamb on the doorposts and lintel of the houses, in the spiritual sense, means **affirming innocence and our connection with the Lord.**

When we feel the possible inroads of what is sinful, in our thoughts or in our feelings, or both, this is the time to affirm innocence and our connection with the Lord. And we need to **be definite** and not enter into some kind of conversation with ourselves. Jesus said



Thirdly, it is important to remember the help that a trusted friend who shares our spiritual journey can be to us.

Talking through an issue, or what we know to be sinful thoughts or feelings, with another person can help bring perspective.

For example, I have known people who have felt depressed, discouraged, and even beyond salvation, because of sinful things they said or did in years long past. I am always pleased, and thankful, that I can share with them from the Teachings of The New Church, that **God is not in the least interested in the past.** The main thing is that they repented and swore not to repeat those things. Having done that there is absolutely no need for them to re-visit those things. God is only interested in where - spiritually - we are right now. And **His focus is on the destination for which He created us, to become an angel of heaven.**



What could do us great harm is no longer able to do so.

Symbolically, or in the spiritual sense, we all have different animals within us. Some are capable of doing us great harm. Others are gentle and harmless. And the ones that can do us harm are such things as **self importance, self-interest, and different cravings** as, for example, to have people think we are wonderful, or to have more of this world's goods. Also, imaginings that we are indispensable or that we must have our say about everything, assuring ourselves that we know best. **The promise is that these cravings and imaginings can be subdued and neutralized.**



Isaiah Chapter 11 is a beautiful Chapter because it is **a promise of peace and security and protection** from what is wrong and evil. And what is wrong and evil is depicted as a wolf, a leopard, a young lion and a bear.

A wolf, we are told, symbolizes feelings and even experiences that snatch away and destroy our connection with the Lord and reliance on Him. (Apocalypse Revealed 241). For example, the feeling - when confirmed - that my life is my own to do with as I please - snatches away, and effectively destroys,, my connection with the Lord and my reliance upon Him.

A leopard symbolizes thoughts and teachings which seem to agree with the truths of religion but which, when looked into, disagree. (“Apocalypse Explained” 780:9). A good example of this is what,



A lion is undisguised falsity which destroys truth. (“Apocalypse Revealed” 573:2). In the West just now the idea is promoted that gender is a choice. This is an undisguised falsity that destroys truth.

And, lastly, **a bear symbolizes the power that there seems to be from the literal sense of the Word, wrongly understood.** (“Apocalypse Explained 781:14,15). This means insisting on a literal interpretation of things said in the Bible when, yet, they can’t be literally true. For example, that God has favourites among the human race; favourite people or a favourite nation.



The Bible has **many promises of protection from evil**, one of the most memorable, from the Psalms, is Psalm 27, the first 3 verses of which read,

“The LORD is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?

The LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? When the wicked came against me to eat up my flesh, my enemies and my foes, they stumbled and fell.

Though any army should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear.

Though war should rise against me, in this I will be confident.”



As each of us seeks that protection so, collectively, it can also become a reality, and this world will know **a peace and protection** from evil which, so far, has eluded it.

AMEN



Readings:

Isaiah Chapter 11: 1-9

Luke Chapter 1:67-79



And, from the Teachings of The New Church:

Arcana Caelestia 59:2

“If the Lord did not protect people moment by moment, and in every shortest instant, they would immediately perish, for there is such murderous hatred reigning in the world of spirits against all forms of love and faith in the Lord as to defy description.”

Arcana Caelestia 968

“Nothing at all can harm people whom the Lord is protecting, not even if the whole of hell were surrounding them.”

Heaven and Hell 5777:3

“The Lord cannot protect us unless we acknowledge the Divine and live faithful, thoughtful lives. Otherwise, we are turning away from the Lord and toward hellish spirits.”



THE END

