

Emanuel Swedenborg, Revelator

A Servant of the Lord

The Lord called Emanuel Swedenborg to write the Revelation that is the Lord's Second Coming. Why did the Lord call Swedenborg to do this wonderful work? Starting as a young boy, Swedenborg prayed to the Lord and read His Word. He enjoyed learning, and he kept studying long after he finished school. He was very interested in science, for he wanted to learn all about the natural world. But he never forgot the advice of his father: "I beg you most earnestly that you will fear and love God above all else, for without this fear of God all other training, all study, all learning is of no account."

When Swedenborg was 56 years old, the Lord appeared to him in a vision, surrounded by the light of heaven. The Lord told him to think more about spiritual things. So Swedenborg studied the Word with great care. Later, the Lord opened Swedenborg's spiritual eyes so that he could see into the other world. Being a scientist, he remembered and carefully wrote down all that he saw.

The Lord led Swedenborg to write 35 books we call the Writings for the New Church. It took him 24 years to write them all before he died in 1772. Some books told deeper meanings of the Word. Others described life after death, how the Lord created the world, how the Lord leads us, and the genuine marriage love called "conjugal love". About these books, Swedenborg wrote, "I have not written anything from myself, but the truth from God". Once the Lord commanded Swedenborg to write these words on a book called *The Brief Exposition*: "This book is the coming of the Lord". These precious books are the Lord's Writings, but He gave them to the world through Emanuel Swedenborg.

Swedenborg spent much of his time talking with angels and writing, but he also enjoyed visiting with friends. People found him a gentle and humorous man. One of the most famous stories about Swedenborg happened at a party with friends, hundreds of miles from his home. He was suddenly alarmed and told them about a fire now burning near his home. Later, his friends learned that there was a fire that night exactly as Swedenborg described it! This led some people to guess that he was the author of the Writings, which were published anonymously. He confirmed it when asked.

Two Lutheran ministers, Gabriel Beyer and Johan Rosen, wanted to meet Swedenborg. They were delighted with the New Church teachings, and they shared these ideas in their sermons and classes. But they were accused of heresy and ordered to stop teaching about the New Church. Books of the Writings were banned in Sweden. Emanuel Swedenborg was sad that there was so little freedom of speech and freedom of religion in his native land.

When Swedenborg finished writing the book, *True Christian Religion*, the Lord called together the twelve disciples who had followed Him in the world. He sent them throughout the spiritual world to proclaim that the Lord God Jesus Christ reigns. This was the beginning of the New Church. It took place on the 19th day of June in the year 1770.

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Shortly afterwards, Swedenborg was ready to live in the spiritual world forever. He had no fear of death because he knew just what heaven was like. He had even seen his home there! He was happy to have been “a servant of the Lord”.

Just before Swedenborg died, he told a friend, “ As truly as you see me before your eyes, so true is everything that I have written; and I could have said more had it been permitted. When you enter eternity you will see everything, and then you and I will have much to talk about.”

Bibliography:

Heinrichs, Willard L.D. “A True Believer and Humble Servant” (A Children’s Talk from *New Church Home*)

Henderson, Bruce. *Swedenborg: Man Beyond Measure* (Pamphlet of the second chapter from his book, *Window on Eternity*).

Questions for Discussion:

1. Do you think Swedenborg was a great scientist? Why or why not? (See Ripley’s Believe It or Not)
2. How did Swedenborg’s experience as a scientist help him do this special work for the Lord?
3. Swedenborg waited until he had visited the spiritual world for three years before he started writing the Revelation from the Lord. Why do you think he didn’t start writing immediately?
4. Why did Swedenborg publish the Writings anonymously?
5. Swedenborg sent copies of the Writings to ministers, libraries, and universities. But he did not try to start a New Church organization. Why not?

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At School:

Choose one quote from the Writings and copy on special paper using a calligraphy marker.

Homework (Choose 1):

1. Write a bio-poem about Swedenborg (using the bio-poem sheet).
2. Color the border of Swedenborg's Rules of Life.
3. Choose 1 of Swedenborg's rules of life and write ways you could follow this rule.
4. Read part of a book about Swedenborg.
5. Sometime in the late 1890s, a New Church man made a model of Swedenborg's flying machine and tried to fly it. Jesse Burt worked for the Field Museum in Chicago, but visited his friends and family in Glenview often. He attached ropes to the flying machine and had several men run alongside him, trying to pull him up into the air. Reports differ, but it seems that he did glide for a short while before crashing back down. Use the picture of Swedenborg's flying machine as a reference and illustrate this effort to test Swedenborg's invention in Glenview.