

*Heavenly Secrets 168 - 189, 314 – 322 (inter-chapter material)* reveals what happens when we die:

(**note:** Swedenborg doesn't seem to refer anywhere to people who have been resuscitated back into the natural world - NDErs. When Swedenborg uses the words 'revived' or 'resuscitated' he means people waking up into the spiritual world immediately after death. There are great similarities between this section and the *Bardo Thodol* – Tibetan Book of the dead. **Both Swedenborg and the Bardo Thodol indicate our spiritual destiny is based not on punishment but on self-selection based on what we have loved during our life.**)

Swedenborg here describes how we move from physical life into eternal life starting with how we first emerge into the spiritual world after dying. He indicates that his description is not based on his speculation but on being given his own personal experience of the process so he would know exactly what happens.

**Swedenborg account compiled by Joe Vandermeer** (language slightly simplified for ease of understanding):

I found myself in same state as someone dying, physical sensations no longer being felt (yet fully aware of things, still able to think perfectly well so I could witness and remember what was happening).

Breathing kept going, then stopped, as it does with dying people.

Aware of heavenly angels in area around my heart; I seemed to be at one with them.

Eventually there was almost nothing of me left except my thought and the resulting perception (this lasted several hours).

I was now no longer linked with spirits because they would by now assume that I have died.

Two angels were near my head as well as those around my heart (I gathered this is how it is with everyone).

Angels near my head were completely silent and passed their thoughts to me by means of their faces.

I began to feel my own face changing, it changed twice because there were two angels (I gathered that angels know when a person is dead because then the angel can mirror their faces in the dead person's face).

When they recognised the look of their faces on mine, they made some changes around my mouth so they could share their thoughts with me.

Speaking (sharing their thoughts) by shaping the area around someone's mouth is apparently quite normal for angels.

I could now hear them speaking via their thoughts.

I could also detect a sweet fragrance like that coming from an embalmed corpse (that fragrance is evidence that angels are present).

If evil spirits smell this they can't and won't come near.

All this time I was at one with the angels in the area of my heart, like a close embrace (I could feel this by noticing my pulse).

I got the idea that angels keep us in whatever reverent and holy thoughts we might have as we are dying.

I also gathered that most people are thinking about eternal life when they are dying rather than about salvation and happiness, so the angels keep them in that overall thought.

Angels maintain us like this for quite a while before withdrawing and leaving us with other angels who then come near us.

All through this we suppose, even if very dimly, that we are still physically alive.

As soon as the inside parts of our bodies begin to grow cold all our living substances are separated from our body wherever they are, even if our bodily substances are caught up in thousands of entanglements (the Lord's mercy has such a living and pull on us so great that nothing of us can be left behind).

The angels at my head stayed with me for quite a while after I had been revived [into their world] and they didn't speak except in their silent way.

I realised they didn't take any notice of my misconceptions or wrong ideas; they didn't ridicule them, they just didn't seem interested in them.

They speak by means of thoughts and use this way of 'speaking' with those they are with at the beginning of their reawakening.

Up to now the person who has been revived is still experiencing a dim sort of life.

When it is time to pass us on to other angels, these first angels wait for a while until the other angels have come near.

I was now shown how these second kind of angels work with a person to give them the benefit of light or understanding about their new condition.

The angels who were with people at first don't make a choice to leave, because they love the person. Only when we decide that we no longer wish to be with them anymore that we seek to be away from them, which is when the other angels come and begin to give us the gift of light (which was not there until now as we were only in our thoughts).

I was shown how these second angels work with us.

They seemed to roll the covering from the surface tissue of my left eye towards my nose so that I could see the light. Although it seemed to happen like that, it was actually an appearance.

Once the eye covering is rolled away, a kind of light appears, like the light we see through our closed eyelids when we begin to wake up.

All the time we remain in the peaceful state being maintained by the first angels.

A kind of twilight comes, like the sky with one star shining in it, and I sensed that different people have different experiences of this.

It then seems that something needs to be gently rolled off our faces. Then we become conscious again.

The angels with us take great care to stop any idea coming out of us unless it's a gentle and loving one. At this point we learn we are a spirit. Now we start to live. To begin with, everything is well with us because we feel we have come into eternal life. This stage is represented by a white light with gold tinge to it, showing that our first experience of life in eternity is heavenly and spiritual.

Next we are welcomed into a community of good spirits, represented as a young adult sitting on a horse, apparently directing the horse towards hell even though the horse can't move.

We are like a young adult because as soon as we come into eternity we find ourselves among angels and so we seem to be in the prime of our life.

In these representations of what is happening, the next one is a scene where the young adult gets off the horse and walks on, because the horse is unable to move.

Then we get the thought we'll be taught about goodness and truth.

Then we begin to see some gently rising paths representing the fact that we will be gradually led towards heaven by a knowledge of truth and goodness and by recognising what our own nature is like. If we don't acknowledge what we are like and learn what is true and good, we can never be led there.

After being re-awakened and with the benefit of light to help us look around, the angels do everything they can to help us in this state. They tell us about things that exist in the other life, but only those things that we can take in. If we have beliefs and are interested in them, the angels can start showing us some of the amazing sights of heaven. But if we're not the sort of person who wants to learn, we'll feel like leaving these angels too.

The angels see immediately when we're no longer interested, because in the other life everything we think is shown openly. If we are keen to leave them, it's us who bring our association with those angels to an end (the angels don't wish to leave us because they love everybody and wish to help us, to explain things and to take us to heaven, because that is their greatest pleasure).

But when we do seek to move away from these angels, we're welcomed by other good spirits. They also wish to do everything they can to help us. But if our previous life was such that we can't cope with being among such good people either, ***we will want to withdraw from them as well. This process keeps going until we are with the same kind of people who have similar attitudes to life as we have. That is who we wish to settle down with. At that point, amazingly, we are in the same kind of life as we were on earth,*** and as we come back into that kind of life we experience a new beginning.

Some of us move towards hellish kinds of states, either quickly or after quite a time.

But those who have practised good because of their faith in the Lord are gradually led towards heaven at this time of new beginning.

Some come to heaven quickly while others do so more slowly. I have even seen some people who came to heaven immediately after they died. Here are two examples.

A man who had recently died came and talked with me. He didn't seem to know where he was and he seemed to think he was still in the world. I told him that he had passed over and he no longer had any former possessions but was in another state where such things are not there. He became anxious and wondered where to go and where he would live, but I mentioned that the Lord alone provides everything, for him just as for everyone. At this point I left him alone with his thoughts and he started thinking about what he would do. He came into company with heavenly spirits, those who are in the area of the heart, and they helped him with whatever he wanted. When he was on his own he started wondering how he could repay their kindness to him. This showed that he had previously been led by kindness from his faith, and at this point he came into heaven straightaway.

I also saw someone else who came into heaven straightaway with the help of angels, where he was received by the Lord and shown the wonderful things of heaven.

As well as these two examples, I have come to know from a lot of different experiences that many people come into heaven only after some time has passed.

We will now see what it is like for people who have recently passed on.

My experiences have shown me that when people come into the next life they don't realise they are there to begin with. They think they are still in the world and in their same body, and they are amazed when they are told that they are now a spirit. They think like this because, for one thing, they feel they are completely human in the way they are experiencing things, and because they still have wishes and also because they can still think.

Another thing is that often when they were in the world, they didn't believe in a spiritual level of life, or in some cases never imagined that spirits could be like them.

There is something else as well; the sensations that spirits have are much more well-developed than those they had while they were in their physical body, in things like thinking and speaking. The difference between the two is almost beyond comparison, and yet they are unaware of this until the Lord brings them to the point of coming to appreciate it.

We should not assume that spirits can't have any sensations (or that they can't have greater sensations than before) simply because they are no longer in a physical body. I've come to realise that the opposite is true from thousands of experiences. If people won't believe this, they should be left to find out for themselves in due course when they come into the next life, and their own experience will eventually bring them to realise it.

Spirits can see with their eyes because they are living in light, and every kind of spirit and angel lives in the kind of light that makes the world's sunlight at midday seem much less by comparison.

As well as this, spirits can also hear far more keenly than they could previously. Spirits have continually discussed things with me for years.

They can smell things; they can also feel and touch, which is apparently painful for those in a state of hell.

All our sensations in fact come from the sense of touch, they are all simply different forms of this most basic sense.

Spirits also have feelings and wishes, which again can't be compared to those they had before.

They think much more clearly and precisely than they used to, putting far more meaning into one single thought than would have been there in a thousand ideas back on earth.

They talk to each other very directly and to the point, in such a clear-cut way that if we on earth were to catch only part of what they are saying we would be astounded.

So, in a word, they have lost nothing at all that they need in order to be a human being – and even more fully human for that matter – except their physical body and all the physical imperfections that go with that.

The new arrival now realises that during their life it was their spirit that was really sensing everything. While sensation seemed to take place in their bodies, it wasn't in fact a physical thing. So, when the physical body has been put off, sensations are far stronger and much truer.

Life itself is based on sensation because life can't go ahead without it and the quality of how you sense things determines your own quality of life, as anyone will realise.