

## THE END OF THE FLOOD

### *Genesis 8*

Every teacher should read for background the chapters which have been omitted, chapters 5 and 7 of Genesis, and should study the brief explanations of this transition period in the notes for the various age levels. From the Junior level up, emphasis should be placed on the difference between the Most Ancient Church and the Ancient Church as to the nature of the people. Throughout our study of the Bible there will be many references to these two churches and to the “celestial” and “spiritual” types, and the children should become familiar with them. The simplest illustrations come from their knowledge of the difference between a baby and an older child.

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#### Doctrinal Points

*When a church perverts the truth given it, the Lord always prepares the way for the reception of truth in a new form.*

*The Ancient Word, which preceded our Word, was given for the instruction of the Ancient Church.*

*After man’s will became wholly perverted, the Lord separated the will and the understanding so that a new will could be formed in man’s understanding through the development of conscience.*

*We must form the habit of doing right before the Lord can give us a love for doing it.*

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#### Notes for Parents

Have your children ever asked you, or have you ever wondered yourself, how so many human beings and animals and food enough to last them several months could have been crowded into a boat only about 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high? Or, for that matter, have you asked yourself how it was possible for it to rain so much—even in forty days—that the flood covered the

mountains? Many people have asked these questions. The truth is that this story is in that part of the Bible which was taken from the Ancient Word; it is written entirely in symbol language and not meant to be taken as literal history.

Sometimes when a person yields to a very severe temptation, we say of him: “It was too much for him to stand up to; he was just swept off his feet.” And we often speak of the storms of life. The people of the Most Ancient Church did not always use their independence in an unselfish way. Neither do we. And we know that when our children want their own way, it is very often not a good way. It is all too likely to be selfish, injuring other people rather than helping them. The descendants of these early people yielded more and more to the temptation to use their independence selfishly, and these tendencies were inherited from generation to generation and grew until the people became monsters of selfishness. The stories of the serpent and of Cain and Abel describe this decline. The genealogies recorded in chapters 4 and 5 do not really tell of the birth of individual men but of the succession of whole generations of people. In time their selfish desires and false thoughts became so great that they were “swept away” as by a flood.

But always some few people continued to try to be good. These are described in the symbol story of Noah; and because they built their lives according to the Lord’s commands, as Noah built the ark, they could ride out the flood of evil and falsity. Read Matthew 7:24-27. When we are tempted to do what we know is wrong, our only way of safety is to ask the Lord for help and stick fast to the commandments. It may seem hard at first—we may feel like Noah shut up in the ark and tossed about on the flood—but if we are steadfast, the time will come when the temptation will no longer trouble us and we shall be able to step out into a fuller and freer life. This is the lesson of our story today, but we should also know that each detail in the story has a particular meaning.



### Primary

The literal story is easy to tell. Read as much as possible of it from the Word, and be careful not to add imaginary details. Tell the whole story but dwell particularly on the incidents in chapter 8. If the children are familiar with toy Noah's arks, try to take their minds away from the idea of the ark as a plaything by telling them what a wonderful thing it was that the Lord saved Noah in this way so that the whole human race would not die.

Do you know what a flood is? It is what happens when the water in a river or lake rises far above its usual level and flows over the land. Sometimes even now there are floods which sweep away houses and cattle and people and do all sorts of destructive things.

Our Bible story tells us about the worst flood ever known. You remember the story about Adam and Eve and the beautiful Garden of Eden in which they lived. The Lord gave them everything they needed to make them happy. And there was only one thing He told them not to do—that was to eat of the fruit of a certain tree, called the tree of knowledge of good and evil. When your mother tells you not to do a certain thing, are you ever tempted to go right away and do it? That is what happened to Adam and Eve, and they disobeyed the Lord.

And you know how bad things have a way of piling up. Sometimes when you have done wrong, you find yourself telling a lie so that your mother will not know you did it, and one lie is apt to lead to another, and each makes things worse. And finally you are found out and punished and you are very unhappy. Adam and Eve were sent away from the beautiful garden and had to work for their living. Their children did wrong things, too, and in time people became so bad that they had to be destroyed by a great flood—so great that the water even covered the tops of the mountains.

But one man and his family had remained good. His name was Noah. Just before the flood came, the Lord told Noah to build himself an ark. This was a sort of wooden houseboat big enough to hold him and his wife and his three sons and their wives and a great many animals and birds, and food enough for all of them.

The ark had rooms in it and was built with three stories. There was a door on the side and a window in the roof. When the flood came, the ark floated on the water and everything in it was saved.

It rained forty days and forty nights, and the water rose and rose. Finally the rain stopped and the flood began to go down. Let us read what Noah did then. [Read Genesis 8:6-12.]

What two birds did he send out to see if the waters had gone down?

What did the raven do?

What did the dove do the first time?

What did the dove bring back the second time?

What happened the third time?

What did this show Noah?

You see that the raven which Noah sent out just flew around and accomplished nothing, as we sometimes do when we are not trying to find the right way to behave; but the dove was able to help Noah.

Finally the Lord told Noah that he might go out from the ark to live again on the dry ground. The first thing Noah did when he went out was to build an altar to the Lord so that he could thank the Lord for saving him. Almost every church today has an altar in it, and it is put there for the same purpose for which Noah built his altar—to worship the Lord. Do you know where the altar is in your church?

And do you know what we in the New Church always have on the altar? It is a copy of the Bible, the Word of God, from which we learn all we know about the Lord and what He wants us to do.

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### Junior

The general significance of the flood can be taught to children at this age, and the knowledge will save them from being affected by the many light remarks they are likely to hear about Noah and the flood. The lesson suggested in the third paragraph of their notes is one they especially need. They should also be introduced to the thought that the story of Noah pictures the development of a new church in the world. Be guided by their interest and their questions.

What does the Bible call the beautiful state in which the people of the Most Ancient Church lived?

Why are the people of this church called “Adam”?

What was the one thing Adam wanted which was not in the Garden?

How did the Lord provide this helper?

In the story of the Garden of Eden we are told that the “tree of life” was in the midst of the garden, and that there was also there the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” Look back at the Creation story in chapter 1 and see when the trees first appeared. It was after the creation of light and after the waters above and below the firmament had been separated and the dry land appeared. The dry land is a picture of our character after we begin to learn the truth (the light) and to distinguish between heavenly and worldly things. It is then that we first begin really to think, and our thoughts are pictured by the plants that spring up out of the earth. The trees are the big general ideas that tower above all the others. We need to know this to understand how it came about that the descendants of the people who had known the beautiful Garden of Eden state could become so evil that they had to be destroyed by the flood. In the garden, the tree of life stands for the thought that all goodness and all truth come from the Lord alone and that we must learn them from Him. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil stands for the thought that we are smart enough to know what is right and wrong without learning from the Lord. In the story Adam and Eve were commanded not to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil—but they disobeyed. And when they disobeyed, they were driven out of the garden. The thought that we do not need to learn of the Lord is the beginning of all our mistakes and all our wrongdoing.

The descendants of Adam and Eve became worse and worse. Their false ideas grew until they swallowed up all their spiritual life. This is pictured by the flood which covered even the mountains and destroyed all life from the earth. The flood was not a flood of water, but a flood of false ideas. There were always, however, some people who chose to follow the Lord instead of their own ideas; and these people are described in the story of Noah and his family. They did not have an easy time, but because they

obeyed the Lord He was able to save them and to build up among their descendants a new church, called by Swedenborg the Ancient Church. Mythology calls this period the Silver Age.

Did you ever find yourself among a group of boys and girls who were bent on doing something you knew was wrong? Perhaps you tried to argue with them, and they were able to answer all your arguments and make you feel foolish for objecting; but you still in your heart knew that you ought not to join them. It was not an easy or a comfortable position to be in. It was very much like Noah in the ark, tossed about on the flood. The flood pictures a great temptation, and Noah was saved only by staying in the ark until the waters had gone down. When you are tempted to do what you know is wrong, stick to your principles through thick and thin, and you will come through safely.

After the rain had stopped, it is said that Noah opened the window which was in the top of the ark. This is a picture of opening our minds to instruction from the heavens; and the birds Noah sent out were his thoughts going out over the earth to see whether the temptation was over. There were two birds: one black and one white. There were a great many false ideas in the minds of even these good people, as there are in the minds of all of us, and these are pictured by the raven. And you notice that the raven did nothing but fly around. False ideas do not accomplish anything for us. But Noah also had the dove, which pictures a true thought. This did not bring him at once the information he wanted, but it went out again and again until Noah could be satisfied. If we go at a thing in the right way, looking for help to those who know more than we—as the people called “Noah” looked to the Lord—we shall succeed in time.

And the first thing Noah did when he and his family came out of the ark onto dry land again, was to build an altar and make sacrifices to the Lord. Whenever we are saved from yielding to temptation and brought again into a peaceful and happy state of mind, we should thank the Lord for His help: for it is the Lord who watches over us all the time and leads us safely, if we are will-

ing to obey Him.

Sometime you will learn a great deal more about the meaning of this story. It tells of how the Lord saved the whole human race from destroying itself by evils, and found a new way to reach their minds and teach them after they had closed their hearts against Him. One thing you may remember is that the church which grew up from this beginning—the Ancient Church—knew a great deal about correspondences (the relation between spiritual and natural things) of which you are beginning to learn a little now as you learn of the meaning of light and of trees and of the flood and the raven and the dove. They understood these things and loved to study them, and they even wrote in the language of correspondences. The Ancient Word (the Bible which existed before our Bible and from which the first seven chapters of Genesis were taken by Moses) was written in the days of this church. In time this church also declined, as we shall soon learn; but its people spread all over the earth and many of the religions of the Orient and of other parts of the world are remnants of the knowledge of the people of the Ancient Church, remnants perverted because they have been handed down by tradition instead of in a written form dictated by the Lord.

How long did the rain last?

What was the first bird Noah sent out?

What other bird did he send out?

What is the difference between the raven and the dove?

What did the dove bring back in her mouth the second time?

What was the first thing Noah did when he came out of the ark?

What promise did the Lord make after this?

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### Intermediate

This group should have a running account of the spiritual meaning of the story of the fall and of Noah and the flood, particularly as it relates to the change from celestial to spiritual in the race and applies to our present nature and possibilities. They should know clearly what are meant by the Most Ancient and Ancient Churches and what the distinction is between “celestial”

and “spiritual.” Stress the nature of temptation and the way in which we should meet it.

The decision of the people of the Most Ancient Church to try to think from themselves was, as we have seen, a step—the first step—away from the celestial state, which is the highest and happiest state men can enjoy. So it was the beginning of a long downward trend. In the Bible story the next step was the temptation by the serpent, and this was followed by the expulsion from the garden and the killing of Abel by his brother Cain. The meaning of these stories is dealt with elsewhere, and may be guessed from what is said in verses 5 to 8 of chapter 6 of Genesis. When we use our independence in the wrong way, forgetting what the Lord has told us is right and trying to please ourselves instead of Him, our natural desires lead us further and further on the path to spiritual destruction.

The celestial church was a church in which people were governed by their hearts, and when their hearts became evil, the Lord could no longer reach them because their thoughts were wholly controlled by their desires. If you stop to think, you can see that we are not just like that now. We may want very much to do some selfish thing and yet our minds can see that it is wrong, and through our minds the Lord can lead us to refuse to do it. We have, through education in the knowledge of what is right, something called our conscience. That is, we are really governed through our minds and not through our hearts. This is a spiritual instead of a celestial state. If we try to build our conscience on the Lord’s teachings and choose to obey them, the Lord can form in us gradually an unselfish instead of a selfish will. This is called *regeneration* or *rebirth*. For we are all—ever since the first people turned from the Lord—born selfish, and we must be made over by the Lord if we are to become good and happy people. This is not something that can happen all at once. It is a lifelong work. But you can see from your own experience how it is done. Remember some naughty thing you used to do when you were a little child: First your parents told you it was wrong and you learned to stop doing it



when they said “no” so that you would not be punished, although perhaps you still did it when no one was looking; then you began to be ashamed of it and tried to stop for your own sake; gradually you stopped altogether, and in time found that you no longer had any desire to do it; and finally it seemed so unpleasant to you that you wondered how you could ever have wanted to do it. You had, in regard to that particular thing, a new will which was the very opposite of your first desire. The Lord gives us the new will, but we have to prepare the way by resisting the temptation to do wrong and persevering until we have formed a new good habit in place of the old bad one.

What the Lord had to do in order to save the few good people at the end of the Most Ancient Church—the few represented by Noah—was to separate their minds from their wills so that they could see what was right even when they did not want to do it. The story of the flood is, like the story of the Garden of Eden, a symbol story. The flood was not a flood of water, but a flood of falsity developing in the minds of the people as their wills became more and more evil, until they could no longer receive the inflowing life from the Lord and destroyed each other and themselves. Only a few survived the change. The good who were saved are described in the story of Noah, and the evil who managed to go on living were the giants who appear for a short while in the historical part of the Bible: the Anakim (Numbers 13:22), etc. Two who are familiar to us all are Goliath of Gath (I Samuel 17:4) and Og, king of Bashan (Numbers 21:33).

In the story, Noah and his family were saved by building an ark which would serve as a boat, according to the Lord’s directions, and staying shut up in it until the waters of the flood subsided. This is a picture of living within the limits set by the Lord’s commandments until the temptation to disobey has passed. The part of the story we read in chapter 8 tells of the gradual subsiding of the temptation and the way in which we begin to live a new life. First Noah opens the window in the top of the ark. This is a picture of opening our minds to instruction from the Lord. Then he

sends out two birds—a raven and a dove—to see if the waters have dried up. You remember that birds picture our thoughts which fly around in our minds. Some are good and some are bad. The raven pictures our false thoughts. Our first idea of the new life is, perhaps, that it will be more profitable for us. The raven flew about and accomplished nothing. But the dove—the thought that we ought to be grateful to the Lord and look to Him for guidance—did eventually bring back the news that the new life could be good and happy. Technically the olive corresponds to “the good of charity” (the *love* of serving the Lord), and the olive leaf to “the truth of charity” (the *knowledge* of how to serve Him).

When Noah finally went out of the ark, the first thing he did was to build an altar and make sacrifices to the Lord; and this was the first worship of the Ancient Church. How did Noah know about building altars and making sacrifices? Swedenborg tells us that the people of the Most Ancient Church knew “from perception” the correspondence of everything in the natural world to the things of spiritual life, and that this knowledge was handed down by tradition to the Ancient Church. The people of the Ancient Church—with whom, as we have said, the things of the intellect came first—cultivated this knowledge of correspondence and loved it more than anything else they learned, forming their way of life and their worship according to correspondences. It was in the time of the Ancient Church that the Ancient Word was written, from which the first seven chapters of Genesis were copied by Moses.

The last verses of our chapter, in which the Lord promises that man shall never again be destroyed by his evils and falsities, tell us that the Lord has now provided in man a permanent structure (the separation of the will and the understanding) through which it would always be possible for Him to reach those who were willing to be saved. We shall find that each church raised up on earth had its decline, but that before its end the Lord began to prepare the way for a new church among those not wholly perverted. This repeated succession of new growths is described in the last verse of the chapter.

*Basic Correspondences*

- the raven = a false idea
  - the dove = a true idea concerning God
  - the olive = the good of charity
  - the olive leaf = the truth of charity
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**Senior**

The separation of the will and the understanding and its effect on the race and on the individual are important for this age group. It is not true that we “can’t help” yielding to temptation. The Lord will give us strength if we obey the commandments. Such obedience may seem a hardship for a time, but this is a necessary step to greater strength and happiness. They know that we do not gain physical strength by doing easy things. The same is true of spiritual strength.

In Genesis 6:1-8 we have the key to the meaning of the story of Noah and the flood. The daughters of men are the affections which sprang from the selfish will of the degenerating race in the Most Ancient Church. The sons of God are the truths which they received by tradition and which had originally come from the Lord. We recall that the first people were governed through their hearts—the characteristic of the celestial type. This meant that when their hearts became evil, all the truths they knew were twisted to conform to their evil desires, and there was no possibility of change for them. They assumed credit to themselves for all truth, and became great in their own eyes: “there were giants in the earth in those days.” In fact, their opinion of themselves eventually resulted in actual physical overgrowth, so that they were giants physically, also. A few of these ancient giants survived the destruction of the race pictured by the flood, and we find them mentioned in the historical parts of the Word as the Anakim, etc., and as individuals such as Goliath of Gath, and Og, king of Bashan. “And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”

We see an analogy to this today in the case of a self-exalted man who twists everything he sees to suit his own ambition. But today

there is always the possibility of reform for such a man because his mind and his will are still actually separate: that is, he *can*, if he will, admit some truth which is contrary to his desire. The longer one persists in selfishness, the harder this is; but it never becomes impossible as it was with the Most Ancient people. Swedenborg tells us that at the end of the Most Ancient Church, the great majority of the people were actually suffocated because of their own fantasies; but that in those pictured by Noah in whom there still remained some desire to serve the Lord, the Lord wrought a change by separating the will and the understanding so that He could reach them through their minds. This is pictured in the letter by the fact that the ark had “rooms” in it. The ark is the character of the man of that time who was willing to obey the Lord. The heart was prevailingly evil; but through obedience to the Lord it could remain safe from destruction during the temptation represented by the flood. The animals and birds shut up in the ark with Noah picture his affections and thoughts, both good and bad. The pitch with which the ark was covered inside and out is the motive of self-preservation. The door in the side which was kept shut throughout the flood is his normal communication with others. The window toward heaven, which was also shut during the temptation but was opened immediately after the flood, represents the mode of access for truths from heaven.

Many people think of the Christian life as a life of restraint, and so it may be for a time to the man who has formed bad habits. This is Noah shut up in the ark. But when temptation ceases to tempt him—when he has formed new habits which he finds he likes better than the old—he comes to live the Christian life freely and with happiness. This is Noah coming out of the ark to repopulate the earth. The raven and the dove which he first sent forth to see if the waters were abated, are his natural, false ideas and his true thoughts. The raven flew about and accomplished nothing, but the dove persisted until it found the olive, a symbol of goodness and truth in the new life. (The olive fruit represents the *good* of charity and its leaf the *truth* of charity.) If this seems obscure, let us think

of our own experience in trying a new way of life. Even after the strong temptation to “backslide” is over, we are a little shy of the new life, trying it out here and there to see if it is really all that was claimed for it. This is like sending out the raven and the dove. The raven says, “Will this new way really get me anywhere?” The dove says, “Is it really the good and useful way?”

Noah’s building the altar and making sacrifices thereon of clean beasts and birds, pictures a new type of worship of the Lord which developed in the second or Ancient Church. We recall that the people of the Most Ancient Church had open communication with the heavens and were instructed by the Lord by a direct impulse of the heart. This was the celestial state. But after the will and understanding were separated, ideas of God had to be formed in the mind; truth had to be presented there, and considered, and so chosen as a way of life. The people of the Most Ancient Church had seen in everything about them in the world, representations of spiritual things. This knowledge was passed on by tradition to their descendants, who formed the Ancient Church, cherished it, and made it their greatest study and delight. The altar and the sacrifices represented worship of the Lord and the dedication of their affections and thoughts to His service. In this way forms of worship arose whose meaning was at first fully understood. Also the symbol teachings were written down, under inspiration from the Lord, and formed what Swedenborg calls the *Ancient Word*. The nature of this Word we can know from the first seven chapters of Genesis, which we are told were copied from it; and some of its books are mentioned by name in our Word. Swedenborg said that in his day the Ancient Word might still be in existence in Great Tartary.

Our first desire after we have passed through a severe temptation and find ourselves moving freely in a new life should be, like Noah’s, to thank the Lord for our deliverance, and to offer to Him the service of our hearts and minds. And as we do this, our lives begin to fall into a new and lasting order, governed by the Lord. This is what is meant by the last verses of our chapter. The

Lord takes care of His church in the world, and sees to it that it shall never be destroyed. When one dispensation perverts its revelation and declines, He prepares the good remnant of its people to form a new church: “seedtime and harvest” never fail. We shall have more to say about this in a future lesson.

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### Adult

In regard to the individual experience, note that our chapter covers all three stages of the man who regenerates: his preparation for regeneration, his state during the process of regeneration, and his regenerate state. The difference between perception and conscience, the origin of representative worship, and the difference between the doctrine of “original sin” and Swedenborg’s teaching concerning hereditary evil are all good topics for discussion.

We have seen that the people of the Most Ancient Church were “celestial” in character: that is, this man “was so constituted that the will and the understanding with him formed one mind, or that with him love was implanted in his will part, and thus at the same time faith, which filled the other or intellectual part of his mind” (AC 927). He had open communication with the heavens and lived, so long as he was content to be led by the Lord alone, in a beautiful, childlike state of innocence and trust—the Garden of Eden. His first downward step was taken when he began to be dissatisfied with this state and to desire to be independent. Because the Lord had foreseen this desire and immediately provided for him a good way to satisfy it (the story of the creation of Eve), man was still for a time maintained in the Garden of Eden state. Gradually, however, his selfhood asserted itself more and more, his senses and their pleasures (the serpent) misled him, and he turned from the Lord, lost his innocence, and was driven out of the Garden. The final state of the people of that church is described in the first seven verses of chapter 6. AC 927 continues as follows: “Their posterity inherited the condition that the will and the understanding made a one; and therefore when the love of self and the consequent insane cupidities began to take possession of their will part (where previously there had been love to the Lord and charity

toward the neighbor), not only did their will part or will become utterly perverted, but so also together with it did their intellectual part or understanding, and this was still more the case when the last posterity immersed their falsities in their cupidities, and so became ‘Nephilim,’ for thereby they became of such a nature that they could not be restored, because both parts of the mind (that is, the whole mind) had been ruined.” The giants mentioned in Genesis 6:4 were men who had acquired tremendous importance in their own eyes; but this also in time affected their physical structure. The Nephilim, Anakim, etc., were some of these giants who survived the general destruction of the Most Ancient Church; individual giants were Goliath of Gath and Og, king of Bashan. The giants were not finally exterminated until David’s time. Swedenborg tells us that the insane evils of those people were so great that the hells of the Most Ancient Church have been closed by the Lord so that spirits from those hells cannot influence others.

Near the end of that church, however, there were still some who desired to serve the Lord, and in these the Lord wrought an actual constitutional change so that they might be regenerated and built into a new church. AC 597 states: “By ‘Noah’ is signified a new or second church dispensation, which is to be called the Ancient Church, for the sake of distinction between the Most Ancient Church which was before the flood, and that which was after the flood. The state of the Most Ancient Church was such that they had from the Lord a perception of good and the derivative truth. The state of the Ancient Church, or ‘Noah,’ became such that they had a conscience of good and truth. Such as is the difference between having perception and having conscience, such was the difference of state of the Most Ancient and the Ancient Churches. Perception is not conscience: the celestial have perception; the spiritual have conscience. The Most Ancient Church was celestial, the Ancient was spiritual.” We are also told that the people of the Most Ancient Church, because they were in communication with the heavens, had internal rather than external respiration, and that when the communication ceased, many of them actually died of

a kind of suffocation, so that the flood is a realistic picture of their end. But in the good remnant—and in the others who survived—the Lord set up external respiration. Internal respiration, for short periods, is not unknown even today. It is practiced by some of the Indian Yogis, and has the effect of making them practically unconscious of their material surroundings. Swedenborg also had this experience.

The most important change made in man at this time was the separation of the will and the understanding, so that man could see the truth of thoughts which were contrary to his desires. Men ever since have been of this nature. We know this from the fact that we ourselves often wish very much to do things which our minds tell us are not right, and that we are capable of making decisions contrary to our desires. This new character set up in the good remnant is pictured by the ark, the separation being indicated by its “rooms.” There was much falsity in the minds of these people and much selfishness in their hearts: the ark was pitched “within and without with pitch”; and all the animals and birds both clean and unclean were within it. But it had a window toward heaven, and because it was built according to the commandment of the Lord, and because the Lord “shut him in,” it could ride out the flood. We know in our own experience that there have been times when we were sorely tempted to yield to worldly and sensual desires and have been kept safe only by our knowledge of the right way and a dogged determination to stick to it. The Lord’s providence shuts us in, also. Noah, tossed about in the ark throughout the flood, pictures this period in our experience.

But the time comes, if we remain shut up in the ark, when the rain ceases and the flood begins to abate. We realize that our temptation is losing strength and we begin to reach out tentatively for a new and freer way of life which shall yet be good and righteous. This is the particular time described in our chapter for today. There are in our minds both false and true thoughts—the raven and the dove—with which we explore our condition. Rest and peace in the new way do not come immediately, but presently the dove



brings back tokens of promise. The olive leaf represents “the truth of charity.” Finally the flood is over and we can open the door and go out freely to build up a new life. This whole process is a common Christian experience, the duration of the flood representing the period of temptation which must follow the decision to lead a new life, if we are to lead that life with assurance and strength.

In AC 920 Swedenborg describes the origin of representative worship, pointing out that in the Most Ancient Church worship was internal, as it is in heaven, but that men saw in the things of the outward world representatives of internal things. As the internal perception was gradually lost, the knowledge of the representatives was more cherished, and this knowledge was handed down to the posterity of that church and became the basis of the representative worship of the Ancient Church. The altar which Noah is said to have built after he came forth from the ark is the first altar mentioned in the Word. The altar is the representative of worship of the Lord and the offerings made upon it picture the desire that our affections and thoughts shall be such as to serve Him. This recognition that the Lord is the Source of all goodness and truth is essential to anyone’s salvation.

The New Church does not hold the doctrine of “original sin” in the sense in which this is accepted in many churches, but neither does it teach that we are “born good” and acquire all our evils through our environment. Our natural inheritance is selfish, and this selfishness remains with us to eternity. Regeneration does not destroy it (cf. AC 868). But if we look to the Lord, obey Him, and become regenerate men and women, the Lord holds our natural self in subjection and permits us to enjoy the peace and happiness which are the result of unselfish love—the Lord’s love acting in and through us. The Lord’s promise in the last verse of our chapter describes the order of this change called regeneration, which under the Divine Providence is and always will be possible for anyone who seeks it.



### From the Writings of Swedenborg

*Arcana Coelestia*, n. 927: “It has been shown that the man of the Most Ancient Church was so constituted that the will and the understanding with him formed one mind, or that with him love was implanted in his will part, and thus at the same time faith, which filled the other or intellectual part of his mind. From this their posterity inherited the condition that the will and the understanding made a one; and therefore when the love of self and the consequent insane cupidities began to take possession of their will part (where previously there had been love to the Lord and charity toward the neighbor), not only did their will part or will become utterly perverted, but so also together with it did their intellectual part or understanding, and this was still more the case when the last posterity immersed their falsities in their cupidities, and so became ‘Nephilim,’ for thereby they became of such a nature that they could not be restored, because both parts of the mind (that is, the whole mind) had been ruined. But as this had been foreseen by the Lord, He had also provided for man’s upbuilding, in this way, that he might be reformed and regenerated in respect to the second or intellectual part of the mind, in which there might be implanted a new will which is conscience, and through which the Lord might work the good of love (that is, of charity), and the truth of faith. Thus of the Lord’s Divine mercy has man been restored.”

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### Suggested Questions on the Lesson

- P. After men were created, where were they placed? *Eden*
- I. Why were they not satisfied? *wanted independence*
- I. How did the Lord meet their new need? *showed them how to use selfhood constructively*
- P. Why couldn’t men always live in the beautiful Garden of Eden? *disobeyed*
- J. Why did they become worse as they went on? *one bad deed led to another*
- J. What finally happened to most of them? *destroyed by own evil*
- P. Who was saved? *Noah*
- P. How was Noah saved? *ark*
- P. How long did the rain last? *forty days*
- P. Where was the window which Noah opened when the rain stopped? *top*
- P. What two birds did he send out to see if the waters had gone down? *raven, dove*
- P. What did the raven do? *nothing*
- P. How many times did Noah send out the dove? *three*
- P. What happened the first time? *came back*
- P. What did the dove bring back the second time? *olive leaf*

THE END OF THE FLOOD

- J. What happened the third time? *did not return*
- J. What was the first thing Noah did when he came out of the ark?  
*built altar*
- J. What did the Lord promise? *no more floods*
- I. What is meant by the flood? *false ideas*
- I. What are meant by the raven and the dove? *false and true thoughts*
- S. To what does the olive leaf correspond? *knowledge of how to serve Lord*
- S. What change did the Lord make in man's constitution at the beginning of the Ancient Church? *Separated will and understanding; people were no longer led by perception, but now were led by conscience*
- J. What does mythology call the civilization described by Noah? *Silver Age*
- J. What does Swedenborg call it? *Ancient Church*