

# NOAH'S ALTAR

by the Rev. J. Clark Echols

The Lord provided that Noah and his family, and all the animals in the ark, would survive the flood. Then they would multiply and spread all over the earth. Spiritually, the good people who survived this flood of evil that swept over the earth and destroyed the Most Ancient Church were saved by the Lord. This was so that the human race would continue, as it does today.

The first thing that Noah did was very important. He had just gotten out of the ark. He must have been very happy. He must have been deeply thankful that the Lord protected him throughout the flood. So the first thing Noah did was to build an altar and burn offerings on it to the Lord. This was the way he knew to worship the Lord and praise Him.

However, this was not the way people first began to worship. In the Golden Age, during the time of the Most Ancient Church, when all people were good, they worshipped on the tops of mountains and in groves of trees. These celestial people could see into the spiritual world. They could talk with the angels. They knew that a mountain was a symbol for the great height from which the Lord ruled all the universe. So when they saw a mountain, they did not think of the mountain's great height. They thought of the Lord's great power and love with which He ruled the world. And when these people of the Most Ancient Church saw a grove of trees, they did not think of the trees so much as how they represented the church, which was made by the Lord, and in which there was fruit to eat. In fact, everything these people saw was for them a symbol of the Lord and all He did for them to make their lives happy. They did not have to build an altar to the Lord when they worshipped. All they had to do was look around and see something the Lord gave them, and praise Him for it. Everything they saw reminded them of the Lord.

But when people began to be evil, they lost sight of all this. They lost their ability to see the Lord in everything around them. Now, Noah was a good man. He wanted to do everything the Lord asked him. But not even Noah could see into the spiritual world. He could not talk with the angels. And so he did not see how everything in nature was a symbol, a representation, of the Lord, the church and heaven. But the Lord made it so that Noah could still worship the Lord. The Lord told Noah all that he needed to know to worship Him. And so, Noah built an altar out of stone, and burnt sacrifices on it. And when the people saw the smoke of the sacrifice rise up, it reminded them that the Lord was the Most High, their Lord and God. They would picture the Lord smelling the sweetness of the sacrifice and being pleased by the smell.

When Noah worshipped the Lord in the best way he knew how, the Lord knew that people could be good. They could still love the Lord and worship Him. They could turn to the Lord and love Him instead of themselves. They could give thanks for their blessings. And so the Lord promised to Noah, and still promises to us, that "seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and winter and summer, and day and night, shall not cease."

**Texts: Genesis 8:12-22; Arcana Coelestia 920**