

NOAH BUILDS AN ARK A NAME WITH THE MEANING OF “REST”

Rev. Donald Rose

Lessons: *Genesis 6*

There is a word in Hebrew that means “rest.” There is good reason why this word was given as a name in a story about a man who built an ark. The name was given as a sign of comfort when work and toil are hard (*Genesis 5:29*). The meaning of “Noah” is “rest, and the comfort that comes from rest” (*Arcana Coelestia 531*).

When we read about Noah, we should have a picture of the Lord Himself inviting us to the comfort of His rest. “Come unto Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest...and you will find rest for your souls” (*Matthew 11:28,29*). We may think of a voice from heaven saying, “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord...that they may rest from their labors” (*Revelation 14:13*).

It is helpful to know that in several stories of the Word, when we read about rest, the Hebrew word is the word “Noah.” For example, “My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest” (*Exodus 33:14*). “He gives you rest from all your enemies round about, so that you dwell in safety” (*Deuteronomy 12:10*). “The Lord your God is giving you rest” (*Joshua 1:13*). “This is the rest with which you may cause the weary to rest” (*Isaiah 28:12*).

The kind of rest the Lord gives is a rest of inward peace, a feeling of safety. Can one possibly have a secure and calm feeling in difficult and threatening times? The Lord mentioned “floods,” when at the end of His Sermon on the Mount He spoke of a wise man safe in his house when “the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house...” (*Matthew 7:25*).

The story of a man named Noah building an ark is the story of how the Lord cares for us in the most difficult times. What a dangerous time it was when Moses was born. Babies then were in danger from the command of Pharaoh, but a little ark was prepared for the baby Moses to rest safely upon the water. And what a dangerous time is pictured when in the story of Noah “the wickedness of man was great in the earth” (*Genesis 6:5*). How dangerous it was when “the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. And the rain was on the earth forty days and forty nights” (*Genesis 7:11,12*).

Just as in the story we think of Noah, his family, and the animals, safe while the storm and flood are upon the earth, we can also think of what the Lord

does for people at this day. Sometimes the beautiful feelings and thoughts the Lord gives to someone as a little child seem to be in danger in later life. That person may go through rough times when it would seem that those tender things (remains) could not survive. And yet, as if in an ark upon a flood, the Lord preserves them.

All of us will know times when we are “tossed about by the waters of a flood, or falsities (*Arcana Coelestia* 891). When a person gets very angry, when there is a complete loss of temper, it is almost as if a storm and flood have taken over. Sometimes in anger people say or shout things they would never say in a calm state of mind. At those times the angels are merciful—for at those times we need mercy—and the Lord protects the good that is within. He so protects that even after such a storm, He can lead us beside the still waters, and we can thankfully find that our good feelings and thoughts have not perished in the flood. The time of anger was not really a time of freedom. It was a kind of “imprisonment,” but the Lord provides time to step forth from the ark free once more. (See *Arcana Coelestia* 891.)