

## THE MOST ANCIENT CHURCH

Rev. Daniel Heinrichs

*Lesson: Genesis 3*

A long time ago, there was a church on earth called the Most Ancient Church. This is a church that the Lord established with the early people of this earth. And in the beginning, this Most Ancient Church was good. The people in it loved the Lord with all their heart. They loved their neighbor as themselves. The delight of their life was following the Lord, being led by the Lord. They looked to Him for guidance in their lives. And because their minds were directed upward to the Lord and outward to the neighbor, they were able to speak with angels. In fact, they didn't have a written Word like we do. The angels spoke to them and told them how they ought to live in order that they, too, might become angels of heaven.

We have to go to school when we are young to learn what is right and wrong. We learn about the world that we live in, the facts of nature, of science and so on. In the Most Ancient Church they didn't have to do this. They knew everything that they needed to know to live in order.

Now this is the way the people of this church were at the beginning. Little by little they began to change. Little by little they began to take credit for the good things that they did and for the good things that they loved from the Lord. They began to think, "I'm very wise and very intelligent." You know, when people begin to take pride in their own intelligence, something happens inside of them. They begin to think of themselves as being much greater than they are. And this is what is meant when the Word says there were giants on the earth in those days.

When we are filled with the love of self, when we feel that we are more intelligent than other people, in our mind we become giants. We look down on other people. We look down on them as if they are like pygmies compared to us. We say they are not nearly as wise or smart as we are. This is what happened in time. Little by little the people of the Most Ancient Church began to think, "I am great, I love to follow the Lord. I like to be of service to my neighbor." And they began to elevate themselves and put other people down. They looked upon themselves as giants. But what they had was a gigantic conceit and a gigantic love of self.

Now when this happens, we look down on other people. We despise them. We have contempt for them. We regard them as nothing compared to ourselves. When we have this gigantic love of self, when other people don't please us, we

begin to hate them. So the Word says that the earth was filled with violence in those days. The thoughts of human hearts were wicked. Everyone began to despise one another, to hate one another. They longed to destroy everyone that didn't agree with them.

The flood that we read about in the Word was really a flood of evil. People were flooded with rage and jealousy toward others. And this church, the Most Ancient Church, that started off such a wonderful church, the people so good, was eventually destroyed—by gigantic conceit and selfishness. Minds were closed to the Lord and they no longer received His love and wisdom.

But there were among the people a few who remained innocent. They still loved to be led by the Lord and to live according to the Lord's Divine order. These people are represented in the story of Noah, his wife, his sons and their wives. They had grace in sight of the Lord. In other words, they were willing to follow Him. So from these people the Lord formed a new church.

This was called the Ancient Church. It was a good church. These people, though, needed a written Word. They had to be taught by the Lord more or less like we do. They had to read, study, learn things, and then teach them to their children.

The lesson we learn from this story is that everything we have, we have from the Lord. And it is important that we remember this. As long as these people looked to the Lord, and sought to be led by Him, everything went well with them. They were the happiest people that ever lived on this earth, because they were in the order of their lives. Everything thrived with them. When we read about the Garden of Eden, and all the beauty of it, that's showing the beautiful life of this people. They looked to the Lord and were led by Him.

But they began to take credit for the things that they had from the Lord. They began to think, "*I'm good; I'm intelligent,*" instead of realizing, "I have good things with me from the Lord. When they stopped thinking that way and began to think, "These things are mine," that's when they destroyed themselves. And the same thing will be true of everyone of us if we ascribe to ourselves the things that we have from the Lord; the talents we have, the gifts that we have, the intelligence that we have—if we ascribe those things to ourselves, we turn our backs on the Lord. We close our minds to His love and wisdom. We become cruel and hateful.

On the other hand, we can remember everything good is from the Lord—everything true is from the Lord—every ability that we have, every talent that we have, is from the Lord. They are gifts, given in trust—given to us to use—in the service of our loved ones. If we remember that, then we can enjoy all the blessings that the Lord gives us. We can rejoice in them. We can use them

and develop them. We will also remain in the order of life, open to the Lord.  
And He will fill that life with happiness and joy.