

Bible Study Notes — Lesson 1

The Creation — a General View

Bible References: Genesis 1, 2:1-3

This is a lesson excerpted from The Dole Bible Study Notes. There are more than 150 of these lessons, covering many of the great stories in the Bible. They were designed for use in Sunday Schools, but they're good for all ages — for self-study, for parents to use in home devotions, and for pastors and teachers. Here's a link to more information about them.

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Introduction

The introduction for this first lesson in all classes should be a few words about the Bible as the book we study in Sunday School. It is different from all other books in the world. The Lord is its Author, and in it He tells us about Himself and the things we need to know so that we may learn to be heavenly people and live in heaven when we die. So we call it the Word of God. It is made up of many books written through many men. The first book is called Genesis, which means "the beginning."

Doctrinal Points

[Summary doctrinal points will be found at the beginning of each lesson. They are especially recommended for the use of teachers of Intermediate and Senior classes. Their listing in this way merely brings them together for the teacher's convenience; they are not meant to be taken up as the main feature of the lesson, but to be brought in by the way. Each point will be identifiable as related to one of the four principal doctrines of the Church: the doctrines of the Lord, the Word, Faith, or Charity.]

- The Lord is the beginning of everything. He created heaven and earth.
- The Word is the Lord's revelation to us of all that we need to know about our Creator and our relation to Him.
- Faith in the Lord means trust in Him and obedience to His commandments even against our own will and judgment.
- We cannot do any real good of ourselves. All good is in and from the Lord.

Basic Correspondences

- light = truth
- water = truth
- dry land, earth, or ground = our conscious experience, which forms our "mind"
- the vegetable kingdom = our thinking
- the animal kingdom = our affections
- darkness = ignorance
- the sun = love to the Lord, from whom all truth comes
- the moon = faith in the Lord
- the stars = knowledges of heavenly things
- waters above the firmament = spiritual truth
- waters under the firmament = natural truth
- seas = truth gathered in the memory
- fish = affections for natural knowledge
- birds = affections for spiritual knowledge
- animals = affections for useful thought and action

Notes for Parents

We send our children to school to learn the things they need to know to find and fill their places in this world. We bring them to Sunday School to learn the deeper things they need to know in order to be useful and happy not only in this world but in that higher world where we shall all live to eternity.

These deeper things can be learned only by studying the Book in which the Lord has revealed them to us — the Bible, the Word of God. So in our Sunday School course each year we cover the Bible story, learning more and more about it from year to year. We hope very much that you will be interested in what your children are learning in Sunday School and will help to lay the basis in their minds for the lesson each week by reading with them the chapters in the Bible suggested in these notes and by teaching them the memory verses. The Lord not only speaks to us in His Word; He is present with us in every verse from the Word which is planted in our memory. So in helping your children to know the Bible you are doing for them something more valuable than anything else you can possibly do.

The Bible begins with the story of creation. Its very first verse tells us the first and most important thing every person should know: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." If we do not believe that we owe our existence to God, we can have no true understanding of the purpose and goal of life.

Many people today question the authority of the Bible because science has proved that the material world was many thousands of years in the making. Yet when an old person says to us, "In my day people didn't do that," we know that the speaker does not mean a day of twenty-four hours. The six days of creation are merely six stages of development. And, while it is true that in general the physical world came into being somewhat as the first chapter of Genesis says, it is not really this physical world about which the Lord is speaking. We can find out about the physical world for ourselves, but of the inner world of our souls only the Lord can tell us.

The first chapter of Genesis really tells us about the creation of a true human soul from its unconscious beginning in infancy, when it has only the potential elements of spiritual and natural development — the heaven and the earth — through the first dawning of the light of understanding by means of which one learns both natural and spiritual truths, to the belief in God and love of Him which enable us to come into His image and likeness and to attain the peace and happiness pictured by the sabbath day.

Primary

Teacher Notes: The teacher, after going through the whole story briefly, should try to see that most of the children are able to answer at least the questions, who made the world? What book tells us about the Lord? and who wrote the Bible? and to tell how many days it took the Lord to make the world and what He did on the seventh day. Do not be afraid of repetition; little children like it, and that is the way they learn.

In this lesson on Creation a special point can be made very simply of the origin of the sabbath and how we should use Sunday.

Do you know what book we study in Sunday School? It is the Bible. It is called the Lord's Book because the Lord was its Author. It is also called the Word because it was spoken by the Lord. And finally it is called the Book of Life because it tells us how to live so that we may be the Lord's children and live in heaven when we die.

The Bible is made up of many books, the first of which is called Genesis, which means "the beginning." Let us read the very first verse of the Bible and see if we can learn it, because it teaches us something which we must never forget. The Lord made this world in which we live and everything in it. But He made something else, too. He made heaven, the beautiful world to which we shall all go to live sometime if we are good.

What was the world like when it was first created?

What was the Lord's first command?

In how many days was everything created? These were not twenty-four hour days but long periods of time.

What did the Lord make last?

Our chapter for today tells us the order in which the Lord made man. Let us read it from the Bible. [Read Genesis 1.] You see the world had to be prepared for men before men could be created, but everything in the world was made for the use of man. The Lord is called our "Heavenly Father" because He made us all and loves us as His children. He tells us to take good care of everything and to use everything wisely as He made it to be used.

See if you can remember what the Lord did on the seventh day [Read Genesis 2:1-3], and try every Sunday when you wake up to think, "This is the Lord's day; I must keep it holy; I must think about the Lord, and try to make everyone about me happy." Blessed means made happy, and sanctified means made holy.

Junior

Teacher Notes: These children should be able to find the lesson in the Bible and to remember most of it. It is at this age that children especially like to learn facts, and it is therefore the age at which the literal sense of the Word should be most thoroughly taught. Be sure that they understand the meaning of any unusual words in the text. Juniors like to learn new words and to stretch their minds. They may also be introduced to the idea that all the stories in the Word are parables, even though most of them are also fact. So the Junior notes will include from time to time some of the simpler and more obvious correspondences. In the case of the Creation story the correspondence of light and darkness is a very easy one to explain because it is so familiar through our everyday speech.

What book do we study in Sunday School?

What is the first book in the Bible?

What does Genesis mean?

What does the first verse of the Bible tell us?

Who is the Author of the Bible?

The first chapter in the Bible tells us about the creation of the world. God made both the heavens and the earth in the very beginning, but it took a long time to prepare the earth for man. This preparation was accomplished in six stages, called "days."

Notice that the very first step in the development of the world was light. "And God said, Let there be light; and there was light." Now think whether there is any other kind of light besides physical light. Do we ever say, "I see," when we don't mean seeing with our eyes? When we don't understand a thing, it is like darkness, isn't it? And light comes when we begin to understand. Then we can go ahead. So if our minds are to develop we need the light of truth, or knowledge.

After light came, the world moved steadily forward.

First the heavens and the earth could be clearly distinguished from each other.

Then on the earth the dry land appeared, and grass and grain and fruit trees began to grow.

Then the clouds broke away so that the sun appeared in the daytime and the moon and stars at night.

Then the fish were created in the sea and the birds in the air. Finally, on the sixth day the animals were created and lastly men and women.

Read Genesis 1:27 and see what it tells us about God, and about man. This shows us that man is quite different from the animals.

God gave the whole world to man to use and enjoy and take care of. If we misuse and spoil the good things the Lord gives us, we hurt ourselves more than anyone else. If we take good care of our

possessions and use them as they are meant to be used, we can be trusted with more and more and can have more and more happiness.

Read Genesis 2:3. Blessed means made happy, and sanctified or hallowed means made sacred. This tells us what kind of day Sunday should be. It should be a restful and happy day not only for us but for all those about us; so we must try to be especially obedient and helpful at home on that day. And it should be made sacred by taking time and opportunity to learn about the Lord and to worship Him.

The first chapter of Genesis seems to be just a story of how the world and all things in it were created, but it is really a parable. Inside of this story of the beginning of things on the earth is the story of how each one of us is born in the darkness of complete ignorance and develops little by little as his understanding grows until he is able to bring forth the fruits of good deeds and become a true man or woman in the image and likeness of his Heavenly Father, and worships Him in a happy, peaceful heart.

Now, let us see if we can write down the order in which the chapter tells us everything was created, so that we shall remember it, for as you grow older, you will learn a great deal more about what each thing in the story means.

On the first day God created light.

On the second day God created the firmament.

On the third day God created the grass, herbs, and trees.

On the fourth day God created the sun, moon, and stars.

On the fifth day God created the fish and the birds.

On the sixth day God created the animals, and man.

What did God do on the seventh day? He rested.

Intermediate

Teacher Notes: There should be persistent effort to make clear to the pupils that the Bible has an intimate personal application and that it describes their own spiritual life. This group should begin to realize that in its spiritual as well as in its literal sense the Bible is one continuous story written by the Lord according to definite patterns and plans. In this lesson the New Church teaching concerning the early chapters of Genesis can be given briefly, and the effect should be to make the young people feel sorry for those who know so little of the meaning of these wonderful stories that they doubt and ridicule them. Most of the class time should be given to the correspondence of the six days as it relates to their own development from infancy to maturity.

Let us be sure we know the first verse of the Bible by heart.

Other verses in the lesson which are good to learn are verses 3, 27, and 28. We should also know what progress was made on each of the six days.

While this seems to be the story of the beginning of the earth, we should know that the Bible is not given to teach us natural science. Men can find out things about the earth by their own efforts, and God would not have to give us a revelation to tell us such things. The Bible is given to teach us spiritual truths — truths about God and our souls — which we could not find out for ourselves. The Lord Himself is the Author of the Word, although He used many different men to write it down. He put the words into their minds, and they knew that they must write them down, and that the words did not come from themselves.

The very first verse tells us that in the beginning man was created with a heavenly as well as an earthly nature. He was not a mere animal. But his earthly nature was rudimentary and his heavenly nature was clouded with the darkness of ignorance (verse 2). This is also true of each one of us when he is born.

The beginning of man's development — and of ours — was the moment when God said, "Let there be light." Truth is for the eye of the mind what light is for the physical eye. When we begin to understand something, we say, "I see." Then and only then can we go ahead. See if you can think of any other common sayings in which light and darkness and sight and blindness are used in this way.

The six days of creation picture six stages in man's development into a true human being, in the image and likeness of God, a spiritual being capable of knowing and worshiping God. Read through the chapter, thinking of each step in this light. Because everything in nature was made by the Lord, everything expresses something in Him. So we say that each thing in nature "corresponds" to something in the world of the spirit, and the Bible is written in this language of correspondence. Here are some correspondences to help you in seeing the spiritual meaning within this first chapter of Genesis:

Waters mean truths.

The firmament — or expanse as it is more accurately translated — pictures the plane of our thinking. The waters above the firmament are symbolic of truths about God and heavenly life, those below the firmament are truths about the world and earthly life.

Dry land means our conscious experience, and seas represent truths gathered together in the memory.

The vegetable kingdom stands for our thoughts, the fruit for our deeds. Seeds, spiritually speaking, are new germs of thought which are capable of producing fruit. We may think of the Lord's words: "By their fruits ye shall know them." And we all remember the parable of the sower, which is found in Matthew 13:1-23. The Lord Himself explained this parable to His disciples, and told them that the seed represented the Word.

The sun is the symbol of love for the Lord, the moon faith in Him, and the stars knowledges of heavenly things. The day is a time when we see clearly, and the night one when everything seems dark, and we must just trust in what we have been taught about the Lord and the good life, as a sailor at night is guided by the stars.

Living creatures represent affections or desires — cold-blooded ones, like fish, affections for earthly knowledges, the birds affections for heavenly knowledges, and warm-blooded animals affections for doing useful things.

Think carefully what verse 27 teaches us about God and our relation to Him.

The Lord gave us the world in which we live and also all the thoughts and affections we have, and He tells us to rule over them wisely. Swedenborg tells us: "The end [purpose] of creation is a heaven from the human race." So our purpose in life should be to become the kind of people who can live in heaven.

Read chapter 2, verse 3, and think from it what type of day Sunday should be for us. It is not intended to be a sad or hard day, but we ought to spend it in such a way that we and all those about us may be happy and peaceful together. Happiness does not come from always "getting our own way," for our own way is often very selfish and hard on other people. Happiness comes from learning to love to do the things the Lord would have us do, and we can do this only by learning what He has told us in the Word and by keeping His commandments. Recall the commandment, "Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy." Going to church and Sunday School is an orderly part of the keeping of the sabbath. A good rule to keep in mind about Sunday is one which the Lord gave the people when He was in the world: "It is lawful to do good on the sabbath day."

Senior

Teacher Notes: Follow the same general lines as for the Intermediates but with proportionately more stress upon doctrine and upon the attitude of the world toward the things of religion. Solid grounding in the principles underlying the Lord's operation in the world, given at this age, will do much to prevent the young people from drifting away from the church when the atmosphere of the world begins to press upon them.

Probably the first attack on the authenticity of the Bible as the Word of God centered about the creation story. Since science has proved that the world was millions of years in the process of formation, it is obvious that the literal statement in Genesis is contrary to fact. As a result of this, some men say that the Bible cannot be the Word of God because it is not true.

But the Bible was not written to teach men natural science or anything else which they can find out for themselves. It was written to teach us about God and His purposes, and about our souls and their relation to Him.

In the creation story the Lord tells us — in terms of familiar natural objects which we all understand — the story of how He created the human soul in the first place and of how He creates each one of us today. In the New Church view, a human being is not merely a higher animal, although he has a material body as the animals have. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Man from his creation has not only a natural body fitted for life on this earth and mental faculties to direct its use, but he has also a higher spiritual plane capable of knowing God and of living in the spiritual world.

At first both the spiritual and the natural planes were undeveloped, just as our individual minds are at birth. The baby has no knowledge; he is unable to do anything for himself. But he is not a little animal — he is a potential man. Let us follow the story of creation through briefly, as it applies to the development of the individual soul, for we are immediately concerned with the process by which each of us may become the true human being whom the Lord created him to be.

The first step — or day — is the dawn of consciousness, the ability to see, to distinguish objects and form associations of pleasure or pain. The baby begins to "notice," to recognize his parents and friends, to play, to laugh, to seek what pleases him. The second day is the dawning of the realization that some things must be done whether they give pleasure or not, that there is something in life beside the satisfaction of physical desires. This is the rudimentary differentiation between right and wrong, the basis of heavenly life.

The third day brings the thirst for knowledge of the world about us with all the thoughts and activities that spring up from this knowledge. The fourth day brings the first real concept of God and desire to learn about Him and to love and serve Him — the sun, moon, and stars picture love to the Lord, faith in Him, and knowledges of heavenly things. The fifth day brings abundant knowledge and understanding of both earthly and heavenly truths. And finally on the sixth day the strong, warm desires for useful and happy service — the warm-blooded animals — appear, and man becomes a truly human being, ordering his life wisely on the basis of knowledge of the Lord and His purposes. He is then a mature, independent, and useful individual, and can know rest — peace of mind.

This story is developed in detail in the first volume of Swedenborg's @AC , from which you will find a quotation at the end of this lesson. There it is also applied to the development of the Human nature which the Lord manifested by means of His life on earth. For within the letter of the Word of God there are several levels of meaning. The inmost level relates to the Lord and His nature and life, the next to the individual human soul, and the next to the spiritual history of the human race as a whole. So within every verse there are deeper and deeper ideas and knowledges, each one a subject for study and development. It is this inner world which the Lord has opened to men in His Second Coming.

Adult

Teacher Notes: The teacher should cover the whole lesson briefly and then invite discussion and develop further the points in which the class is most interested.

It is very important for us to understand that the New Church has teaching concerning the early chapters of Genesis which can be found nowhere else. For even if we hear no direct attacks upon the validity of this portion of the Word, we can scarcely escape hearing slighting references to it, and jokes and songs based upon the stories of Creation, Adam and Eve and the serpent, and Noah and the Ark. The prevailing skepticism concerning these early chapters is like an atmosphere which is breathed unconsciously. Children who are beginning to pass from complete reliance upon their parents can be protected against it only by being forewarned of its existence and by understanding its cause. This is the method the Lord followed with the race. It is interesting to note that the first volume of the Arcana, which points out the impossibility of a literal interpretation of these chapters and gives their internal sense, appeared several years before the work of Jean Astruc (1684-1766), the father of modern skepticism. [The work here referred to was published in 1753 and titled, "Conjectures sur les Memoires Originaux dont il Parait que Moise s'est Servi pour Composer le livre de la Genèse" (Conjectures on the manuscripts of which it appears that Moses made use in order to compose the book of Genesis). Biblical textual scholars generally regard this work as the beginning of modern textual investigation of the sources of the Pentateuch. -Editor]

Thus before doubt was permitted to attack the Word openly, the truth which could meet and overcome the doubt was published.

The New Church teaches that the early chapters of Genesis were copied by Moses from the Ancient Word, which existed before our Word and which was written entirely in correspondences; that is, the things of nature were used as symbols to express spiritual truths, just as the Lord taught His disciples through the various parables so familiar to us all. The people of the Most Ancient Church, having open communication with the heavens, understood the true relation between the two worlds and saw everything in nature as a mere ultimation of something spiritual. So the earliest language, both spoken and written, was a beautiful symbol language, the expression of spiritual thought in natural forms. This language was preserved, in the Ancient Word, and still is preserved in the first eleven chapters of our Bible. As men turned from the Lord, however, and became absorbed in themselves and in their life in the world, they lost communication with the spiritual world and with it the understanding of the spiritual realities behind things in nature. In time they lost even the knowledge that the early stories of Genesis had a spiritual meaning.

Yet for a time men continued to recognize that these stories came from God and to believe them to be true. So they could be helped by them, for even in their letter they teach the great truths that the Lord is Creator of all things, that man is happy so long as he obeys the Lord, and that all evil and unhappiness come from disobedience. But finally men began to doubt the truth of the stories and with it their Divine origin. Then in order to save mankind the Lord restored the knowledge of their inner meaning. This is what was done through Swedenborg. To the New Churchman the early chapters of Genesis, instead of being strange and puzzling, and stumbling blocks in the way of belief in the Bible, become wonderful volumes of instruction in the spiritual history of the race and of our own souls. Our children should be armed with the knowledge that those who doubt these chapters are simply ignorant of their true meaning, because they either have not found or have

refused to use the key which the Lord has given us.

Swedenborg tells us that the object of creation was "a heaven from the human race." The first verse of the Word tells us: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Heaven symbolizes the spiritual nature in man, the earth his lower nature. The whole story of creation is the account of the development of man's consciousness of his higher nature, of his understanding of the proper relation and use of the higher and lower, and finally of his enjoyment of the full measure of his heavenly possibilities; that is, of the development of the truly human soul. This is a long process, and the history of the individual parallels the history of the race because the race is composed of individuals, and because each individual is a new creation.

The great heritage of the New Church is the key to the inner meaning of the Word: the knowledge of correspondences. Yet many New Church people never acquire the ability to use this key for themselves. They know perhaps that water corresponds to truth, fire to love, a lamb to innocence, bread and wine to good and truth, and other correspondences here and there, but their information is too scattered to be of any use to them as they read the Word. The story of creation provides a practical working outline for the study of correspondences because it contains the great generals. Heaven in the first verse of Genesis signifies the internal part of man, and earth the external part of man (@AC 16). The external part of man does not mean just the body, but all the natural thoughts and feelings which are connected with our everyday life in the world. The internal man is the higher, internal region of the soul, of which we are unconscious much of the time, where are our thoughts and feelings about the Lord and spiritual things. These two are present in every man from the beginning, but the earth — the external man — is without form and void; that is, we have no understanding of the purpose or plan of our earthly life. And darkness is "upon the face of the deep"; that is, we are altogether ignorant even of the existence of an inner and higher nature. This condition exists not only when we are infants, but when we are grown men and women if we have not begun to regenerate; for when a man or woman does not believe that there is any higher life than the natural, not only is his internal man in darkness but everything he knows about this world is empty of any real good and truth because it is not seen in its proper relation to spiritual life. Yet always the "spirit of God" moves upon the face of the waters; the Lord's mercy is always seeking to reach us through the things which He has stored up — without our knowing it — in our internal man.

The first beginning of regeneration — the formation of a heavenly character — is the coming of light. Throughout the Word darkness pictures a state of ignorance and light a state of knowledge. The Lord was born while shepherds watched their flocks by night; when He was crucified there was darkness over the world. And in the creation story each day — that is, each stage of development — proceeds from evening to morning, from darkness to light, from ignorance to knowledge. "And God said, Let there be light; and there was light." Of this Swedenborg says: "The first state is when man begins to know that the good and the true are something higher" (@AC 20). The very first thing necessary to regeneration is to recognize that there is something higher than our mere external life, something more important than what we can get for ourselves out of this world. Thus God, working in our minds, divides the light from the darkness.

Then follows the second day, in which we begin to organize the knowledges which are in our minds, dividing between those which concern merely worldly things and those which concern heavenly and Divine things. This is the beginning of our real awareness of our internal potential — the firmament — and the dividing of the waters above the firmament from those below the firmament. In the story water first appears as a symbol for truth. To the man who does not believe

in God and a spiritual world the Bible is like any other book, and ideas about goodness and truth have no meaning other than that which arises out of their effects in this world. But as soon as one recognizes the existence of God and of a higher life, goodness and truth are seen as spiritual realities.

The third day, or stage, brings more definite and permanent accomplishment. The waters under the firmament are gathered together into seas. Seas stand for knowledges gathered together in the memory. Think, for example, of the place the Sea of Galilee holds in the Gospel story. Then the dry land appears; that is, man forms a definite idea of what his external nature is and of what its use should be. And from this time he begins to make his external perform its proper use. It receives seeds of truth from the Lord and produces external good works. Here we have our introduction to the wonderful symbolism of the vegetable kingdom, the basis for the understanding of the meaning of all the plants and trees in the Bible story. We are familiar with the parable of the Sower and with the Lord's explanation of it: the Sower is the Lord, the seed truths from the Word, the ground the minds of men, and the fruit the good and useful things done by a man when the seed of truth has taken root in his heart and grown up in his life. The many different plants and trees represent different truths. Every plant and tree is a principle grown from a particular truth, and its fruit is the conduct which results from the application of that principle. And as every fruit has seeds of its own kind within itself, so right conduct in one individual suggests to other people the truth of the principle behind it, which they may adopt and develop into right conduct of their own. Notice that there is a progression in the appearance of vegetable life: first the grass — or more properly the "tender herb" — then the herb yielding seed and finally the tree yielding fruit. That is, we first develop minor truths whose results are perishable, and later more and more important and fruitful truths.

Now we are ready for another great step forward. The good we have done so far has been the result of the mere recognition of the existence of God and spiritual things. But when we have had some experience in trying to live according to spiritual principles, we begin to feel the need of more definite knowledge of God and of His purposes. On the fourth day the sun, moon, and stars appear. The sun is the symbol of love to the Lord, the moon of faith in Him, and the stars of knowledges of heavenly things. There are a great many people who believe that there is a God but think we cannot know anything about Him. These people try to do right, but they have only their own judgment to guide them or the judgment of other men and women. They have light but they do not know where it comes from. They do right from a sense of duty, or from fear of the consequences of evil, or from a desire to be respected and to respect themselves. These are all motives in which there is much of self. Such people are often troubled by the command to "love the Lord." They say, "What does it mean to love the Lord? How can we love someone we do not know?" But it is not true that we cannot know the Lord. He has revealed Himself to us in His Word and in the person of Jesus Christ, the "Word made flesh." If we love the divine characteristics so manifested, we love the Lord. If, instead of clinging to our natural tastes and desires, we seek to make our characters conform to the divine standard, then we are acting from love to the Lord and not from love of self. Then the sun appears in our heavens. But we all know that even after we have seen this sun, there are times when our natural desires rise up and darken our sky. Then we must continue to obey the commandments because we know that they are the Lord's way. This is faith, which like the moon shines by reflected light and shows us the way through our temporary darkness until the sun rises again — until the temptation is past. And we are helped at such times also by all that we have learned from the Word about the Lord and His ways — the stars guide us. This change from self-guidance to the Lord's guidance is a distinct step in our progress and is necessary to our doing any

real good; for, as Swedenborg tells us many times and as the Lord Himself tells us in Matthew 19:17, there is no genuine good except from the Lord's unselfish love in the heart. This is why the creation of the sun, moon, and stars comes in between the creation of the vegetable kingdom and that of the animal kingdom, for animals are warm-blooded, living things and represent genuine good affections.

At the beginning of his explanation of verse 20 Swedenborg says: "After the great luminaries have been kindled and placed in the internal man, and the external receives light from them, then the man first begins to live. Heretofore he can scarcely be said to have lived, inasmuch as the good which he did he supposed that he did of himself, and the truth which he spoke that he spoke of himself; and since man of himself is dead, and there is in him nothing but what is evil and false, therefore whatsoever he produces from himself is not alive" (@AC 39). But as soon as one recognizes that all goodness comes from the Lord and not from himself, everything in him begins to live. The knowledges of external things which he has stored in his memory — the seas — come to life, as it were, because they become related to the Lord and His service; these are the "moving creatures that hath life" which the waters brought forth. And the higher things of his reason are the birds which fly in the air. The great whales are the general principles of external knowledge. That is, fishes and birds picture things of the mind made alive by being related to the Lord as the source of all wisdom.

On the sixth day the earth brings forth living creatures. These are no longer things of the mind alone, but things of the will — good affections. Before we reach this stage we may know what is right and not do it, or we may even do it against our real desire. But when we love to do it, then the earth has brought forth the good animals. Fish and birds always picture things of the mind, lower and higher, and animals always picture things of the heart or will. When these good affections are brought forth, when a man has come to love to do the Lord's will, then he has become truly a man created in the image and likeness of God both as to his intellect and as to his will: "Male and female created he them." Here is another fundamental correspondence which we should know: in general throughout the Word men picture the intellect and women the affections. The regenerate man has dominion or control over all his thoughts and affections; for when anyone loves to do the Lord's will, the Lord's power can act in and through him. The Lord has given each of us a kingdom within himself, which he must learn to govern wisely. We must try to see that everything in us serves the Lord and so is really alive, and then we must keep all the fish and birds and animals of our minds and hearts in order so that the Lord's power can make us true men and women.

The seventh day — the day of rest — pictures the happy state of one who is fully established in heavenly character. We have a taste of this state whenever we have fully conquered a particular temptation so that we no longer want to do the wrong thing against which we have been struggling, when the Lord's love is in our hearts instead of the selfish desire which has troubled us. As long as we are in this world new temptations will soon come upon us. But when we reach our heavenly home, the time of struggle and trial will be past and we shall always enjoy the happy state of willing service. For rest is not inactivity: it is "rest in the Lord" living consciously from Him so that nothing which is given us to do can worry or tire us. For this reason the seventh day was blessed and sanctified, and the number seven throughout the Word represents what is holy.

From the Writings of Swedenborg

@AC 16, 20: "The most ancient time is called 'the beginning.' By the prophets it is in various places called the 'days of old [antiquitatis]' and also the 'days of eternity.' The 'beginning' also involves the first period when man is being regenerated, for he is then born anew, and receives life. Regeneration itself is therefore called a 'new creation' of man. The expressions to 'create,' to 'form,' to 'make,' in almost all parts of the prophetic writings signify to regenerate, yet with a difference in the signification. . . . That 'heaven' signifies the internal man; and 'earth' the external man before regeneration, may be seen from what follows."

"And God said, Let there be light; and there was light. The first state is when man begins to know that the good and the true are something higher. Men who are altogether external do not even know what good and truth are; for they fancy all things to be good that belong to the love of self and the love of the world; and all things to be true that favor these loves; not being aware that such goods are evils, and such truths falsities. But when man is conceived anew, he then begins for the first time to know that his goods are not goods, and also, as he comes more into the light, that the Lord is, and that He is good and truth itself."

Suggested Questions on the Lesson

Primary: What book do we study in Sunday School? the Bible

Primary: Who is the Author of the Bible? God

Primary: By what other names do we call the Bible? the Lord's Book, the Word, the Book of Life

Primary: What is the name of the first book of the Bible? Genesis

Primary: Can you repeat the first verse of the Bible? In the beginning ...

Primary: What is the first chapter about? the Creation

Primary: In how many days was the earth and everything on it created? six

Intermediate: Were these days of twenty-four hours each? no

Intermediate: What happened on the first day? light

Intermediate: What happened on the second day? firmament

Intermediate: What happened to the waters on the third day? sea, dry land

Intermediate: What new things were created on that day? grass, herbs, trees

Intermediate: What appeared on the fourth day? sun, moon, stars

Intermediate: What were created on the fifth day? fish, birds

Intermediate: On what day were the animals created? sixth

Intermediate: What was the final creation? man

Intermediate: In whose image and likeness was man created? God's

Intermediate: What two kinds of people were created? male, female

Intermediate: What did the Lord tell them to do? be fruitful

Primary: What did the Lord do on the seventh day? rested

Intermediate: What is the Lord really telling us about in this first chapter? the beginning of our spiritual growth

Senior: What is meant by the heaven and the earth? spiritual and natural

Senior: What do the sun, moon, and stars correspond to? love to Lord, faith in Him, knowledges of heavenly things

The brief answers to questions supplied in all the lessons are intended only as a general guide to teachers. Fuller and more detailed answers formulated and worked out with the class are generally recommended.