

# Bible Study Notes - Adult series

additional content belongs here

## 1:INTRODUCTION

### INTRO

For anyone who loves the church there is no more rewarding experience than teaching a Sunday School class. Like every other worthwhile undertaking it has its problems, its difficulties, and its disappointments; it demands time, effort, and self-sacrifice. But the teacher feels that he is performing a task second only to that of the minister. He is constantly inspired and stimulated by the responsibility of guiding young, open minds into an understanding of spiritual things. His own grasp of the Word and the teachings of the church grows and deepens from Sunday to Sunday. And his understanding of individuals other than himself, as it develops through this experience, enables him to be more and more helpful to friends and acquaintances as well as to his pupils. All these things take time; so let no one feel discouraged if he fails to find immediate enjoyment and success in the work. Be patient, and count the failures as stepping stones.

#### The Teacher's Equipment

Every Sunday School teacher should have a teacher's Bible.

Cross-references and varying translations in the center column, a concordance at the back, tables and historical summaries, Bible dictionary, and maps are invaluable. There are many collateral works which have been produced for the special purpose of aiding teachers and students. Your minister can make these available to you and advise you as to their use. Information concerning special visual aids may be obtained from the Sunday School Association's committee on visual aids.

#### Preparing the Lesson

The teacher should realize that more preparation is necessary than merely reading through the lesson notes for his class. There is no substitute for personal study and thought. The first essential is to study the Bible story. In this, too, it is not enough for the teacher to read the lesson assignment for the day, for this is always somewhat curtailed and leaves many details and connections to be filled in by more extended reading. If chapters have been omitted, the teacher should be familiar with at least their general content and should know as much as possible of the history and relationships of the characters involved in the lesson and the location of the places mentioned. His own interest in the lesson will be deepened by looking up the cross-references, and often he will find points in which his class also will be interested. The meanings of the Hebrew names (found in a concordance) are significant, whether they are of persons or of places.

Next, the pupils' notes for all ages should be read, as this course is planned in such a way that both the understanding of the lesson and the knowledge of its background build up progressively from Beginner to Adult notes. [In this publication of these lesson materials, the notes for the Beginner and Primary children have been combined.]

If possible, the teacher's personal study should be supplemented by a teachers' meeting under the supervision of the minister, who can supply a great deal of helpful information and also make suggestions as to the presentation of the lesson and give advice concerning specific class problems as they appear. Also, the exchange of ideas among the teachers at a weekly meeting has great educative value.

Finally, the teacher should think about the lesson in its relation to his own particular class and, with the help of the teachers' notes, decide just how he is going to present it. In this try to think always of what will be most valuable and helpful to your pupils rather than of what has proved most interesting and stimulating to yourself. Remember that their background and their states are quite different from yours. Pray for help in presenting the lesson. Our failures come most often either from lack of proper preparation, or from obtruding our own ideas between the Word and the children and trying to impress them with ourselves rather than with the lesson. Remember that the power for good is not in yourself but in the Word.

### Subject Matter

The primary task of the church is "to keep the Divine among men." And we know that our access to the Divine is through the Word. Therefore the first goal of our Sunday Schools should be to acquaint the pupils with the letter of the Word. There is no other agency except the Sunday School which can be counted on to perform this task. The schools do not do it, and even in the New Church few homes attempt it in any systematic way. The child is taught morals and certain common ethical values by many of his contacts outside of the church, but only in Sunday School can we be sure he will be taught to build his character on the Word of God. The child whose experience does not include systematic instruction in the letter of the Word is cheated of his birthright. So the Word is our primary subject matter. Our supplementary material is found in the writings of the Second Coming which enable us to understand the Word. All our other objectives may be carried out in connection with this study. The stories of the Word are not mere fairy tales or fables or ancient history: they are messages from the Lord to us — our life textbook. As teachers we must feel their power and see their applications, and always try to inspire in the children the love of hearing and studying the Word.

### Suggested Goals for the Sunday School

1. Knowledge of the letter of the Word.
2. Introductory knowledge of the spiritual sense of the Word.
3. A working knowledge of New Church doctrines.
4. A desire for worship and an understanding of its forms.
5. Instruction in the Christian way of life in emotion, thought, and conduct.

This outline does not imply that there should be separate lessons in doctrine, in worship, and in Christian living, but that these objectives should all be in the teacher's mind as he prepares and teaches the lesson, so that the particular Bible story being taught will come to the children with present meaning and urgency, and so that no opportunity will be wasted of furthering the spiritual development of the children.

To achieve these goals the teacher of each age group should have in mind specific things under each heading which he may hope to impart to the children of his class before they pass on to the

next age group. A further definition of these requires that we consider each age group in turn.

### The Age Groups

Traditionally the children in our Sunday Schools are divided into five age groups: Beginner (ages 3, 4, and 5), Primary (ages 6, 7, and 8), Junior (ages 9, 10, and 11), Intermediate (ages 12, 13, and 14), and Senior (ages 15, 16, and 17). At the age of eighteen the young person should be ready for the Adult class.

Children vary, of course, in their individual mental and emotional development at any given age, and the occasional slow or advanced child in a group presents a special problem, and may need to be placed temporarily with another age group. But in general there are certain characteristics of each age group which are fairly constant.

**Beginner:** Beginners are still in the infant states of trust and love, and are peculiarly sensitive to the atmosphere of the class. We know that some of the deepest and most lasting impressions are made on children at this age — without the child's knowing how or why. Even though the children may not at the time be able to recall — or at least to express — any of the specific facts we give them, we know that these facts together with the states in which they were received are stored up in the children's minds as "remains" on which heavenly attitudes are built. The teacher's own attitude toward the Lord, the Word, and the Church will largely determine the kind of impression which the Sunday School makes on little children. We should never feel that these little ones are in our care merely to be "looked after" and amused. If we do, the church will be to them just another place where they may play. Instead, their first contacts with the church should give them a sense of wonder and reverence. They should be happy, but happy in a special way. We cannot teach this by words, but only by the example of our own feeling.

So the specific goals for this group are simple and general:

1. **The Word.** Although each lesson should be taught as it comes, special pains should be taken to impress upon the children the Creation story, the story of the Garden of Eden, the story of the flood, stories of Bible children, and the Christmas, Palm Sunday, and Easter stories.
2. **Spiritual Sense.** Nothing specific should be given at this age level, but if the teacher has the correspondence in mind in discussing things in nature, what he says will inevitably be put in such a way as to prepare for later instruction. For example, the plants and animals of the Bible will be emphasized.
3. **Doctrine.** Jesus is our heavenly Father. The world was made by Him. The Bible is His book. He wants us to be good. He takes care of us.
4. **Worship.** The church is the Lord's house. Teach the Lord's Prayer and other simple Bible verses. Teach the simpler Sunday School hymns. Develop a reverent feeling about the Sunday School service.
5. **Christian Living.** We should be kind and loving. We should learn what is right and good. We should obey our parents.

**Primary:** Primary children retain much of the same responsiveness to atmosphere, but they are beginning to acquire in school tools of learning, and they need to be allowed to exercise their new tools and abilities and to be kept busy. This does not mean just handwork. Their minds need to be kept busy, too. They like to be able to answer questions, and they like to memorize. They can stand

any amount of repetition of the lesson — in fact that is the way in which it is impressed upon them. Pictures and other visual aids should never be chosen just to give the children something to do, but always as aids to the lesson; for at this age children are quick to recognize discrepancies between a picture and what the teacher is telling them, and if pictures and handwork make a false impression, it is hard to correct it later. This is one reason why Bible stories should never be embroidered by the teacher's imagination. Let the child's own imagination do the embroidering, if it will, but do not encourage it.

The specific goals for this group may be:

1. The Word. The emphasis should be on the literal story, with the attempt to fix important names in the memory. Read as much as possible of the story from the Word itself. Teach the Blessings and other verses.
2. Spiritual Sense. Suggest the correspondence of the sun to the Lord and of its heat and light to His love and wisdom. Bring this out a little at a time by speaking of the effects of the sun in the world and of the Lord in our souls.
3. Doctrine. The Lord is always with us and knows our thoughts. He teaches us through His Word. Talk about heaven and the life that leads to it.
4. Worship. Reverence for the Lord's house. Care of the Word. Why the Word is on the altar. The Sunday School service, with participation in its conduct.
5. Christian Living. (a) Moral principles: honesty, obedience, industry, trustworthiness. (b) Where our good and bad thoughts come from, and their power. (c) What unselfishness is, with practical guidance in unselfish conduct.

Junior: Children of this age are hungry for factual information. They are beginning to be somewhat self-assertive, and if their minds are not fed, and fed rather fast, they become restless and look about for some other occupation. They are interested in maps and in pictures of places and people — real pictures, not "baby work." The teacher should be particularly careful not to "talk down" to them, but to respect their growing mental ability. Their questions are usually intensely practical and the teacher needs to study as much as possible of the geographic and cultural background of the lesson. Frequent reviews help to hold the interest of the class, and this is also an excellent age at which to teach the children how to look up verses in the Bible and how to use Bible helps.

1. The Word. The literal story in detail, with emphasis on geography and attention to background, especially the past history and the relationships of the people in the story. Learn the Commandments and several Psalms.
2. Spiritual Sense. Some simple correspondences, such as high and low, heat and light, animal, vegetable, and mineral, gold, silver, and brass, water, stone, bread and wine, the seed-plant series. Quite often the general inner meaning of the story can be suggested. Watch the notes for such opportunities.
3. Doctrine. The doctrine of use. The meaning of baptism. The origin of evil. The Lord's part and ours in our getting to heaven.
4. Worship. The parts of the church building. The service. Why we come to church.
5. Christian Living. Application of religious principles to the children's everyday problems. How to live together.

Intermediate: This is in some ways the most difficult age to teach with any degree of satisfaction. It is indeed an "in-between" age. The pupils are still really children, and yet they like to think of themselves as "grown-up." They should be taken very seriously from Sunday to Sunday, but the teacher himself should not worry too much about any untoward attitudes they may express, for they experiment and change constantly. They need mental challenge, teaching which makes them think in new terms and new ways, the feeling that the teacher believes them capable of understanding rather deep and difficult ideas. And it is surprising how much they do understand and remember. Anyone who has taught this age group over a period of years has had the experience of being reminded by a former pupil of some teaching of his which he was sure no one in his class had taken in when it was given. At this age pupils may be apparently quite unresponsive and yet may be taking in a great deal for private consideration. Their occasional questions are searching ones. The teacher needs much more knowledge of the doctrinal and philosophical aspects of the church teachings than one might imagine.

1. The Word. In the literal story place the emphasis on individual character and historical sequence. Stress daily reading of the Word and the use of memorizing for our individual needs.
2. Spiritual Sense. The general internal sense of each lesson, with as much detail as time and the ability of the class permit.
3. Doctrine. Preparation for confirmation. Doctrine of the Lord, of the Word, of Life, the Second Coming, the Lord's Supper, the Church.
4. Worship. Function of the church. Duty to the church. History of the New Church. Learn the Faith. Study the church service and principles of chanting.
5. Christian Living. What true leadership is. Responsibility in home and community. Boy-girl relationships (if indicated).

Senior: While these young people are still adolescents, they have passed beyond the stage of wishful thinking about adult life and are really trying to live as independent human beings. They are genuinely grasping at principles by which they may live good lives. The teacher should take for granted that their intentions are uniformly good and their mistakes mistakes of judgment, and should give them all the help possible both spiritual and natural. In school they are exposed to all sorts of civic and social attitudes and theories, and they need as clear and complete an understanding as possible of the basic philosophy of the New Church. "Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together," not as a helpful idea here and there, but a consistent doctrine of life which can guide our thinking in every field. The teacher of the Seniors has a very great opportunity and a very serious responsibility, for if he is able to lead these seeking young people to the treasure which the Lord has given us in His Second Coming, he is doing both them and the church the greatest service possible.

1. The Word. Emphasize throughout the Lord's part in the Bible story.
2. Spiritual Sense. More detailed study of the internal sense of the lessons, with some suggestion of the celestial sense.
3. Doctrine. Doctrine of degrees, the spiritual world, repentance, reformation, and regeneration, doctrine of marriage. Start them reading Swedenborg.
4. Worship. Deeper study of public worship and home devotions. Study of prayer.
5. Christian Living. Application of religious principles to adolescent problems. Some consideration

of the cause of community and world problems.

Adult: One of the first duties of the teacher of the Adult class is to appraise his particular class as to their basic knowledge of the Bible and of the teachings of the church. It is unfortunately true that in most of our Sunday Schools the adults are fully as much in need as the children of instruction in this field. There are usually two or three well-read laymen and women in a Society, and sometimes these tend to monopolize the discussion and to carry it at a level which is beyond the understanding of the rest of the class. Such a situation also discourages the young people from graduating into the Adult class, and if the Sunday School is taking the place it should in the church life, there are always new people, often young couples, becoming interested who have not been brought up in the New Church and especially need instruction of the informal discussion type, based on the Bible. The attitude of the teacher should be that every member of the class is to be taken seriously and that each is able to make worthwhile contributions to the discussion. He should also be able to establish the fact that we are never any of us too old or too wise to need further Bible and doctrinal study, and that the Sunday School is the place especially for Bible study. Even with the Adults the Bible lesson is the first thing to cover each Sunday, and discussion of current topics and of special problems should grow out of the Bible lesson — not be substituted for it. The five goals should be kept in mind, the particular methods of fulfilling them being determined by the states and needs of the members of the class. Perhaps one more goal should be added for the Adults: that of developing the ability to communicate to others the New Church understanding of the Word and the New Church answers to individual and social problems. Every New Churchman should be a missionary, not merely for the sake of building up the church organization (although that in itself is a worthy endeavor), but because we have so much help to give, and the responsibility of giving it wherever and whenever it is needed is laid upon each one of us. We cannot fulfill this responsibility without constant study and intelligent thought about the problem of communication. This need should always be in the teacher's mind.

- Anita S. Dole
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Genesis == THE CREATION — A GENERAL VIEW — Genesis 1, 2:1-3

## **2:THE CREATION — A GENERAL VIEW — Genesis 1, 2:1-3**

### **INTRO**

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."

## **Adult**

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.

# **3:THE CREATION — THE FIRST FOUR DAYS**

## **— Genesis 1:1-19**

### **INTRO**

In teaching the Creation story we need to keep in mind that this is not only the beginning of the Bible but the foundation of all our further teaching. The thought of the Lord as the beginning of everything, our Heavenly Father, the Creator of everything we see and know, is essential to any spiritual understanding and to any genuinely good life. With all the classes we shall need to point out that our primary business in Sunday School is to learn of the Lord and His purposes for us so that we may truly serve Him, and that the only sure source of such knowledge is His Word which He has given us so that we may know these things. We are studying the Word as the Lord has given it to us and as He has opened it for our deeper understanding. Throughout our year's work we should frequently remind ourselves as well as our pupils that what we are studying is the Lord's Book, which is the Book of Life. We are putting special emphasis on the thought of the first four days in the Creation story, but the seven days should first be covered briefly.

### **Adult**

It is suggested that in taking up the Creation story, the teacher refer to the attack which has been made upon its authenticity, point out that the Bible is the Lord's revelation to us and is not concerned with things we can find out for ourselves; and go on from there to the general meaning of the six steps of creation in their relation to the development of the race and of the individual, with particular emphasis on the reason why light appears in the story before the creation of the sun, moon, and stars, and why each day is said to go from evening to morning.

In Revelation 20:12 we read, "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God, and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works." It would be difficult for anyone to read this verse and fail to understand that by "the books" are meant the record of the lives of those who are being judged, and that by "the book of life" is meant the Bible. Throughout the history of the Christian Church, therefore, the pressing problem of salvation has been tied inseparably to that of the nature and interpretation of the Bible. Before the development of natural science, Christians were for the most part content to accept the Bible as literally true and to leave its interpretation to the priesthood, living in the simple belief that if they did what their priests told them to do, they were obeying the Lord and would be saved. With the invention of printing, however, and the consequent wide distribution of the Bible, men began to read it for themselves and to develop differences of opinion as to its interpretation, and inevitably differences of opinion as to what constituted conduct in accordance with the Bible teaching. And these differences were aggravated as the findings of natural science began to cast doubt upon the literal accuracy of the Bible narrative. Actually the unique character of the Bible should be evident from the very volume and persistence of the study which it has produced, to say nothing of the literature that has been influenced by it. It is significant that even those today who believe that the Bible is the product of human minds often confess to feeling its strange power and try in various ways to account for this power.

It is not the Lord's fault that men refuse to recognize His Word as a revelation from Him; the refusal is in the individual will. The Lord has always told men all they needed to know about Himself. To the two on the way to Emmaus He said: "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken' ... And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:25,27). And just before He allowed Himself to be taken He said, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now" (John 16:12). This further revelation foretold to the disciples was given to the world through Emanuel Swedenborg just as soon as men's minds were ready to receive it, and in time to meet the humanistic and scientific attacks upon the Bible. As we read the @AC , we are constantly coming upon statements which show that Swedenborg, who was one of the most noted scientists of his day, was fully aware of all the facts which are brought forward to prove that the Bible is the work of men. This is indicated by many statements like the following from @AC 2674 concerning the sending away of Hagar and Ishmael: "Every one can see that these historic statements involve arcana, from the fact that Abraham, who was rich in flock and herd, and also in gold and silver, sent away in this manner his handmaid by whom he had a son, and the boy Ishmael whom he much loved, giving them only bread and water." And he says repeatedly that only a knowledge of the internal sense can account for the peculiarities of the letter of Scripture, and that the Lord revealed the internal sense for the specific purpose of saving good men from losing their faith in the Word. It is therefore of supreme importance that we, and our children as soon as they are old enough, study the internal sense as well as the letter of the Word.

The Creation story is an outstanding example of this necessity.

Science makes it obvious that it cannot be literally true. Archaeology turns up similar stories in other ancient literatures. As Swedenborg says, men ask "How can this be Divine?" Yet the Creation story is the foundation of the Word and the basis of all our understanding of the Lord's purpose in our creation and of the working of His Divine providence in our lives. We are told through Swedenborg that the literal sense of the first eleven chapters is not history in the sense in which the rest of the Word is history: These eleven chapters were copied by Moses from the Ancient Word — the Word which existed before our Word and which was still in existence in the time of Moses. All the stories of Creation, of the Garden of Eden, and of the Flood found in literatures other than the Hebrew had their source in this same account in the Ancient Word, but they came down in the form of tradition and so are not in themselves verbally inspired. The Ancient Word was written in the language of pure symbol, the language in which the people of the Ancient Church thought and wrote. No one in that day misunderstood the Creation story or took it for an account of the creation of the physical universe. There are quotations in other parts of our Bible from other books of the Ancient Word, and some of these books are mentioned by name (See Numbers 21:14-16, 27-28; Joshua 10:13; 2 Samuel 1:18). Swedenborg also tells us that the book of Job — a book which has puzzled scholars because it has the language characteristics of a very old Hebrew book and yet manifests highly developed philosophical concepts — is "a book of the Ancient Church," lacking an inner sense but written in the "forms of expression in common use in the Ancient Church" (@AC 2682).

The Creation story, like the rest of the inspired Word, coming down as it does from the Lord through the heavens, has within it several levels of meaning. For us it is primarily the story of the creation of a human soul. We may see it in its relation to our development from infancy to adult life, or, as Swedenborg especially interprets it in the Arcana, as the process of regeneration. In every individual there are two natures: a higher or spiritual, and a lower or natural — the heavens

and the earth. So long as he remains, whether innocently or willfully, in ignorance of spiritual things, his soul is actually in darkness and undeveloped; but the Lord is constantly seeking to awaken him. The first response is like the coming of light, and after that he is able to see that some knowledges relate to spiritual and others to natural things — the waters above and below the firmament. All life is from the Lord, and man does not begin really to live until he recognizes God and tries to learn of Him. At first his knowledge of God is derived from others and is like a diffused light in his mind, but as he begins to think and act from the principle of doing what is right in the Lord's sight instead of what is pleasing to himself, living things begin to appear in his soul and he comes to know from his own experience what it is to love the Lord and to believe in Him and trust His guidance — the sun, moon, and stars appear clearly in the sky. The sun is love to the Lord shining in our states of clear understanding; the moon is faith and trust showing us our way even when everything seems dark and incomprehensible. The stars are all the knowledges of spiritual things which, as we relate them to each other, gradually form patterns in our minds and help to direct us. Living thoughts and affections — the birds, fish, and animals — are then possible, and one is formed into a true man, in the image and likeness of his Creator. Only then can one find rest and peace.

"And the evening and the morning were the first day." In this lesson we are centering our thought on the first four days of Creation. The outstanding characteristic of this part of the story is the appearance, effect, and increase of light. In the letter of the inspired Word there is nothing accidental. In our natural activities we think of a day as beginning with the morning and ending with the evening, but when we stop to think, we may realize that from morning to evening there is a decline — a decline in strength, in vitality, in mental keenness, in endurance — until we reach the point when we must stop and wait for the renewal which comes with sleep. In the writings of Swedenborg we are told that it is during our periods of sleep that the Lord can do most for us, because then our concentration on our own affairs and on the natural world about us is in temporary abeyance, and our souls are open to heavenly influences. This is why it is provided that children shall have such long periods of sleep, and why sleep has such curative value. The physical rebuilding is the least of the values of sleep. If we are inclined to boast that we do not need so much sleep as the average person, it is time for us to take serious thought as to our spiritual state. Actually progress is from evening to morning — from a state of ignorance to one of understanding — and this is the work of the Creator, not of ourselves. Day by day we must seek continually to learn in order that we may progress.

## **4:THE CREATION — THE FIFTH AND SIXTH DAYS — Genesis 1:20-31**

### **INTRO**

The natural introduction to this lesson is to talk about the Bible as a whole — what it is and why we study it in Sunday school. With all except the Primary class, the children's knowledge on these points should be tested first. Then give a very brief account of the seven days and what happened on each before developing the work of the fifth and sixth days.

# Adult

Cover the lesson briefly, pointing out the various levels of meaning in the story. Then discuss the nature of a true man as an image of God, the difference between natural goodness and spiritual goodness, the necessity of continually adding knowledges to our memory, and the method by which they are brought to life and made means of producing genuine goodness.

In paragraph 4 of the Arcana Coelestia we read:

"The first chapter of Genesis in the internal sense treats in general of the new creation of man, or of his regeneration, and specifically of the Most Ancient Church; and this in such a manner that there is not the least expression which does not represent, signify, and enfold within it these things."

Of the first verse we are told that "heaven" signifies the internal man; and "earth" the external man before regeneration.

In general this first chapter of the Bible describes truly the order of material creation. It is strange that the use of the word day has caused so many to believe that it is contrary to the findings of science, when we ourselves are quite in the habit of using day to express any general period of time: "in that day," "in the day of the cave dwellers," etc.

In the New Church we are also familiar with the thought that the development of every individual from infancy to maturity is pictured in this chapter and also the development of the first created human race from their primitive state of ignorance into a true church, the first or Most Ancient Church on earth. But we do not so often think of it in terms of the change which takes place in an adult of our own day as he passes from an unregenerate to a regenerate state. Yet it is true that every individual who has not come to recognize the Lord and brought his life into order according to the Lord's commandments from a desire to serve the Lord is as yet a mere potential man. However learned and cultured he may be, his mind is "without form and void" and the darkness of ignorance obscures the deeper possibilities of his nature. He is not truly a man. For man is man from being formed into the image and likeness of God.

This change of man from his natural state into his true form is called regeneration, or rebirth, and it is a gradual process. In some churches it is believed that a person is "saved" by a single religious experience called "conversion," but this is not the New Church belief. Conversion is necessary, but it may perhaps be likened to the coming of light on the first day and is only a beginning. In @AC 6-13 Swedenborg sums up briefly the meaning of the six days of creation in their application to the process of regeneration, and concludes: "Those who are being regenerated do not all arrive at this [sixth] state. The greatest part, at this day, attain only the first state; some only the second; others the third, fourth, or fifth; few the sixth; and scarcely anyone the seventh."

In the first lesson of this course we took up all seven stages in a brief general way. In the second we centered our lesson on the work of the fourth day. Of this Swedenborg says: "The fourth state is when man becomes affected with love, and illuminated by faith. He indeed previously discoursed piously, and brought forth goods, but he did so in consequence of the temptations and straitness under which he labored, and not from faith and charity; wherefore faith and charity are now enkindled in his internal man, and are called two 'luminaries'" (@AC 10). In this lesson we shall consider a little more fully the meaning of what took place on the fifth and sixth days.

Swedenborg says (@AC 11): "The fifth state is when the man discourses from faith, and thereby confirms himself in truth and good; the things then produced by him are animate, and are called the 'fish of the sea,' and the 'birds of the heavens.'" Until true love and faith (the sun and moon) make their appearance in a person's life, he believes that the truth he thinks and the good he does are from himself, and at this stage his grasp of truth and level of goodness are not really "living" and are pictured by the "grass, the herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit" (Genesis 1:11), but when he comes to acknowledge that all truth and good are from the Lord alone, the living creatures of the water, air, and earth appear. These are created in order. We may recall that seas picture knowledges gathered together in the memory, and that fish are memory knowledges "which belong to the external man" (@AC 40). What then is the difference between the seas and the fish? All knowledge comes to us first by an external way. Our minds are full of knowledges which we have gathered throughout our lives. But there is no life in these knowledges until we begin to draw them forth for the service of the Lord. Mere worldly and even intellectual use of them does not make them "fish." This is the lesson taught in John 21:3-6, where the net cast by the fishermen on the left side of the ship — the side of the intellect alone — drew in no fish, but when at the Lord's bidding it was cast on the right side — the side of the will or affection - "they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes." We must have the necessary memory-knowledges before we can make any spiritual progress, but it is the will to serve the Lord which gives them life.

@AC 40 goes on to tell us that "birds" generally signify rational and intellectual things, "of which the latter belong to the internal man." Once we have a desire to serve the Lord we draw knowledges from our memory to implement the desire. The next step is thought about them, rising to a higher level than mere worldly or temporal uses. So on the fifth day "man discourses from faith, and thereby confirms himself in truth and good."

The final stage, the sixth day, is described in @AC 12 as follows:

"The sixth state is when, from faith, and thence from love, he speaks what is true, and does what is good: the things which he then brings forth are called the 'living soul' and the 'beast.' And as he then begins to act at once and together from both faith and love, he becomes a spiritual man, who is called an 'image.' His spiritual life is delighted and sustained by such things as belong to the knowledges of faith, and to works of charity, which are called his 'food,' and his natural life is delighted and sustained by those which belong to the body and the senses; whence a combat arises, until love gains the dominion, and he becomes a celestial man." In @AC 45 we read that "beasts are of two kinds; the evil, so called because they are hurtful; and the good, which are harmless. Evils in man are signified by evil beasts, as by bears, wolves, dogs; and the things which are good and gentle, by beasts of a like nature, as by heifers, sheep, and lambs. The 'beasts' here referred to are good and gentle ones, and thus signify affections, because it here treats of those who are being regenerated."

From this, we learn that in the process of regeneration genuinely good affections are developed last of all. The writings throughout make a clear distinction between "natural good" and "spiritual good." We all inherit from our natural parents good as well as evil tendencies, but even the good tendencies we inherit are full of self. They are not spiritual or living. The Lord uses them as first means toward our reformation, but they are really the opposite of genuine good. We cannot trust our natural good intentions to produce either knowledge of what we ought to do or good works. Even on the sixth day, as we note in Swedenborg's explanation, "a combat arises, until love gains the dominion." The man created in the image of God had work to do. He was to "be fruitful, and

multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it." We never in this world reach a state in which acquiring new knowledge from the Lord and overcoming our evils become unnecessary.

## 5:THE CREATION — THE SEVENTH DAY — Genesis 2:1-7

### INTRO

The lesson in all the classes should begin with some brief discussion of the nature and purpose of the Bible, followed by emphasis on its first book and on its first verse, and then a very brief review of the first six days of creation. The notes for the various age groups will suggest the level at which this review should be carried in each class. Not more than half the lesson time should be used for this introductory work.

### Adult

After the introductory statement concerning the Bible, and the brief review of chapter 1, the teacher should touch on the meaning of the seventh day in the internal historical sense and in the spiritual sense, and then go on to a discussion of the use of the sabbath. It may be well to mention the reason why we observe Sunday instead of Saturday (see Junior notes) especially if there are young adults in the class. The rest of the discussion may well be based on the Lord's use of the sabbath, and the teacher should be familiar with the Gospel passages cited in the Junior notes and with their context.

Every time we reread the story of creation, with which our Bible begins, we are more impressed with its scope and importance. From the letter alone we receive the fundamental teachings that everything with which we are familiar was created by the Lord, that there is a Divine order in the universe, that man is not merely a higher animal but a creature with heavenly possibilities, that man has the responsibility of controlling and using rightly all the lower forms of creation, and that the ideal state to which he should look forward is one of heavenly peace and happiness. In the Creation story nothing appears which is not good and useful. "And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good." The Lord is the Source of all good and nothing but good proceeds from Him.

When we read this story with a knowledge of its spiritual sense, it is still more impressive. Everything that is in man's soul appears here in its original orderly form. Throughout it is the story of the formation of man — as a race and as an individual — into the image and likeness of God, his highest possible attainment.

In the three previous lessons we have considered the first six days of creation in some detail, and we now center our attention on the seventh day.

Limiting our thought for the moment to the letter, we rightly think of Genesis 2:2-3 as the Divine institution of the sabbath day. The commandment regarding the sabbath given through Moses from Sinai was not a new commandment. The sabbath was a part of the order of the Most Ancient Church. The Lord, who made man, knew man's needs. Even physically we need one day out of

seven of rest and change from our regular work. Our minds need this same rest and change. And above all spiritually we need one day in seven in which we may lift our thoughts above our worldly concerns and renew our inner strength through worship, instruction, and meditation.

In this simple statement of the Divine ordination of the sabbath there is nothing harsh — nothing suggestive of prohibition: "And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made." If we developed in an orderly way as children of our Heavenly Father, we should have no problems concerning the sabbath. We should, as Isaiah suggests (58:13), "call the sabbath a delight." The reason why the breaking and profaning of the sabbath is connected with such severe denunciation later in the Word is that men departed from their true order and that without the regular observance of the sabbath men become immersed in worldliness and selfishness, lose their touch with God, and die spiritually. Our Puritan forefathers were mistaken in making the sabbath a hard and burdensome day, just as the Pharisees were mistaken in adding their own interpretations to the simple law. We recall how many times in the Gospel story the Pharisees accused the Lord of breaking the sabbath and how He told them that He Himself was Lord of the sabbath. He gave us our example specifically in attending the synagogue on the sabbath day, teaching, healing, and walking with his disciples, and He summed up the law in the simple statement (Matthew 12:12): "It is lawful to do good on the sabbath."

Turning to the inner meaning of our lesson, we find this in @AC 83, 84: "The 'heavens and earth and all the army of them' are said to be 'finished,' when man has become the 'sixth day,' for then faith and love make a one. When they do this, love, and not faith, or in other words the celestial principle, and not the spiritual, begins to be the principal, and this is to be a celestial man .... The celestial man is the 'seventh day,' which, as the Lord has worked during the six days, is called 'His work'; and as all combat then ceases, the Lord is said to 'rest from all His work.'"

The Most Ancient Church, whose development is described in the internal historical sense of our lesson, was a celestial church, in which love to the Lord ruled in the heart and truth could be given by perception — in an internal rather than in an external way. We forget sometimes that this first church had to be developed — that even the first men had to grow into it through the various stages pictured in the Creation story, and had to become spiritual men before they became celestial.

In its application to our own regeneration this is also true.

Although it is certainly possible for us, if we are faithful, to attain the celestial degree, we do not attain it before the end of our life in this world. But we all may have foretastes of it. For example, whenever we recognize a particular evil in ourselves, fight it with the Lord's help, and reach the point where it no longer has any appeal for us, we have — with regard to that particular evil — reached the sabbath of rest. But as long as we are in this world there are always further evils in us to recognize and fight. And we recognize and fight these only if we are constantly trying to learn new truth from the Word. In this world we never reach a state in which the knowledge of what is right comes to us by an internal way. The Writings are very clear on this point. Our conscience is never a perfect guide. It must be continually corrected, educated, and developed throughout our lives here. Without this process we make no spiritual progress and never attain the true sabbath of rest.

This rest of the sabbath is not idleness. It is rest from struggle with temptation. It is said that the Lord blessed and sanctified the seventh day, that is, pronounced it happy and holy. We know that happiness comes only from forgetting self, and that only as we learn about the Lord and seek to

serve Him and the neighbor is it possible for us to make a place in our hearts for the influx of His unselfish love. If we regularly use the sabbath for worship, instruction, and unselfish service, we shall find it our best aid in attaining the celestial state of rest. Let us use it to "do good" and make it a happy and a holy day.

## 6:THE GARDEN OF EDEN — Genesis 2:8-25

### INTRO

The first seven chapters of Genesis were copied verbatim from the Ancient Word and are in the language of pure symbol in which that word was written (see @DSS 103, @TCR ???; SD 5605). They are especially adapted to the teaching of young children, who love the simple, beautiful pictures they present and retain them deep in their memories. They should be taught with a feeling of wonder and reverence.

### Adult

The interpretation of the creation of woman from the rib of man is perhaps the best discussion topic for this class, although the general correspondences of the Garden of Eden should be covered first.

We have seen that the Creation story is the account of the orderly development of the race or of the individual. The first people did in general develop in this way, so that the first church on earth — the Most Ancient Church — was composed of a very high type of people, "celestial people," who loved the Lord supremely, had open communication with the heavens, and cared for the things of this world only as they were related to and could serve spiritual things. The Lord instructed them directly through their affections. We know that we cannot trust our desires to tell us what is true and good because so many of our desires are evil. But the early people had only good and innocent desires because they were content to be led entirely by the Lord and did not care to guide themselves or to imagine that they knew anything apart from the Lord's teaching. In various parts of the writings Swedenborg tells us many things about these people, of their simple, happy life, their high ideal of marriage, their love for each other and for children, their worship. Love was the keynote of everything, and for this reason the traditions of this period have come down to us — aside from the symbolic stories of the early chapters of Genesis — in the myths of the "Golden Age," for gold has always been recognized as the symbol of love. The Word describes this civilization as a garden which the Lord planted "eastward in Eden," Eden meaning pleasure or delight, and eastward always meaning near the Lord. The garden was watered by the river of wisdom from the Lord's love, and in it were all trees "pleasant to the sight and good for food," which mean all the knowledge necessary to make men happy and useful. And in the center was the tree of life, which is the knowledge that man lives from the Lord alone. Man was placed in this garden "to dress it and keep it"; that is, he realized that all the good things he had belonged to the Lord and were to be used in His service.

Everyone loves a little baby because of the beautiful sphere of innocence and trust which surrounds him. The infancy of the individual is like the infancy of the race, before the development of self-consciousness and self-seeking. He is close to the Lord and the angels, and is without anxiety or fear. In this sense the life story of the individual begins in the Garden of Eden. The four heads

into which the river was divided picture the Lord's provision for the enlightenment of all the planes of the mind: the Pison is symbolic of the highest intelligence, which is from love; so there was gold in the land compassed by that river. The Gihon pictures "the knowledge of all things that belong to the good and the true" (@AC 116). The Hiddekel stands for "reason, or the clear-sightedness of reason" (@AC 118), that plane or faculty which connects the internal with the external mind and enables us to relate the two. And the Euphrates represents memory knowledge, all that we learn of the externals of things, which serves as a basis for the higher planes. All good and useful knowledge is open to us, and all good things are given us to use and enjoy. To eat of every tree is "to know from perception what is good and true" (@AC 125). As long as men were content to be led solely by the Lord, they had this perception. Very little children retain something akin to such perception; they are given to sense the quality of those about them, feeling "instinctively" whether a person is really kind and loving or merely pretending an affection he does not feel.

But there is another tree in the garden of which the man in the story was commanded not to eat — the "tree of knowledge of good and evil." In reading this story people sometimes wonder why the Lord put anything in the garden which men should not eat, and they sometimes even feel that the Lord must have put it there on purpose to tempt men, just as people sometimes blame the Lord for their troubles and say, "How can the Lord be a God of love when He permits people to be unhappy?" The tree of knowledge of good and evil was man's ability to think of himself as independent of the Lord. The presence of this ability in the garden of the human soul is necessary to man's being man. The Lord created man to make him happy, but happiness can come only from love freely given; so man could not be a mere mechanical agent of the Lord's love as other created things are. He must have a type of independence, the power to decide for himself whether he wishes to return the Lord's love or not. Therefore, although all life and power actually come to man moment by moment from the Lord, man is allowed to feel this life and power as his own and to use it as he pleases. This tree had to be in the garden, but the Lord warned man not to eat of its fruit, that is, not to depend on himself for knowledge of what is good and true, because if he did he would be cutting himself off from the real source of goodness and wisdom and would become spiritually dead. As Swedenborg puts it (@AC 126), "We are not to inquire into the mysteries of faith by means of the things of sense and of the memory, for in this case the celestial of faith is destroyed." In one of our New Church Books of Worship this prohibition is put in the form of simple doctrine to be acknowledged by those who wish to be confirmed in the New Church: "In abstaining from evil and doing good we are to act as of ourselves; at the same time believing and acknowledging that the will, the understanding, and the power to do so are of the Lord alone."

The last part of our chapter treats of the first step in the descent of man from this high state, the awakening of the desire for independent life, and of the way in which the Lord's providence recognizes and meets this desire. Swedenborg tells us (@AC 139) that throughout the Word "to dwell alone" signifies to live wholly from the Lord and so not to be subject to the influence of mere externals, which are the source of evils. The first men dwelt alone in this sense, and so does a little baby. But when the Lord sees that man is beginning to be more consciously interested in external things, He provides a way by which man may, if he will, develop this external consciousness and still not become absorbed in self. First He shows us all the things which are within us and teaches us their character. This is described by the Lord's bringing all the living creatures to Adam to see what he would call them. So a little child, in the course of his everyday experience, learns a great many things about himself and the world about him. Then comes a time when through all this knowledge he develops a feeling of self-importance which dulls his interest in higher things. This is the deep sleep which fell upon Adam. The rib which the Lord took is the picture of this self-hood —

the Own, or proprium — of each one of us as it really is, merely the dead framework of a human being. Only when this self-hood is seen in its true relation to the Lord and the Lord's spirit is allowed to work through it does it become clothed with flesh and living. There is a deep psychology in this lesson. To make progress in character we must be able to "get outside of ourselves," to "see ourselves as others see us," and especially as the Lord and the angels see us. Then we begin to look at our self-hood as a tool given us to fashion for the Lord's service, and to love ourselves only for the use we can be to the neighbor. In this way our dead self-hood becomes a beautiful living thing, like the woman fashioned by the Lord from the rib of the man. The writings say: "The Own of man, when viewed from heaven, appears like something which is wholly bony, inanimate, and very ugly, consequently as being in itself dead, but when vivified by the Lord it looks like flesh" (@AC 149). Only the Lord's Own was living; so He said: "A spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have" (Luke 24:39).

## 7:A WIFE FOR ADAM — Genesis 2:8-25

### INTRO

This in the letter is a very short and striking story. In all classes it might be well to start by rereading the entire assignment from the Word. Only the very youngest children will be likely to accept the literal story without question, and questions should be welcomed; for the more children question, the more interested they are. Swedenborg says (@AC 155): "The words 'a rib was built into a woman,' have more things inmost concealed in them than it is possible for anyone ever to discover from the letter; for the Word is such that its inmost contents regard the Lord Himself and His kingdom, and from this comes all the life of the Word."

### Adult

There is so much in this lesson that the teacher has a wide range of possible emphases. He should perhaps read to the class first the summary of the spiritual meaning of this lesson found in @AC 131-136, and then let the class decide what particular phase of the subject they would like to discuss.

Of our lesson for today Swedenborg says (@AC 137): "The first three chapters of Genesis treat in general of the Most Ancient Church which is called 'Man' (homo), from its first period to its last, when it perished: the preceding part of this chapter treats of its most flourishing state, when it was a celestial man; here it now treats of those who inclined to their Own, and of their posterity."

We have considered the Creation story in its relation to the regeneration of the individual, but it also treats of the development of the first people into a church — the Most Ancient Church. Of these first people, when they were placed on the earth, Swedenborg said (many years before Darwin) that their posture was not erect and that they lived an animal-like existence, but they were from the beginning men and not animals. It is interesting to compare the speculations of anthropologists with this statement from The Divine Providence (nos. 275-276): "The love into which man was created is love of the neighbor, to the end that he may wish as well to the neighbor as to himself and even better, and may be in the delight of that love when he is doing good to the neighbor; nearly the same as a parent's love for his children. This love is truly human, for there is in it a spiritual [element] that distinguishes it from the natural love that belongs to brute animals. If man

were born into that love he could not be born into the thick darkness of ignorance, as every man now is, but into a certain light of knowledge and intelligence therefrom: and into these he would quickly come. At first, of course, he would creep like a quadruped, but with an inherent endeavor to raise himself up upon his feet; for however much like a quadruped he would not turn his face downward to the earth but forwards towards heaven, and would so raise himself up as to be able to look upwards. But when love of the neighbor was turned into love of self, and this love increased, human love was turned into animal love, and man from being a man became a beast, with the difference that he was able to think about what he felt in the body, and could rationally discriminate one thing from another, and could be taught, and could become a civil and moral man, and finally a spiritual man." It is important to see the distinction between this idea — that the human race began as man and descended to the level of the beast in the period before our commonly accepted records begin — and the assumption of some evolutionists that the race began as an animal and worked itself up to its present state.

Our story for today, one of the best-known and perhaps most frequently ridiculed of the early stories of the Bible, treats of the beginning of the decline of the Most Ancient Church. The reason for this decline is stated very clearly in @AC 139: "In ancient times those were said to 'dwell alone' who were under the Lord's guidance as celestial men, because such were no longer infested by evils, or evil spirits." But the Lord foresaw that men would not be content to "dwell alone" with Him. All along the way of the first development there were those who chose not to accept what the Lord taught them. But at this point in the story even the posterity wishing to be led by self was still in the desire to obey the Lord; therefore the Lord could vivify and enlighten the self to which these men looked for guidance. "That by 'a help as with him' (a helper suitable for him) is signified man's Own, is evident both from the nature of this Own, and from what follows. As however the man of the church who is here treated of was well disposed, an Own was granted him, but of such a kind that it appeared as it were his own, and therefore it is said 'a help as with him'" (@AC 140). The Hebrew word here translated "as with" and in the King James version "meet for" actually means "opposite" or "complementary to." In the relation of this story to the doctrine of marriage (see Matthew 19:3-9), this word indicates what husband and wife should be to each other. We know that a true human marriage is the highest ultimation among men of the union of the Divine Love and Wisdom in the Lord. We should therefore seek in marriage nothing less than a perfect mating of hearts and minds, and we should hold this ideal before our children. This does not mean that there will never be differences of opinion between husband and wife, but that as both look to the Lord for guidance and hold the same basic principles, differences will be resolved amicably and with satisfaction to both. In @AC 155 Swedenborg points out that inmost this passage treats of the heavenly marriage between the Lord and His kingdom, which can be called the "bride and wife" of the Lord.

But the part of the story on which we perhaps need most to dwell is that which shows the nature of man's Own or proprium and why it was taken out of him and made by the Lord into a living thing which he could love without harm. The Garden of Eden represents the state of the men of the Most Ancient Church. The four rivers represent truth from the Lord flowing into the various planes of the mind. The tree of life in the midst is the perception that all life, knowledge, and power are from the Lord, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil man's power to choose between God and self. We note that first the Lord brought to Adam all the beasts and fowl of the garden that he might give them names. The beasts and fowl are men's affections and thoughts. Thus Adam is asked to examine his affections and thoughts and determine their quality. "That to 'call by name' signifies to know the quality, is because the ancients, by the 'name' understood the essence of a thing, and by

'seeing and calling by name,' they understood to know the quality" (@AC 144). We all, before we take any important step in life, need such self-examination.

@AC 147 gives in very simple terms the outline of the spiritual meaning of the crucial verse, Genesis 2:21: "By a 'rib' which is a bone of the chest, is meant man's Own, in which there is but little vitality, and indeed an Own which is dear to him; by 'flesh in the place of a rib,' is meant an Own in which there is vitality; by a 'deep sleep' is meant the state into which he was let so that he might seem to himself to have what is his own, which state resembles sleep, because while in it he knows not but that he lives, thinks, speaks, and acts from himself. But when he begins to know that this is false, he is roused as it were out of sleep, and becomes awake."

The bones, in which there is little life and yet which support and give form to the whole body and protect the delicate internal organs, naturally represent man's Own, the proprium, by which each individual is distinguished from every other. We need to see this Own as it really is and then to see it as it can be when filled with the Lord's spirit. "The Own of man, when viewed from heaven, appears like a something that is wholly bony, inanimate, and very ugly, consequently as being in itself dead, but when vivified by the Lord it looks like flesh. For man's Own is a mere dead thing, although to him it appears as something, indeed as everything. Whatever lives in him is from the Lord's life, and if this were withdrawn he would fall down as dead as a stone; for man is only an organ of life, and such as is the organ, such is the life's affection" (@AC 1492). "But truly the things of man's Own that have been vivified by the Lord appear beautiful and lovely, with variety according to the life to which the celestial of the Lord can be applied" (@AC 154).

The fact that the Lord Himself (Matthew 19:3-12) used a portion of today's lesson to point out to the Pharisees the true nature of marriage should help us to realize that the basis of a true marriage must be a oneness of thought and purpose. We should bring up our children from the start to feel that marriage is a holy thing, that the Lord's spirit must be in it in order that the married pair may respect and love each other and may stand before the world as one. It is very important that parents exhibit this oneness to their children, by forming their judgments on the basis of the same spiritual principles and by coming into agreement as to what they will and will not allow their children to do. Neither parent should rule the other; rather, differences of opinion should be resolved by serious consideration from the common ground of their spiritual beliefs. And the children should be educated from the start in these spiritual beliefs.

## 8:THE SERPENT — Genesis 3

### INTRO

In all classes the connection with past material may be made by reviewing the order of creation, pointing out the difference between men and animals, and then speaking of the Garden of Eden as the beautiful state in which men came to dwell and in which they might have remained if they had been obedient and had not begun to trust in self instead of in the Lord. Speak of the two trees and of the Lord's command with regard to the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

### Adult

The question of the origin of evil and the decline of the human race will furnish ample discussion

material. The temptation of the serpent in our modern world is a powerful force for evil.

The serpent is the symbol of the sensuous part of man. If we think a little, we can see that there is a mental as well as a physical basis in each of the five senses. For example, when we are absorbed in a book, someone may speak to us several times without being heard. There is nothing the matter with our ears, but our consciousness is temporarily withdrawn from the sense plane. We are living in another world. The sensuous plane of our mind is closed for the time being. So we may walk along the street thinking so hard that we pass a close friend without seeing him, although we look right at him. In times of great excitement people can injure themselves severely and feel no pain until the excitement is past. So we can see that there is actually a distinct plane of our mind that is in contact with the natural world through the five senses. This is what Swedenborg calls the "sensuous" part of man (meaning simply that which pertains to sense impressions rather than thoughts) and what is signified by the serpent. The sensuous part is necessary to us. We could not live in this world without it. But it is meant to be merely the servant of the higher planes of our minds. The serpent has a good as well as an evil correspondence. The Lord said to His apostles, "Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves" (Matthew 10:16). This means to take advantage of all the knowledge which comes to us through our senses, but to use it always for good and never for harm to ourselves or anyone else. And we remember that when the children of Israel were going through the wilderness and were plagued by fiery serpents because of their lust and disobedience, Moses was told to make a serpent of bronze and raise it up on a pole, and those who looked at it were healed. The serpent of bronze was the symbol of sensuous things turned to good use. Later, when this bronze serpent became an object of worship in itself, Hezekiah destroyed it because it was leading people away from the worship of the Lord, as today the doctrine that goodness is in external good works leads people to think it is not particularly important to go to church or to learn about the Lord. When the Lord was in the world, He likened His own human nature to this serpent of bronze lifted up.

But the serpent, as our lesson says, is "more subtle than any beast of the field." Our senses are constantly bringing us impressions and appealing to us in many ways at once. Many of the things they bring us are delightful — the beauties of nature, music, odors, flavors, caresses. It is very easy to come to depend upon them and to refuse to believe anything which our senses do not confirm, and thus to look to ourselves for knowledge and power instead of to the Lord. This is the temptation of the serpent, first to the woman — our affections — and then through the woman to the man — our intellect. Pleasures of the senses first appeal to us because they are delightful, and then our minds begin to think up reasons why we should indulge in them; and if there is a command of the Lord which forbids them, we refuse to believe the Lord or that any evil can come because of our indulgence. So in the story the serpent first put doubt in the woman's mind of the truth of the Lord's words. This is the beginning of all evil — the temptation to reason and judge according to what our senses tell us instead of according to what the Lord has revealed through His Word.

This thought is stated very clearly in @AC 196: "In ancient times those were called 'serpents' who had more confidence in sensuous things than in revealed ones. But it is still worse at the present day, for now there are persons who not only disbelieve everything they cannot see and feel, but who also confirm themselves in such incredulity by knowledges [scientifica] unknown to the ancients, and thus occasion in themselves a far greater degree of blindness."

If we think of our sense life as the important thing, we shall lose sight of the true meaning which only knowledge of the Lord and of heavenly things can give to it. That the ancient people began to reason from nature to God instead of from God to nature and to refuse to believe what they could

not confirm by their senses is meant by their eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. In this way they gradually lost that immediate perception of the truth which the celestial people had, but they did not lose it all at once. They retained enough of it to know that they were doing wrong — to recognize their evil state. This is pictured by verse 7, the fact that they knew that they were naked. Here is introduced another correspondence which we should note: the fig, symbolic of "natural goodness," the kindly feelings and thoughts which even the most worldly people may have. How often when we recognize some serious fault in ourselves, we try to cover it up in our own minds by recalling our "good deeds." These thoughts about natural goodness are the fig leaves with which Adam and Eve tried to cover themselves. Garments correspond to truths and nakedness to lack of truth. We may recall here that Hezekiah's boil was cured by a lump of figs and that the Lord condemned a fig tree which bore no fruit. These are stories which teach the necessity of kind, neighborly living. But we must not think that natural kindness will excuse a lack of acceptance of truth from the Lord. Without a desire for truth from the Lord natural kindness and good works are self-righteous and not genuinely good at all. Read Revelation 3:14-18.

In the study of the punishment meted out to the serpent, the woman, and the man, we have our first introduction to the "doctrine of appearances." The Lord is perfect love. He never punishes. Yet throughout the Word He is frequently said to be angry, to be jealous; to take revenge, to curse, to punish, etc. This is because the Lord had to write the Word by means of men and in terms which they would understand, and so the truth often takes the form in which it appears to men, and when men are in evil states, the truth appears to punish them. In the same way, to a child bent on having his own way his parents' efforts to turn him into the right way seem harsh and cruel. The punishments which the Lord is said to mete out are inherent in the evils committed. So the sensuous part of man, when it leads man away from the Lord, is condemned to go on its belly and eat dust — that is, to see only the things of the earth and to feed on dead things. This is just what our senses do when we trust in them instead of in the Lord's revealed truth. The woman is told: "In sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee." We remember that the woman pictures our own will and that the first people, whose affections were centered in the Lord, could be taught immediately through them. But when the affections became centered in the world and in self, they could not bring forth any truth or good except by bitter experience of evil and punishment. The birth of children in the Word always pictures in a good sense the bringing forth of truths and goods. And the man is told that the ground is cursed for his sake and will bring forth thorns and thistles. The mind of the self-centered man is full of false ideas which plague him and make it difficult for him to find the truth, and so he finds it hard to nourish his soul: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread." Finally they are cast out of the garden, and cherubim with a flaming sword are placed at its entrance "to keep the way of the tree of life." The cherubim throughout the Word are the symbol of the Divine Providence protecting — in this case protecting men from profaning the highest things of their nature. The sword in the Scriptures is either truth or falsity used as a weapon. When a person persistently refuses to live according to a truth which he knows, the belief that it is the truth is finally taken away from him so that he may not go further into a state of willful disobedience.

## 9:CAIN AND ABEL — Genesis 4:1-15

## INTRO

After the review of the last lesson the teacher in each class will need to cover briefly the story of the Garden of Eden. The emphasis should be on the disobedience, the reason for it, and the resultant expulsion from the garden, treated in each case according to the level of understanding of the class.

## Adult

Since this lesson on the Ancient Church will be centered on the end rather than on the beginning of that church, it will be better to point out the difference between the two "churches" in this lesson. Discussion should also bring out the fact that "faith alone" is a doctrine still common in some churches and that as individuals we are all believers in that doctrine to the extent that we take it for granted that we shall get to heaven just because we go to church.

We have seen that the seventh day of creation — in addition to its meaning for our individual lives — pictured the celestial state of the people of the Most Ancient Church, a state in which, because they loved the Lord and trusted Him wholly, they could be instructed in His truth by an inner way. This beautiful state is further pictured by the description of the Garden of Eden.

But we remember that men were not content to remain in this state. Self-consciousness developed in them — represented by the creation of Eve — and through it the temptation to reason from the evidence of their physical senses — the serpent — instead of trusting the inner dictate of truth from the Lord. So they were driven out of the garden. Man, once he begins to develop self-consciousness and to assert himself, loses the innocent, trustful state of his early infancy and comes into the hard necessity of learning from experience. We think of the development of a child as an advance from infancy to maturity, and on the external plane it is; but spiritually it is a decline, a progression downward from the celestial to the natural state.

In the internal historical sense of the Word we see this decline clearly in the description of the character of the successive churches. The story of the birth of Cain and Abel and the slaying of Abel by Cain is the basis of our understanding of this decline. Swedenborg says of it: "As this chapter treats of the degeneration of the Most Ancient Church, or the falsification of its doctrine, and consequently of its heresies and sects, under the names of Cain and his descendants, it is to be observed that there is no possibility of understanding how doctrine was falsified, or what was the nature of the heresies and sects of that church, unless the nature of the true church be rightly understood. Enough has been said above concerning the Most Ancient Church, showing that it was a celestial man, and that it acknowledged no other faith than that which was of love to the Lord and toward the neighbor. Through this love they had faith from the Lord, or a perception of all the things that belonged to faith ... But the case is far different at this day, for now faith takes precedence of charity, but still through faith charity is given by the Lord, and then charity becomes the principal. It follows from this that in the most ancient time doctrine was falsified when they made confession of faith, and thus separated it from love. Those who falsified doctrine in this way, or separated faith from love, or made confession of faith alone, were then called 'Cain.'"

The name Cain means "possession." Cain represents faith, a faith of the mind, believed to be self-derived and so separated from charity. Abel represents charity, love to the Lord and the neighbor in the heart. Abel was a keeper of sheep. Sheep, we know, represent innocent affections. Cain was a tiller of the ground. The ground is the mind in its natural state. We are told (@AC 345) that "Those

were said to 'till the ground' who look to bodily and earthly things." Both Cain and Abel brought offerings to the Lord, the offerings representing worship. Of Cain's offering Swedenborg says: "That by the 'fruit of the ground' are meant the works of faith without charity, appears also from what follows; for the works of faith devoid of charity are works of no faith, being in themselves dead, for they are solely of the external man" (@AC 348). Abel's offering of the firstlings of the flock and of the fat thereof represents love and the faith thence derived, the fat representing "the celestial itself."

Even in the letter we are not left in doubt as to the reason why Cain's offering was not accepted. The Lord looks upon the heart, and in the Lord's sight Cain did not "do well." The state of his heart became evident when he slew his brother. Of this, as it applies to the later state of the church, Swedenborg says (@AC 369): "... while both faith and charity were from the doctrine of faith, yet faith separate from love could not but disregard and thereby extinguish charity; as is the case at the present day with those who maintain that faith alone saves, without any work of charity, for in this very supposition they extinguish charity." Cain's attitude is also clearly expressed in his question, "Am I my brother's keeper?"

Nevertheless, the Lord does not permit Cain to be destroyed.

The killing of Abel represented the destruction of the innocent love in the heart through which, up to that time, the Lord had been able to instruct and guide mankind. The Lord had foreseen that man would develop in this direction and was providing a new means of reaching him and saving him from himself. Of the successive churches on the earth only the Most Ancient Church was of the celestial type. In @AC 393 we read: "The Most Ancient Church was of such a character as to acknowledge no faith except that which is of love, insomuch that they were unwilling even to mention faith, for through love from the Lord they perceived all things that belong to faith. Such also are the celestial angels of whom we have spoken above. But as it was foreseen that the human race could not continue to be of this character, but would separate faith from love to the Lord, and would make faith a doctrine by itself, it was provided that they should indeed be separated, but in such a way that through faith — that is, through the knowledges of faith — men might receive from the Lord charity, so that knowledge or hearing should come first, and then through knowledge or hearing, charity — that is, love toward the neighbor, and mercy — might be given by the Lord, which charity should not only be inseparable from faith, but should also constitute the principal of faith. And then instead of the perception they had in the Most Ancient Church, there succeeded conscience, acquired through faith joined to charity, which dictated not what is true, but that it is true, and this because the Lord has so said in the Word." Faith — even faith without charity — is better than no faith at all. So long as a man recognizes God with his mind there is a possibility that something in the Word may strike home to his heart and that he may "come to himself," as we read of the prodigal son (Luke 15:17-19): "And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants."

## 10:NOAH'S ARK — Genesis 6

# INTRO

In the internal sense, the stories of the serpent and of Cain and Abel tell of the origin of evil in man's turning from the Lord to self, of the consequent loss of the innocent, celestial state, and of the loss of charity as men became more and more confirmed in self-esteem and self-will. It will be easy in all the classes to introduce the story of Noah by a question concerning the tree of knowledge of good and evil and a brief statement concerning man's first disobedience and its results.

## Adult

The nature of the Ancient Church with the reason for the separation of the will and the understanding in man is very important. Let it lead into a discussion of the nature of conscience and the fact that it must be developed through constant study of the Word, and must often be corrected.

We have seen how the first created people were developed by the Lord into a church — the Most Ancient Church — and how they lived an innocent, happy life led directly by the Lord and caring for the things of this world only as they taught of spiritual things — the state pictured by the Garden of Eden with the tree of life in the midst. Temptation crept in through their desire to be led by themselves instead of by the Lord, and to reason from what their senses told them instead of from what the Lord told them. This turning of their hearts away from the Lord made it impossible for the Lord any longer to teach them through their hearts, and so they lost the perception of truth which they had had and the ability to communicate directly with the spiritual world. They finally came to think only of themselves and of their life in this world, and they used the knowledge of heavenly things which had been handed down to them to excuse and confirm their selfish desires. This is pictured in our lesson today by the marriages between the sons of God and the daughters of men, the sons of God being the heavenly truths handed down to them, and the daughters of men the evil affections which had sprung from their self-love. The result was a race of giants; that is, they became very great in their own eyes and thought of themselves as gods. That this spiritual condition actually worked itself out in material ways we know from the mention of remnants of the giants in later portions of the Scriptures (Numbers 13:33; Deuteronomy 3:11). Goliath of Gath was one of the last of these physical giants. They were giants in body because of their monstrous perversions of heavenly things and exaltation of themselves. These perversions — or falsities — ultimately destroyed them both soul and body, stifling all spiritual life within them and causing them to destroy each other. This is the flood which covered the tops of the mountains — a flood of false persuasions burying all points of approach to the Lord.

In our chapter for today we come to a statement of an apparent truth, when it is said that the Lord repented that He had made man and determined to destroy him. The destruction of the Most Ancient Church was not the work of the Lord, but of the evils and falsities which men had chosen themselves. Nor does the Lord change His mind. He foresees all things and makes provision for them. His love and wisdom are constant, but their working out in human affairs necessarily changes with the changes in men's states. So a father's love for his child does not change, but it cannot express itself in the same way when the child is bent on wrongdoing as when the child is good. When men became so evil that they had closed all ways of approach against the Lord, He permitted them to destroy themselves in order that a new church could spring up and develop among those few who had retained some desire to do right.

Those few among whom the new church could be developed are represented by Noah. They were by no means wholly good; indeed, they were so far perverted that they could not possibly be restored to the original state of the celestial church. The Lord had to take them as they were and provide a new means of approach to them. This is pictured in the building of the ark. It was made of gopher wood. Wood is the symbol of natural goodness - the only goodness that was left in the people of that time — and Swedenborg tells us (@AC 643) that gopher wood is a highly inflammable wood; so it pictures natural goodness full of selfishness. The ark was to be made, as our translation gives it, with "rooms." This pictures a change which the Lord wrought in man's very nature in order to save him. We have seen that the people of the Most Ancient Church were taught through their wills; that is, their thoughts were the direct result of their desires. So long as their inmost desire was to serve the Lord, they could think nothing but what was true; but when their desires became selfish, they could think only what was false. So it was necessary for the Lord to separate man's will from his understanding, in order that his mind could see what was true even when he did not wish to do right; then he could learn the truth and be led to make himself live according to it until he was so confirmed in right action that the Lord could give him a new will. Thus the people of the Ancient Church — as the church described by Noah and his descendants is called — were led to do right by conscience instead of by perception. This separation of the will and the understanding is what is pictured by the ark's being divided into rooms. The three stories picture the three planes of the mind: knowledge, reason, and understanding, comparable to act, thought, and will, through which the man of this church could be led to do right. The window open above pictures the mind open to receive truth from the Lord, and the door in the side, hearing and obedience to the truth. (@AE 651-658) It is by obedience to the commandments that we open the door to the Lord's entrance into our lives (cf. Revelation 3:20). So the ark in every detail is a picture of the character of the people who constituted the remnant from the Most Ancient Church after they had been put into a new order by the Lord so that they might again receive a knowledge of the truth and by obeying it learn to love it. The first church was a celestial church because it was led by love of the Lord in the heart. The second, the Ancient Church, was a spiritual church because it was led by truth from the Lord in the understanding. This newly ordered mind enabled the good remnant to survive the flood of falsity which destroyed the rest of mankind.

But the story has an application to our individual lives as well as to the history of the race. We have compared our infancy to the Garden of Eden state, and we have seen how evil creeps in as soon as we begin to have enough self-consciousness to want to choose our own way. Have we not all seen spoiled children — children who have been allowed to have their own way? Are they not well described by the picture of the giants of old, very great and important in their own estimation, and bending all their efforts and reasoning to the satisfying of their selfish desires, even to the point of violence against those who try to control or thwart them and even sometimes violence toward themselves when they cannot get what they want? Each one of us has an inheritance of evil which, if indulged and confirmed, would lead him to complete spiritual and even physical destruction. But in very early childhood we become conscious of the division which the Lord has provided between our will and our understanding. We are taught what is right and, if our parents are wise, we are made to do it even against our will; and so we gradually form good habits and develop a conscience which helps us to direct our conduct. The life of a little child so taught and directed is also pictured by the story of Noah and the ark. The animals taken into the ark are all his affections, good and bad, which form the basis of his personality and must be dealt with in the course of his regeneration. The flood is the long series of temptations to which his selfish desires and reasonings subject him. Noah and his wife are his recognition of the Lord and his desire to do what is right. Their sons and daughters-in-law are the thoughts and affections which grow out of this recognition and desire.

And if he keeps these alive in the ark, the time will come when his ark will rest on the top of the mountain and the flood will subside; he will have acquired fixed habits of right conduct which he is no longer tempted to break; his mind will have come to rest in the Lord's will and he will be ready to go forth to his work in the world in freedom — "freedom is to be led by the Lord."

## 11:THE END OF THE FLOOD — Genesis 8

### INTRO

Every teacher should read for background the chapters which have been omitted, Genesis 5 and 7, 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.

### 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 self-hood 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 Genesis 6:1-7. @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.

## **12:THE RAINBOW — Genesis 9:1-17**

### **INTRO**

The review of the temptation by the serpent leads directly into the story of the decline of the Most Ancient Church and the necessity of the Lord's stepping in to save the remnant of good people from destruction. The story of the ark and the flood can be told briefly with the emphasis this time on the Lord's new promise and on the rainbow as the token of it.

### **Adult**

Two main lines of discussion may be pursued: the significance of the philosophy of history found in the Arcana, and the difference between the people of the Most Ancient Church and all later people — including ourselves. We have a strong tendency to imagine that individually — if we learn the truths of the church in childhood — we arrive at a point when we no longer need to think about truth but somehow do good instinctively. There is nothing in the writings of the New Church to support such an idea.

The New Church teaching with regard to history is like a powerful searchlight bringing into clear view an area which has previously been dark and uncertain. History as we study it in school is something which has been compiled from material remains of past ages and from man-made documents, both sources necessarily fragmentary. Studied in this way, history is inevitably regarded as a process of human achievement — man's gradual conquest of his environment and

the dealings of man with man. God has no part in it except as men are thought to have developed one religious concept after another and in spreading their ideas to have affected external events. But the Word teaches us that "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" and that God's revelation of Himself to man has governed and directed all history. And the writings of Swedenborg teach us that in every age the church has been the "heart and lungs" of the social body, the center from which the life and thought of the age has sprung.

The character of the ancient people, as these writings reveal it to us in the interpretation of the early chapters of Genesis, is very different from the theories concerning it which men have formed from the study of material remains, and is much closer to the stories of the Golden and Silver Ages handed down through mythology. Our lesson today covers the period of the flood — the transition from the Most Ancient to the Ancient Church. In @AC 605 we read: "The subject now treated of is the formation of a new church, which is called 'Noah'; and its formation is described by the ark into which living things of every kind were received. But as is wont to be the case, before that new church could arise it was necessary that the man of the church should suffer many temptations, which are described by the lifting up of the ark, its fluctuation, and its delay upon the waters of the flood. And finally, that he became a true spiritual man and was set free, is described by the cessation of the waters, and the many things that follow."

Here we have clearly stated the way in which the Lord raised up a new church — the Ancient Church — from the "remnant" who were such that they could be regenerated. We are familiar with the thought that Noah and his sons picture this remnant. The change was not sudden. It took place gradually over a long period of time. The events described in chapter 7 of Genesis treat in their internal sense of the preservation of the remnant and their preparation for the new type of life to be developed, and chapter 8 treats of the development of the new church in them.

Finally in our chapter for today the state of the regenerate man of that church is described, and this is summed up in the "token" of the new covenant, the rainbow. We should note that this covenant was to be a perpetual one. That is, although the Ancient Church was to decline and perish and its knowledges to be lost, the character of man as to his means of regeneration would not again be changed. The human race on earth will not go back to the state of the man of the Most Ancient Church, although the regeneration of any individual may, if he is faithful, progress to the celestial degree. We are told that since the period of the flood no one has been added to the heavens of the Most Ancient Church, and the hells of that church have been closed. The succeeding churches have their celestial heavens but they are not reached except by the process described by the sign of the rainbow. Each of us is born natural and must learn truths and become spiritual before he can become celestial.

Swedenborg tells us (@AC 1043) that the cloud pictures the obscurity in which our minds are as a result of the evil in our natural wills. But when we introduce truths from the Word into our minds and try to live according to them, light from the Lord shining in those truths — like the rays of the sun reflected in the drops of water against the dark cloud — can so modify our darkness as to produce beautiful appearances of truth in our minds, like the colors of the rainbow, teaching us that the Lord is always present with His love and protection however dark our surroundings may seem, and that if we are faithful to the truth, He will keep us safe and finally remove our temptations and "create in us a clean heart." This is the covenant which He makes with all the human race. Because the will with which we are born is evil, we cannot see truth directly by perception as the people of the Most Ancient Church did, but truth can be reflected from the knowledge of the letter of the Word which we have in our minds and so "reform" us that the Lord

can come into our hearts and give us a new will. This is the method of regeneration with all people since the flood, and the rainbow is consequently the correspondential sign of regeneration with the "spiritual" as distinguished from the "celestial" type of man.

Swedenborg says (@AC 1042): "Spiritual angels, who have all been regenerated men of the spiritual church, when presented to sight as such in the other life, appear with as it were a rainbow about the head." He also tells us that the character of the rainbow is different with each, according to the particular way in which he has allowed the truth to modify the natural obscurity of his mind. The "white" light is broken up into colors by the absorption of some of its elements by darkness of one sort or another. All the colors of the rainbow are harmonious and all are present in the white beam. The particular content of our minds determines the colors which can be reflected there and which ones will be blotted out by persistent falsities. "Many are regenerated by the Lord in every dogma, and when they have been regenerated they do not receive any immediate revelation, but only what is insinuated into them through the Word and the preaching of the Word. But because they receive charity, the Lord works through charity upon their cloud, from which there springs light, as when the sun strikes a cloud, which then becomes more luminous and is variegated with colors. Thus also there arises in the cloud the likeness of a bow. The thinner the cloud, that is, the more numerous are the intermingled truths of faith of which it consists, the more beautiful is the bow. But the denser the cloud, that is, the fewer the truths of faith of which it consists, the less beautiful is the bow. Innocence adds much to its beauty, giving as it were a living brightness to the colors" (@AC 1043). This gives us one clear answer to the question often asked, "If people of all religions can be saved, why is one religion better than another?" We should all wish to have our cloud of falsities as thin as possible so that our characters may reflect more of the beautiful variations of the Lord's light. But we must remember that there can be no rainbow whatever if charity is not found in us. We must wish to serve the Lord and the neighbor instead of ourselves or we can have no enlightenment.

## **13:THE TOWER OF BABEL — Genesis 11:1-9**

### **INTRO**

With all classes above Primary the teacher will need to prepare in his mind a brief summary of the story of the flood and of Noah. Present the flood as the inevitable end of those who turn away from the Lord and rely on their own judgment, and the saving of Noah as the Lord's provision for the preservation of the race He had created. Then show how history repeated itself because of human conceit and folly and so introduce the lesson for today. The teacher should have in mind an example of a modern building of a Tower of Babel which will come close to the experience of his particular class.

### **Adult**

The reasons for the decline of the Ancient church and the picture given of it in the series Noah, Ham, Cush, Nimrod, Babel are important for the Adults, especially in connection with the modern approach to Bible study. We might note that the First Christian Church followed the same historic pattern of decline which the Ancient Church presents.

The decline of the Most Ancient Church is described in Genesis 5 in the genealogy from Adam to

Noah, and its final state of gross self-love in Genesis 6:1-7. The destruction of the people of the Most Ancient Church had to be permitted because they were so constituted that all their knowledge of truth came by perception through the will, and when the will became wholly selfish, they could think nothing but what was false. We are familiar with the general meaning of the story of the flood, the salvation of Noah and his family in the ark, and the new covenant whose sign was the rainbow. With the people of the Ancient Church which was founded on this covenant, the will and the understanding were separated so that men could receive knowledge of divine truth by an external way, as all men have received it since that time.

Because of the brevity and simplicity of these early Bible stories we are apt to forget that, like the six days of creation, each of them describes a development which took centuries. The world does not pass suddenly from one state to another any more than an individual does. The germs of evil as well as the remains of good are often unnoticed for a long time and grow little by little. So the tremendous pride of self-intelligence which brought about the end of the Ancient Church was the culmination of a long, slow process of decline.

In our lesson for today we find them journeying "from the east" — away from the Lord — and they have come to a plain in the land of Shinar. There they build a city and a tower, which is called Babel. Babel is first mentioned in Genesis 10:10 as one of the productions of Nimrod, who was a son of Cush and a grandson of Ham. Of the three sons of Noah — the three different branches of the Ancient Church — Ham represents external worship without internal, or faith without charity. Cush represents the "interior knowledges of the Word, whereby such men [men who are in faith without charity] confirm false principles." Nimrod represents the external worship of those who place religion in externals and not in internals. Nimrod was a "mighty hunter" and Swedenborg tells us that this is because the greater part of mankind do not know what internal things are, but only external things; and most men abide in things of sense, in pleasures and in cupidities, and have in view themselves and the world; and therefore they are easily captivated by such a religion." (@AC 1178) This gives us a background for our thought concerning the Tower of Babel.

In Isaiah 14:13-14 it is said of the king of Babylon: "For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High." The word Babylon is merely the Greek form of Babel; by a play on words they are both connected with a Hebrew root (balal) which signifies confusion. The state which causes spiritual confusion is the exaltation of self. The pride of the king of Babylon and the pride of the people of the degenerate Ancient Church are both described in the Bible in similar terms, but the older story, being part of the Ancient Word, uses the picture of the actual building of a tower "whose top may reach unto heaven." "And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar." Stone is one of the symbols of truth, standing particularly for the fundamental truths upon which we build our lives. So the Lord Himself is called the "Cornerstone," and many times the "Rock." Bricks are made by man out of the earth itself to take the place of stone. They picture principles which man makes up out of his own mind to take the place of the Lord's truths; the fire with which he burns them "thoroughly" is the fire of self-love; and self-interest is the slime or bitumen with which he sticks them together, in place of the enduring mortar of neighborly love.

A businessman who believes that "the first duty of each of us is to look after himself" has definite principles upon which he carries on his business; he makes these up with the best of his understanding so that he may succeed. He may not lie or steal or cheat because he can see that "honesty is the best policy," but his principles have nothing to hold them together except self-

interest, and as soon as he is convinced that some other practice would serve him better, the structure that he has made falls to pieces, like the house founded on the sand: his "slime" has melted away. Every life that is built from the motive of self-love is a tower of Babel.

The people of the Ancient Church had a wealth of knowledges concerning spiritual things and how they work out in the substances of the material world. When they turned from the Lord to self, they began to use their knowledges and their worship to get power and fame for themselves, and if the Lord had not again interfered, they would have destroyed themselves as the people of the Most Ancient Church had done. They would have become monstrous forms of falsity, just as the Most Ancients became giants of evil: "And now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do." So the Lord took away from them the understanding of the spiritual meaning of material things, so that they could no longer pervert and profane the holy things which are within all external effects. The Word says that the Lord "did there confound the language of all the earth." That is, when the internal harmony which came from dependence on the Lord was destroyed through self-conceit, all the varieties of thought and worship, which had been like the harmonious colors of the rainbow, became sources of discord and division. So the people of the Ancient Church were divided and scattered, each group following its own form of worship from tradition instead of from any understanding of its spiritual significance.

This, we are told, was the origin of all the forms of idolatry in which the nations were found at the dawn of recorded history. Nature worship, ancestor worship, idol worship — instead of being the beginnings of religion as a prevailing modern theory holds — are the degenerate remains of the beautiful correspondential worship of the people of the Silver Age, the Ancient Church. Mythology is a corrupt survival of true correspondential accounts of the early peoples. Hieroglyphic writing has its basis in correspondence. The accounts of the flood found in the traditions of certain nations are corruptions of the original account in the Ancient Word which Moses copied from that Word for us. A very clear illustration of the building of a Tower of Babel is the "natural history" concept of the development of religion, which is made up by men from their knowledge of existing historical remains without any belief in Divine revelation or in spiritual causes. A knowledge of the spiritual meaning of the story of the Tower of Babel with reference to the Ancient Church should protect the minds of New Churchmen from infection by this "natural history" concept and its conclusions. Modern scholarship is so bound up with this concept that in examining its findings it is almost impossible to separate fact from imagination. When one starts with the premise that the Bible is merely the product of men, one's conclusions are unsound, no matter how painstaking and conscientious the research. It makes a vital difference whether we approach the Bible as God's Word to men or as man's "ascending search for God." The latter study builds a Tower of Babel. The former builds a church.

## **14:THE CALL OF ABRAM — Genesis 11:27-32; 12:1-10**

### **INTRO**

Noah's descendants, like the descendants of Adam and Eve, turned away from the Lord and wanted to go their own way, until finally they became so selfish that they could not live peaceably together and had to be scattered over the face of the earth. There is a good moral lesson for small children

here because they know that when even one child in a group is selfish, there is always quarreling and trouble.

## Adult

The change to the period of actual history should be pointed out and explained. Cover the general points of the lesson briefly and then ask for questions and develop further the indicated subjects.

Up to this point our lessons have been on the portion of the Word that Swedenborg says was copied by Moses from the Ancient Word, and we have not been dealing with historical fact in the letter. [See @AC 1401, but also see @DSS 103.]

@AC 1140 and 1343 state that the first person mentioned in the Word who is a historical personage as well as a representative figure is Eber (Genesis 11:14), from whom the Hebrews took their name. @AC 1343 says that Eber constituted a Second Ancient Church, which came to an end in idolatrous worship in Terah, the father of Abram, and that Abram signifies a Third Ancient Church (@AC 1360), from or in which the Lord instituted the Jewish Church. The Second Ancient Church, like the First, recognized spiritual things and knew that its forms of worship had their value from their correspondence. It was in this church that sacrifices were instituted. But as the people degenerated, the knowledge of the spiritual meaning of the various acts and symbols of worship was lost until they regarded their images and sacrifices as holy in themselves, and became idolaters, knowing nothing of love for the Lord and the neighbor or of heaven and eternal life. So the Lord and the angels could no longer be present with men in their interiors — their hearts and minds — because they no longer had any internal thought, and because all real worship is internal, there could no longer be a real church on earth. Still the Lord had to keep His contact with men in order to keep them alive and to save those whose intentions were good. So He instituted the Jewish Church, which was not a real church at all but merely the representative of a church. One of the Epistles says of the Jewish priests who "offer gifts according to the law" that they "serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things" (Hebrews 8:5). The Hebrew nation was chosen by the Lord for this purpose not because they were a particularly religious people, as is commonly thought, but because they were a wholly external people, and could be led through fear of punishment and hope of reward, without interfering with their freedom, to carry on worship of Jehovah according to the particular forms which would correspondentially represent true worship, and so by the correspondence of these forms could keep the connection between heaven and earth. Their history could be so providentially directed by the Lord that, recorded in words, it would correspondentially express heavenly things and the divine life itself.

It is the history of this church which we are beginning now.

Abram was a man who lived on the earth and did things of which we read in the letter of the Word; but if he had been no more than that, the story of his life would be of no more value to us than the history of any other man. He is also a representative figure — representative of the Lord and of the celestial man — and everything that is recorded of him in the Word has a meaning with reference to the Lord's life and to our own lives. And we should remember that it is what the Lord chose to have recorded in the Word which has this meaning. The findings of archaeology with regard to conditions in Abram's time may be interesting to us as natural learning, but they add nothing to our understanding of the Word.

We have learned that the stories of the Garden of Eden treated of the rise and decline of the church in a celestial type of person, and that the stories of Noah treat of the rise and decline of the church in the spiritual type of person. Now we come to the development of a church among natural men. We are born natural men and women, and it takes a long time for us to develop on this natural plane; so the story is given us in detail, and every detail has a deep importance for us individually. The dealings of the Lord with the Jews throughout their history as it is recorded in the Scriptures picture His dealings with us in our progress through life. This is what makes the Bible the Book of Life for us.

Abram was called to make a journey. The symbol of a journey as the correspondent of progress through life is so woven into our common thought and speech that everyone should be able to recognize it. Indeed the journey of the children of Israel through the wilderness has always been recognized as a picture of the progress of the soul. Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress is a classic example of the use of this symbol. The very word progress embodies the same symbolism. We cannot talk at all without employing correspondences. In life we pass from state to state, from low to high or from high to low. Sometimes we go backward; sometimes we stand still. We reach lofty states of vision, like mountain tops, from which we can look back upon the whole of our life and see it in its true proportions, and forward to the new states we are approaching. We recognize this symbolism as a fact. But with Swedenborg's help — or rather, with the help of the Lord by means of Swedenborg — we are enabled to go further: we can understand the meaning of each detail in this Bible journey of Abram and apply it to our own experience. Abram was called to leave Ur of the Chaldees, the land of his birth, and go to the land of Canaan. The land of our birth is our natural inheritance of evil and falsity; the land of Canaan is a heavenly state. The Lord calls each one of us to turn our backs upon our natural selfish impulses and thoughts and, in obedience to His commands and under His guidance to travel toward a state of heavenly feeling and thought — thus toward heaven itself. We do not get there all at once. We sometimes tarry a long time in halfway states, as Abram tarried at Haran. Some of us, without actually going backward, stop halfway, as Nahor and his family did. If we go on with Abram and reach our goal, we do not remain in the first heavenly state we taste, which is pictured by Abram's stop at Shechem in the valley, but we go on to the higher country of Bethel. Each new heavenly state fills us with gratitude to the Lord, which is pictured by Abram's building altars wherever he stopped.

Then we come inevitably to a time when we feel a hunger for more truth. There was a famine in the land. "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord" (Amos 8:11). And we know that: "Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled." Spiritual hunger and thirst are meant by famine. Abram went down into Egypt. The land of Egypt is the Bible symbol of a state of learning on the natural plane - "the memory knowledge of knowledges," as it is called in @AC 1461. There was no rain from heaven in Egypt, but its land seldom failed to yield crops because it was made fertile by the annual overflow of the Nile and watered from it by irrigation. In the same way, our memory knowledge comes to us not from within but from without, and its fruit is stored up constantly waiting to be needed. Whenever there was a famine in the ancient world, its people knew that in Egypt they could buy grain. So Abram went down into Egypt; later Joseph went down, and was followed by all the children of Israel; and finally the Lord Himself as a babe was taken into Egypt. We should have no difficulty in seeing what these journeys into Egypt mean in our spiritual life. They mean procuring knowledge from the letter of the Word where the Lord has stored it up for us. Whenever there is a famine in our spiritual life, what we need is to go to the Word and read it and learn new truths from its letter, into which the

spirit of the Lord may flow, enlightening us and giving us new spiritual power. But we are never to stay permanently in this mere learning state. We are to take our new riches back to the Holy Land as Abram did and use them in the Lord's service in our daily life.

## 15:ABRAM AND LOT — Genesis 13:1-13, 14:1-16

### INTRO

In addition to the chapters assigned, the teacher should read Genesis 11, 12, 18, and 19, which cover the story of Lot. Familiarity with a map of the journey, and with the location of the cities mentioned in the Holy Land is also important. Archaeologists are uncertain as to the exact location of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, but it is beginning to seem probable that they may be found in an area now covered by part of the Dead Sea, which was in Bible times part of the plain of Jordan.

### Adult

You may be surprised to find that some of the class know nothing of Lot except that Lot's wife was turned into a pillar of salt. This incident has proved so striking and controversial that it is important to see it as one of the last results of Lot's original choice, and so get it into its proper proportion to the rest of the story. As to the incident itself, there is no more reason to doubt it than to doubt any other miracle in the Scriptures. If the class is bent upon discussing it, be sure they realize that it is logically inconsistent to accept the Lord's miracles in the New Testament and refuse to accept the miracles in the Old Testament, just as it is logically inconsistent to accept the visions of Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Paul and refuse to accept Swedenborg's visions.

We have seen that the people of the Ancient Church — the Silver Age — were led by truth. Their great interest was in learning truths, and they had access to the knowledge of the Most Ancient people, which had been preserved and handed down to them. Thus they knew correspondence of the things of nature with spiritual things, and this study was their greatest delight. From our own little knowledge of correspondences we can imagine what wide variety of interest this study must have had, and we can see how, as Swedenborg tells us (@AC 1285), the people of that time could have developed a wide variety of forms of worship, depending upon their particular interests and points of view. Yet as long as they were in charity, that is, as long as they worshiped from love to the Lord and the neighbor, they were in perfect harmony as to doctrine. This is what is meant in the story of the Tower of Babel by their being "of one language and of one speech." When people are working with a common interest and without thought of self, they easily understand one another. They "speak the same language," and variety in knowledge and point of view adds to the harmony of their efforts. But again the love of self crept in, and the Ancient Church came to its end and its people were literally as well as spiritually scattered over the face of the earth. Most of the pagan religions in the world are perversions of beliefs handed down by tradition from the scattered remnants of the Ancient Church.

Up to this point our lessons have been on the portion of the Word copied by Moses from the Ancient Word, and we have not been dealing with historical fact in the letter. Swedenborg tells us (@AC 1140, 1343) that the first person mentioned in the Word who is a historical personage as well as a

representative figure is Eber (Genesis 11:14), from whom the Hebrews took their name. He tells us (@AC 1343) that Eber constituted a second Ancient Church, which came to an end in idolatrous worship in Terah, the father of Abram, and that Abram signifies a third Ancient Church (@AC 1360), from or in which the Lord instituted the Jewish Church. The second Ancient Church, like the first, recognized spiritual things and knew that its forms of worship had their value from their correspondence. It was in this church that sacrifices were instituted. [See, however, Genesis 8:20.] But as it degenerated, the knowledge of the spiritual meaning of the various acts of worship was lost, until they came to regard their images and sacrifices as holy in themselves and became idolaters, knowing nothing of love for the Lord and the neighbor or of heaven and eternal life. So the Lord and the angels could no longer be present with men in their interiors, because they no longer had any internal thought. There could no longer be any real church on earth, because all real worship is internal. Still the Lord had to keep His contact with men to keep them alive and to save those whose intentions were good, and He instituted the Jewish Church, which was not a real church at all, but only the representative of a church. It is said of the Jewish priests who "offer gifts according to the law" that they "serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things" (Hebrews 8:5). The Hebrew nation was chosen by the Lord for this purpose, not because they were a peculiarly religious people but because they were a wholly external people and could be led, through hope of reward and fear of punishment, to carry on worship of Jehovah according to the particular forms which would correspondentially represent true worship and so — through correspondence — keep the connection between earth and heaven which could no longer be maintained through the minds and hearts of men. Their history could be directed by the Lord so that it could be recorded in words which, by correspondence, would express heavenly things and the divine life itself.

The fundamental principle of the Jewish Church was recognition of the necessity of obeying the commands of God. Abram lived in Ur of Chaldea, and he and his people were idolaters; but apparently he above others was inclined to absolute obedience. When he was called by the Lord to leave his country and his father's people and take the long journey to Canaan, he obeyed. And throughout the story he obeyed unhesitatingly when the Lord spoke to him. He represents in us the beginning of the development of spiritual life. This beginning — when we are very little children — lies in obedience, first to our parents and then to the precepts of right conduct which have been taught us.

Abram did not leave Ur alone. He took with him his wife Sarai, his father Terah, his brother Nahor, his nephew Lot — whose father had died in Ur — their families, and all their servants, cattle, and possessions. We start our journey of life just where we are by heredity, and must take with us all our qualities, all our abilities, and all our weaknesses. Abram's father died before he reached the land of Canaan, and his brother Nahor and his family stopped halfway and settled in Haran (also called the city of Nahor). There are in us tendencies which, while not evil, are "simple." We say we have "outgrown" them. Yet they remain in our background and we go back to them from time to time for renewal of our early simple faith. These are represented by Nahor. But Lot went all the way with Abram.

Each plane of our minds has its internal and its external. Abram pictures the internal man in its early state, and Lot the external or sensuous man. We are all perfectly familiar in our own experience with the struggle between higher and lower motives and principles. Lot chose to live in the low but inviting valley of present satisfaction, and Abram dwelt in the mountains of the Lord's promise.

In the fertile valley of the Jordan, Lot's choice, were the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Lot went to live near Sodom. Because of this he was captured and carried away when the four kings from the Tigris—Euphrates valley came over to make war on the five kings of the Jordan valley. This pictures our early temptation to do as others do. At first the childhood habit of obedience, like Abram, is near enough to be aroused and strong enough to go after us and bring us back to a good state. But temptations increase. In chapter 19 we find Lot living in the very gate of Sodom when it was about to be destroyed for its wickedness. We are familiar with the story of the angels who came to Lot to lead him out of Sodom. Even then, we recall, Lot refused to go to the mountain and chose to live in the little city of Zoar, and the Lord permitted him to make his choice. Lot was saved, but his two sons, Moab and Ammon, born to him after this escape, fathered the Moabites and Ammonites, who represent the evils and falsities that result when men live in the externals or worship without the internals. They were enemies of Israel for generations. All Lot's troubles began when his herdsmen quarreled with Abram's herdsmen, at which time he separated from Abram and went to live in the valley.

And what of Lot's wife who disobeyed the command of the angels and looked back toward Sodom? To look back or turn back means to recede from good once we have seen and undertaken it. When we make up our minds to do the right thing, we should go forward with it steadily and not dally with thoughts of the pleasures of the course from which we have turned. Salt in a good sense represents the affection of truth or the desire to live according to the truth. When this is lost, the salt has lost its savor. It was an old custom, coming from a knowledge of this correspondence, to sow a conquered city with salt. We should be able to learn from past experience not to "look back." The pillar of salt into which Lot's wife was turned stands as a perpetual warning. The Lord Himself said, "Remember Lot's wife."

## 16:ABRAHAM AND ISHMAEL — Genesis 16

### INTRO

Review briefly the story of the Most Ancient Church and its destruction as a preparation for describing the decline and fall of the Ancient Church. Then review the raising up of the remnant called Noah and go from that to an account of the call of Abram. The thought of the Lord's stepping in while a remnant of good remained can be connected with the promise of which the rainbow was the token. Be sure the classes understand why Abram is used in our chapter and why we always speak of him as Abraham.

### Adult

The three main lines of thought to be followed are the transition from the Ancient to the Jewish Church, the change of application in our interpretation as we pass to the historical part of the Word, and the meaning of Hagar and Ishmael.

We have thought of Noah as picturing the Ancient Church which was established on earth after the flood. We commonly think of this as the second church and of the Jewish Church as the third. But Swedenborg points out that the three sons of Noah picture different derivations of doctrinals and worships in the Ancient Church — Shem true internal worship, Ham "internal worship corrupted," and Japheth "external worship corresponding to internal" (@AC 1146) - and the explanation of the

internal sense of the genealogies in chapter 10 of Genesis shows clearly how these three types deviated more and more Widely as time went on from the true pattern of the Ancient Church. As might be expected, the descendants of Shem continued to be the core of the Lord's connection with mankind, and in this line there developed a "second Ancient Church" in Eber. Of this church we read in @AC 1343:

"That 'Eber' was a nation called, from Eber as its father, the Hebrew nation, and that thereby is signified the worship in general of the second Ancient Church, is evident from those historical parts of the Word wherein it is spoken of. From that nation, because the new worship commenced there, all were called Hebrews who had a similar worship. Their worship was of the kind that was afterwards restored among the descendants of Jacob; and its chief characteristic consisted in their calling their God 'Jehovah,' and in their having sacrifices. The Most Ancient Church with unanimity acknowledged the Lord, and called Him Jehovah, as is evident from the first chapters of Genesis, and elsewhere in the Word. The Ancient Church, that is, the church after the flood, also acknowledged the Lord, and called Him Jehovah, especially those who had internal worship, and were called 'sons of Shem.' The others, who were in external worship, also acknowledged Jehovah, and worshiped Him. But when internal worship became external, and still more when it became idolatrous, and when each nation began to have its own god whom it worshiped, the Hebrew nation retained the name Jehovah; and hereby were distinguished from the other nations. Together with their external worship, the descendants of Jacob in Egypt lost this also — that they called their God Jehovah; nay, Moses himself did so; and therefore they were instructed first of all that Jehovah was the God of the Hebrews, and the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob."

@AC 1360 tells us that Terah, the father of Abram, was a "third Ancient Church" which had become idolatrous, and Terah's death in Haran (@AC 1375) signalized the end of this idolatrous worship and "the beginning of a representative church through Abram."

In @AC 1403 Swedenborg says: "From the first chapter of Genesis up to this point [Genesis 12:1], or rather to the mention of Eber, the historicals have not been true but made—up historicals, which in the internal sense signify celestial and spiritual actualities." This is further explained in @AC 1409: "The Most Ancient Church, which was celestial, looked upon all earthly and worldly, and also bodily things, which were in any wise objects of the senses, as being dead things; but as each and all things in the world present some idea of the Lord's kingdom, consequently of things celestial and spiritual, when they saw them or apprehended them by any sense, they thought not of them, but of the celestial and spiritual things; indeed they thought not from the worldly things, but by means of them; and thus with them things that were dead became living. The things thus signified were collected from their lips by their posterity and were formed by them into doctrinals, which were the Word of the Ancient Church, after the flood. With the Ancient Church these were significative; for through them they learned internal things, and from them they thought of spiritual and celestial things. But when this knowledge began to perish, so that they did not know that such things were signified, and began to regard the terrestrial and worldly things as holy, and to worship them, with no thought of their signification, the same things were then made representative. Thus arose the Representative Church, which had its beginning in Abram and was afterwards instituted with the posterity of Jacob. From this it may be known that representatives had their rise from the significatives of the Ancient Church, and these from the celestial ideas of the Most Ancient Church. But with representatives the character of the person is not considered at all, but the thing which he represents; for all the kings of Judah and Israel, of whatever character, represented the Lord's kingly function; and all the priests, of whatever character, represented His priestly function. Thus

the evil as well as the good could represent the Lord and the celestial and spiritual things of His kingdom."

The story of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob pictures in the internal historical sense the development of this representative church, and in its internal sense the development of any one of us. So we may think of the whole story of Abraham — which is more or less familiar to all of us — as picturing our spiritual state in infancy and very early childhood. Our lesson for today deals with the beginning of the change from this innocent, trustful, obedient age to the part of our childhood when we are beginning to try to think and act for ourselves. Swedenborg summarizes our chapter in its inmost meaning as follows: "The subject treated of in this chapter is the Lord's first rational, which was conceived by the influx of the internal man into the affection of memory-knowledges [scientiae] of the external. The internal man is 'Abram'; the affection of memory-knowledges in the external is 'Hagar the Egyptian handmaid'; the rational thence derived is 'Ishmael.'" The name Hagar means a "stranger" or "sojourner" and in a simple way we can see that our conclusions from our early thinking are inevitably temporary. They are based on our knowledge of the external world alone. We reason from appearances. And it follows that we resent efforts to correct our ideas and conduct by those who are older and wiser and whose standards are based on deeper spiritual truths. This is pictured in the story of Hagar's despising her mistress, being rebuked, and fleeing from the face of her mistress.

Hagar is found by the angel at the fountain of water in the wilderness. Our affection for external knowledges, under the Lord's providence, is always supplied with some external knowledge of the Word, which serves for rebuke, advice, and encouragement in goodness. So Hagar returns and is again subject to her mistress. But Hagar's son, although he is to be the father of a great people, is not to be Abraham's heir. This means that our first natural reasoning is necessary and will always play a part in our lives, especially in the conduct of our worldly affairs, but it is not adequate to lead us in our spiritual progress.

## **17:ABRAHAM AND THE ANGELS — Genesis 18**

### **INTRO**

This lesson is from the middle of the Abraham story. Review briefly the facts concerning Abraham up to this point, leaving the rest of his story to be covered later. In the story this time Abraham's desire to be directed by the Lord should be emphasized, in contrast to the general state of mankind especially as it was pictured in the lesson on the Tower of Babel.

### **Adult**

The story of Abraham and its general correspondence should be familiar to the Adult class unless the group contains newcomers to the church. Most of the time should be spent on the details of the chapter, with special attention to Swedenborg's explanation of the visit of the three men, of Sarah's laughter, and of the conversation about Sodom and Gomorrah.

In approaching the familiar story of Abraham we need again to remind ourselves that all history is

the record of slow changes, and that events which seem to us sudden and sometimes inexplicable are nevertheless the result of the development of seeds sown long before. As the devastation of the Ancient Church was accomplished gradually, so the inauguration of the Jewish Church was not by a sudden sweeping creation.

The Jews look to Abraham as the father of their race, and we are accustomed to think of the call of Abraham as the beginning of the Jewish Church. But if we read the writings carefully, we find that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob constituted the last phase of the Ancient Church. Swedenborg speaks of three Ancient Churches. The first is pictured by Noah and his sons. The second began with Eber, who is the first real person mentioned in the Word and from whom the Jews take the name of Hebrews. The third is described in the story of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. For although Abraham was an idolater, having lost all understanding of spiritual things, he still had the desire to serve God rather than self, the desire which is essential to a true church. Isaac and even Jacob retained something of this desire. The Jewish Church, which was not a true church at all but merely the representative of a church, was instituted among the sons of Jacob and their descendants. Swedenborg has much to say about this in connection with the interpretation of Genesis 32, 33, and 34.

In explaining the stories of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Swedenborg deals principally with the celestial sense, with their application to the states through which the Lord passed from infancy to adulthood, as He progressively opened the planes of His Human and united them to the indwelling Divine. But we are frequently reminded in the writings that the process of regeneration with man is analogous to the process of glorification in the Lord. So we rightly think of Abraham as picturing our spiritual state in infancy and very early childhood, a state of celestial innocence and trust but also a state of ignorance. The call of Abraham to leave his father's house in Ur of the Chaldees and go to the land of Canaan is the call we hear when, as little children, we first recognize that we ought to be good instead of naughty. If we obey the call, we begin our journey and eventually reach the Holy Land. Like Abram we go down into Egypt for the sustenance we need — the knowledges of the Word necessary to our spiritual life — and return rich "in cattle, in silver, and in gold." We experience the separation from Lot when we see that the natural part of us seeks external satisfactions; and our early struggles with ourselves are on this most external plane, as Abraham had to rescue Lot when he became involved in the difficulties of the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Sodom and Gomorrah appear in our chapter for today. We may wonder at first what connection there is between the first half and the last half of the chapter, but the connection becomes evident when we think what the promise of an heir means. We are approaching the birth of Isaac, who represents our higher rational faculty. Ishmael — the natural rational — is already in the picture. That is, we are passing out of the infant state and have developed the ability to "reason from appearances." We are at the stage when we begin to argue with our parents. At heart we know we ought to continue to trust and obey them — Abraham's confidence does not waver — but our innocent delight in their complete wisdom — pictured by Sarah — is attacked by doubts. The promise of an heir is the promise that our efforts to do right will surely bear lasting fruit. The doubt comes to the child in the form of a question:

"What is the use of trying to be good all the time? I try and try, and never seem to satisfy people."

In verse 1 of our chapter Swedenborg's translation is "the oak groves of Mamre," and as the Hebrew word is terebinth — the teiltree or oak of Palestine — there seems no reason for the translation

"plains" of the King James Version. The Revised Standard Version translates it "the oaks." The oak groves signify perception from memory-knowledges, and the fact that Abraham sat in the tent door signifies a state of worship. So we have present the conditions necessary for receiving a communication from the Lord. We are told in the writings that before the Advent the Lord appeared to men by filling an angel with His presence, and we find that Abraham received the three men immediately as angels or messengers of the Lord. In @AC 2149 Swedenborg says that the three men signify "the Divine Itself, the Divine Human, and the Holy proceeding," and he continues: "for it is known to everyone that there is a Trine, and that this Trine is a One." Then he analyzes the conversation between Abraham and the angels to point out that they are addressed as one, that they speak as one, and that this One is identified with the Lord. A similar circumstance may be noted in chapter 19, where the two men who come to Lot are referred to as "they" while they are in Sodom, but become "he" after Lot has been led out.

The mission of the angels is to confirm the promise of an heir and to name the time of his birth. Concerning Sarah's laughter, which revealed doubt, Swedenborg says in @AC 2216 that laughter is "an affection of the rational" and he continues: "So long as there is in the rational such an affection as displays itself in laughter, so long there is in it something corporeal or worldly, and thus merely human." Even in the Lord, at the time in His earthly life which is pictured here, the rational still had much of the human in it, which was to be expelled, and this in the celestial sense is signified by Sarah's laughing.

Abraham's questions concerning Sodom and Gomorrah and the Lord's replies are an answer to our childhood question, "What is the use of trying to be good?" They are a study in the basic requirements for salvation. "If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes." Fifty signifies "what is full," in this case "truths full of goods." This is a spiritual picture of the man who has persisted in the effort to learn truths from the Word and to live according to them. But we all recognize our shortcomings in this respect. "Peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty righteous." Five signifies "a little." Forty and thirty both signify temptation — thirty a less degree than forty. We are told that genuine temptations come to no one who is not regenerating, for spiritual temptations are not mere external trials but are the urge to despair of our power to do right and to give up the battle, to take the easy downward path. So long as we have these inner struggles, we may know that our state is not hopeless. Twenty represents "the good of ignorance," "those who have not been in temptations and yet are good," and Swedenborg ascribes this especially to the state of young people between the ages of ten and twenty, because they have not reached the age of full responsibility for their choices. All these are saved. Finally the number ten signifies "remains." All little children — in whom the Lord always stores up remains of good and truth - and all adults who have not by their own choice destroyed these remains in themselves are saved.

## 18:THE BIRTH OF ISAAC — Genesis 21:1-21

### INTRO

In this lesson, some of the details of the birth of Ishmael are reviewed in order to contrast sharply the first rational — Ishmael — with the second rational — Isaac. The reiterating of the promise of an heir in the last lesson will lead naturally into the story of the birth of Isaac.

# Adult

The lesson should center on the nature of the natural and spiritual rationals and the difference between them. Ishmael is the reasoning that is born of the world, Isaac the reasoning that is born of the church.

Our writings tell us that we commit sin only when we do what we know or believe to be wrong. When we do wrong, believing that we are doing right, the inevitable external consequences follow, but our souls are not injured. The Lord is always striving to keep us from destroying our spiritual life; so when He sees that men are no longer able to resist certain evils, He takes away the knowledge that these things are wrong, and lets them live under lower standards in order that they may still be able to choose to do what they believe is right and save themselves from hell, if they will. The Hebrew nation began after men had degenerated to such a degree that the inner planes of their minds had been closed and they thought only of this world, and not at all of spiritual things. All spiritual knowledge had thus been taken from them and many things seemed right which the people of the Most Ancient and Ancient churches had known to be wrong. One of these things was marriage with more than one wife. This is why the Old Testament Scriptures contain so many instances of multiple marriage. We should understand this in order that we may not be troubled by the question of why the Lord permitted such things to become part of the Bible. Abraham and Sarah did no conscious wrong when Abraham, at Sarah's prompting, took Hagar to wife. They were old and had had no children and the carrying on of their family meant a great deal to them, especially in view of the Lord's promise that Abraham's seed should inherit the land of Canaan and should become a mighty nation.

But in the Lord's sight the son of the Egyptian bondwoman was not a proper heir for Abraham, and fourteen years later the Lord performed a miracle and permitted Sarah, then ninety years old, to bear Abraham a son. When, on the day when Isaac was weaned, Ishmael mocked at him, Sarah was more clear—sighted than Abraham. Abraham's love for his first son would have prompted him to keep Ishmael in the home, but the Lord told him to obey Sarah and send Hagar and Ishmael away.

In general Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob picture the development of three planes in our lives: the celestial, the spiritual, and the natural. When we are babies, we live in a celestial state — although we have no real knowledge or understanding of it — in which we are close to the Lord (Matthew 18:10) and depend wholly upon His care without thinking for ourselves or trying to govern ourselves. This is the period represented by Abraham. Then comes a time when our reasoning faculty begins to develop. This general period is represented by Ishmael and Isaac. Then follows the period when we have to carry out our ideas in the conduct of our daily life and occupations — make them practical, or put them into practice. This period, the hardest of all, is represented by Jacob and his sons. We must pass through all these stages of development before we are really ready for the work of regeneration.

Isaac, when he is grown up and has become the head of his family, represents our reason when it is fully and rightly developed, but this does not come all at once. When a child first begins to use his reason, he makes a great many mistakes because he has only superficial knowledge to draw upon and because he is proud of his new faculty and unwilling to admit that others may know more than he does. This first type of reasoning power is represented by Ishmael. Ishmael was a son of Abraham. That is, our first reasoning power, as well as our higher reason, comes to us from the Lord in the course of our normal development. But Ishmael's mother was an Egyptian bondwoman.

We recall that women represent the affections and that Egypt represents external or memory knowledge, a purely natural affection. All children at a certain age are eager to learn all sorts of things, to fill their minds with information of various kinds without discrimination, and their first reasoning faculty springs from this affection and is fed by the material which they gather into their memories. But Hagar was only a bondwoman. This pictures the fact that the mere affection for learning is not the true affection from which our thoughts and feelings should spring, but only one of the servants of that affection, and that it should be kept in control and not permitted to set itself up. If it is not kept in its place, it easily becomes scornful of spiritual things. So first Hagar and then both Hagar and Ishmael had to be sent away to make room for Abraham's true heir.

Yet both times the Lord preserved Hagar and her child. The love of learning and the reasoning which springs from it are both orderly and useful in their place. Ishmael married an Egyptian woman. That is, our natural reason — or natural rational, as Swedenborg calls it — not only springs from an affection for natural knowledges, but this affection is its proper "wife" from which its further developments come. Ishmael became a great nation, but he dwelt in the wilderness of Paran, the Arabian desert. Our natural rational continues to develop and to function throughout our lives, but its field of usefulness is in the constantly changing environs of our external lives, and not in the Holy Land of our inner thought and feeling. Our spiritual development is carried on through the higher rational, the spiritual rational, which is represented by Isaac, the son of Abraham by his true wife Sarah, who represents the affection for spiritual truth.

Ishmael has his place in our lives. The Lord gives us our natural rational and wishes it to develop and to serve in our outer lives: prudence, thrift, foresight, executive ability, salesmanship are all "children" of Ishmael; they are useful and worth cultivating so long as they are recognized as servants and not considered spiritual virtues or allowed to interfere with our spiritual life and development. The Lord said to Abraham, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called." The spiritual rational is later in developing — Isaac could not be born until Abraham and Sarah were old — but it is the thoughts and affections which spring from it — Isaac's descendants - which connect us with the Lord and enable us ultimately to possess the Holy Land of heavenly happiness.

Examples of the distinction between Ishmael and Isaac in our own experience are not hard to find. Ishmael tells us that we are in this world for only a short time and that therefore we should get as much as possible for ourselves from it in pleasure, in money, and in fame. Isaac also tells us that we are in this world for only a short time, but he tells us that we shall live to eternity in a world where nothing counts but the character we have developed here, and that therefore it makes little difference whether or not we have pleasure, money, and fame here so long as we are developing heavenly character. Ishmael uses many sharp arguments to uphold the necessity for considering self first — he was an archer. Isaac is quiet and gentle, at home in the Holy Land, seeking to learn the Lord's will and to base the daily decisions upon that will. He takes his wife from among his father's kindred. He does not contend for the wells of the Philistines. He is forbidden by the Lord to go down into Egypt. The spiritual rational must maintain its integrity against all worldly temptations if our spiritual life is to be preserved.

## **19:THE SACRIFICE OF ISAAC — Genesis 22:1-14**

## INTRO

Review the last lesson. Remind the children that the Lord had promised Abraham that his descendants should inherit the land. This makes a good background for the story of how Abraham and Sarah longed for a son and were given Isaac in their old age. It will show how much depended upon Isaac, and how dear he was to Abraham.

## Adult

There are many good topics for discussion in this lesson: the nature of the higher rational, the false ideas of marriage and of worship which were in Abraham's mind, the Lord's permission of falsity in order to preserve the good intention, the true meaning of sacrifice.

We should have in mind that the first rational we develop in our childhood, represented by Ishmael, is what is called the "natural rational" — that is, it is the reasoning which bases its conclusions on natural knowledges (Hagar the Egyptian servant represents the affection for memory-knowledges), or sense experience, and on the outward appearance of things. It is a necessary step in our development and a necessary faculty all through our lives, since we must live practical lives in a finite world; and Ishmael, although he was banished from the Holy Land, became the father of a great nation.

Isaac represents the higher or spiritual rational, the rational which takes into account the Lord and spiritual things and recognizes that the outward appearance may be the opposite of the truth. Although Abraham was one hundred years old when Isaac was born, he continued to live for another seventy-five years; so Isaac was a long time in coming into his full inheritance. The spiritual rational is slow in developing, and for a long time must be kept close to childhood innocence and trust. Young people, when they begin to develop the ability to reason about spiritual things, need the protection of their early states of belief and wonder which the Lord has stored up in them as "remains." And there is a point in the life of every child who is developing in the right direction at which he feels the temptation described in our story for today: the temptation to give up his newly discovered faculty of reasoning about spiritual things, lest it interfere with his childhood faith. In the churches about us in the world, there are many conscientious young people who make just this decision; and some churches encourage it, teaching that there are "mysteries" which we are not meant to understand and must accept "on faith." Still others "sacrifice Isaac" in an easier and less conscientious way by promoting the idea that "it does not matter what you believe so long as you live well," discarding all real thought about spiritual things in favor of mere external good works.

The literal sense of this brief story raises some basic questions. It is said that "God did tempt Abraham." In the New Church we know that God never tempts, that all temptation comes from the hells and is the result of evils in our inheritance or in our environment or resulting from our own sins. We also know that the Lord never permits a temptation to present itself to us except as He sees that we are able to resist it with His help, if we will (see 1 Cor. 10:13). He constantly withholds all other temptations from us. Read, in this regard, the excerpt from the writings at the end of this chapter.

But we all tend to blame the Lord for all our troubles, tacitly if not openly. With Abraham this tendency was very natural. We have seen that he grew up among the people of the Ancient Church

in its last perverted stage. He had many falsities in his mind. One of them was the belief that multiple marriages were permissible; hence his acceptance of Hagar. Another was the thought that God was a jealous God and needed to be propitiated. And another was the idea that it was laudable to sacrifice one's child, that this was the supreme sacrifice and hence must be especially pleasing to God. We are told that the Lord never destroys falsities in our minds until we are ready to receive the truth in their place. Read the parable in Matthew 12:43-45. We are also told that He uses the falsities in which we are brought up so far as they can be made serviceable to keeping us in orderly living and capable of advancing into a knowledge of truth. This He did with Abraham. In the case of his temptation to sacrifice Isaac the Lord allowed him to go through with it to the point of the very act in order that he might be confirmed in his intention of putting the Lord first in his life, and could be shown that this intention was the real sacrifice which the Lord desired. The ram represents "the spiritual from the human race," which is devotion to the Lord developed through conscience. And the ram was found "behind him" and was "caught in a thicket by his horns"; with Abraham this spiritual had been "entangled in natural knowledge" (@AC 2831).

Once we have grasped the general meaning of the story, every detail of Abraham's journey to Mount Moriah — the mount on which later Solomon's temple was built — becomes full of meaning for us. "Abraham rose up early in the morning and saddled his donkey." Morning pictures the beginning of a new state and the donkey pictures our natural reason. Abraham, having conceived a new purpose, acted upon it at once and began by bringing under control that faculty which so often rebels against our higher, spiritual promptings, but which can be made to serve them if our resolution is firm. This idea is further carried out in his taking the two young men, his servants, who picture the rational faculties already developed for service in his daily problems. "And he clave the wood of the burnt offering." Wood, Swedenborg says (@AC 2784), pictures "the good that is in works, and in justice," and the cleaving of wood pictures placing merit in this good. The placing of merit in one's own good works — except by the Lord in whom is all merit - is in itself an evil, but it can be made to serve a use when the end sought is the burnt offering, a genuine desire to serve the Lord. But when the mountain was in sight, the two young men and the donkey were left behind to wait, and the wood was carried up the mountain by Isaac. So we, when we are prompted to some new dedication of our lives to the Lord, often start out with very natural thoughts about what our service will be and even with a good deal of self-praise; but if we persevere — the three days' journey pictures a fully developed state — the mountain does come in sight, and we leave our natural selfish thoughts and reasonings behind, and our new spiritual thought bears the credit for our good deeds up the mountain to the Lord. And the whole experience is then crowned by the realization that to consecrate our reasoning powers to the Lord does not mean to give them up, but to find blessing and fulfillment through them (verses 15-18). And after this realization we can safely return to the exercise of our natural reasoning faculty in our daily activities. "So Abraham returned to his young men, and they rose up and went together to Beersheba." Beersheba signifies "the doctrine of charity and faith which was Divine and to which human rational things were adjoined" (@AC 2858).

In @AC 2767-2859 Swedenborg gives the interpretation of this whole story in its inmost sense, relating to the Lord's life. He shows us how the Lord admitted temptation through His human rational to the very utmost. In @AC 2786 we read: "As regards the state itself, it is ... the state which the Lord assumed when He underwent temptations, and here that which he assumed when He underwent the most grievous and inmost temptations. His first preparation for that state was that He entered into a state of peace and innocence, and that He prepared the natural man in Himself, as also the rational, so that they should serve the Divine rational, and that He adjoined the merit of

righteousness, and in this manner elevated Himself." And in @AC 2795 we read: "The Lord could not be tempted at all when He was in the Divine Itself, for the Divine is infinitely above all temptation; but He could be tempted as to His human. This is the reason why when He was to undergo the most grievous and inmost temptations, He adjoined to Himself the prior human, that is, the rational and the natural of it, as described in verse 3; and why He afterwards separated Himself from these." An interesting statement is found in @AC 2816: "It is according to the internal sense, that the Lord's Divine led His Human into the most grievous temptations." We may think of this when we pray "Lead us not into temptation." The Lord had power to overcome every temptation and so "led" Himself into them. The form of our prayer suggests that we recognize that we have no power of ourselves, and would flee temptation as far as the Lord sees it to be possible. @AC 2819 is a wonderful summary of the whole doctrine concerning temptation.

## 20:ISAAC AND REBEKAH — Genesis 24

### INTRO

All the classes should be very familiar with the names Ishmael and Isaac as the two sons of Abraham, should know who their mothers were, and why Isaac instead of Ishmael was Abraham's heir.

### Adult

Discuss the different types of affection for truth and the need of the proper affection if the life is to bear spiritual fruit. The mere "search for truth" is not necessarily good. Another fruitful topic for discussion is the duty to bring up our children from the beginning with a spiritual idea of marriage. This is the most important thing parents can do in directing their children's choice. Note that in the story it was not the servant or the parents who chose Isaac's mate, but the Lord, and everyone concerned recognized the Lord's part in the matter.

The story of the birth of Isaac pictures the beginning of the development of the higher rational faculty in us, the faculty which looks deeper for its basis than mere external appearances of truth, and depends instead upon the truth revealed by the Lord in His Word. When Isaac was born, Abraham was a hundred years old, Sarah over ninety, and Ishmael fourteen. We recall that Ishmael, because he mocked at the baby Isaac, was sent away with his mother into the wilderness, where he married an Egyptian wife and became the father of a numerous people. Then follows the story of Abraham's temptation to offer Isaac as a burnt sacrifice to the Lord, and of how at the last moment the Lord checked the sacrifice and provided a ram in place of Isaac. We will doubtless remember that here again we have a case of the language of appearance. The Lord of course did not command Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, but He does command each of us to be willing to do His will at whatever apparent sacrifices of our own desires or possessions. Chapter 23 tells of the death of Sarah at the age of a hundred and twenty-seven, and of her burial in a cave in a field in Machpelah, which Abraham bought for the purpose from Ephron the Hittite. This, too, has its inner meaning, but the literal fact is also important to remember because the cave of Machpelah is mentioned several times later in the Bible story, and because it should be noted that Sarah died before Isaac's marriage.

As little children we live, as it were, on the celestial plane, being ruled by our affections and

surrounded as to our souls by influences from the celestial heavens. This is the Abraham stage. But as we develop in body and mind, this state gradually passes and a new one succeeds. We come to be ruled by our rational faculty, to look to it as the head of our house, so to speak. This is the Isaac stage. It is an entirely new state, with new interests and new affections. When it is fully developed, it can no longer cling to the former childlike states of affection and thought. We say that a little child can be led by love, but an older child must be reasoned with. Both the little child and the older child when in their best states love the truth, but they love it in a different way. Each has a type of affection for truth which is appropriate to his state. So when Isaac is developed to maturity, Sarah dies and a wife must be found for him to take the place his mother has held in his life. The way in which this wife is sought and found pictures in every detail the way in which true rationality is established in the life of every one of us who develops as he should under the Lord's guidance.

Abraham in the story pictures the Lord at work in our hearts. His eldest servant, who was over all his household, stands for the natural mind, which governs our daily life — if it is a true servant — in the interests of the Lord and according to His will. This servant is told to seek a wife for Isaac, but not to seek her among the degenerate inhabitants of Canaan. We recall the beginning of the story of Noah in Genesis 6, where it is said that the sons of God married the daughters of men, and a race of giants ensued who eventually destroyed each other. That pictured the uniting of truths from the Lord with selfish natural affections, using what we know of the Lord to excuse and support our selfish desires. Now we are again warned against falling into the same evil. Our new rational mind must not be "married" to selfish and worldly desires — we must not use our new faculty to excuse our faults and to support us in selfish living and thinking. Instead, it must have a wife from its own people, an affection for learning about the Lord and about how to serve Him.

This can be illustrated by the right and the wrong way to study the Bible. If, when we read the Bible, we are constantly looking for statements which we like because they make us feel that we are good — and perhaps that people who disagree with us are wrong and that the Lord will forgive us whatever we do, and pass over all the condemnations and commands which point out our evils, we are "marrying" our rational understanding of the Word to our selfish affections — the "daughters of the Canaanites." But when we read the Bible to find out where we are wrong in the Lord's sight and to find help to correct our faults, then we are "seeking a wife for Isaac among Abraham's kindred." It is our natural mind, the same part of us which gathers knowledge of everyday affairs and keeps it in order, which goes out to find this true wife. It makes use of all that we have learned from childhood about the Lord and His will — the ten camels (@AC 3048) - and it goes back to our first understanding of doctrine which is represented by Haran. There the servant found Rebekah by the well of water, and he recognized her as his master's bride because she willingly drew water not only for him but also for his camels. The well, of course, is the letter of the Word, and the water is truth from the Word. Only a genuine affection for divine truth will draw from the Word refreshment for the mind and for all the knowledges of the Lord which are laid up in it. Selfish affections would gladly let the knowledge of the Lord in the mind die. We may bring this lesson home to ourselves in this way: When we attend church and Sunday school, do we love to hear the Bible explained and try to apply its lessons to our own character and its problems? Or, when the minister begins to touch upon some wrong thought or feeling which we recognize as our own, do we close our ears and try not to listen, or try to think of someone else to whom the lesson applies?

But there is still another part of the story. When Rebekah was found, she had to be brought to Isaac. Isaac was on no account to go back to Haran. Haran was not in the Holy Land at all; it was merely one stage of the journey to the Holy Land, the time when one begins dimly to see that he must obey

the Lord and try to get to heaven. After we have developed our rational faculty, the Lord does not want us to go back to this state. Some people interpret the Lord's statement that we must become as little children (Matthew 18:3) to mean that we should go back to the blind faith of a little child and merely obey the Lord's teaching without expecting to understand it. This is not what the Lord means. He gives us our brains to use in matters of religion above everything else. He wants us to study and understand His teaching, to become His "friends" (John 15:15). What we are to seek to retain — or to regain — from our childhood is not our ignorance but our humility, gentleness, and trust: our "innocence." We are, as Swedenborg says, to cultivate the "innocence of wisdom" in place of the "innocence of ignorance." So Rebekah must be brought to Isaac. Our affection for the Lord's truth must be raised to the rational plane of our lives and united to our rational faculty. Then Isaac is "comforted after his mother's death." When we have grown out of the state of simple, blind acceptance of divine truth, we are sometimes sad and bewildered. We can no longer accept some things which we have heretofore taken for granted, because our unaided reason cannot explain them, and yet we miss our belief in them and seem lost without it. This story teaches us that nothing will really satisfy us until we can restore our belief by seeing its rational basis. A great many people who as little children have believed in the Lord and the Bible lose their faith when their reason develops because they have not found the rational explanation of the Word which the New Church has to give. Many of them long for their early states of belief and trust and never feel "at home" again. They move about from one church to another, looking for a doctrine which they can accept. The story of the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah has a challenge for the New Church.

## **21:ISAAC AND ABIMELECH — Genesis 26:1-33**

### **INTRO**

We have already studied the best—known stories about Isaac.

For the two youngest classes the teacher should be prepared to retell very briefly the story of the birth of Isaac and of his marriage to Rebekah, and should then tell today's story as an example of his dealings with the people of the land. With the older classes, also, the life of Isaac should be reviewed briefly as an introduction.

### **Adult**

We should be able to take it for granted that the adults know the general story of Isaac, and so the teacher may concentrate on the specific lesson, which is an important one often overlooked.

All adults who have brought up children or who have observed the development of any child from infancy through the early "teens" should be able to draw upon their experience for help in understanding our lesson for today and its background. The keynote of the lesson is to be found in the wells. Throughout the Bible a well is the symbol of the Word. We dig wells when we go to the Word for truth. Without the Word our lives are barren.

Abraham had dug wells in the Philistine country. In early childhood we learn the stories of the Word and are given instruction from them. But as we develop out of the innocent childhood states, as we learn more about the world and its standards and begin to reason from appearances — the Ishmael state — the Philistines stop up these wells of truth and fill them with earth. The Philistines

lived in the Holy Land along the coast. Their part of the country pictures knowledge of doctrine, but the Philistines themselves represent "the memory-knowledge of knowledges," the knowledge of spiritual truths held in the memory but not used in life. We all have the Philistines in us, for we all know more truth than we are willing to use. Whenever we know what we ought to do but reason ourselves out of doing it because it is not convenient, the Philistines in us are stopping up Abraham's wells and filling them with earth.

In @AC 2083 Swedenborg shows us very clearly the nature of the progression from Abraham through Jacob in the Lord's own experience, which is our pattern: "Abraham, as said in various places before, represents the Lord's internal man, but Isaac His rational man, and Jacob His natural man. The Lord's internal man was Jehovah Himself. His rational man, because conceived of the influx of His internal man into the affection of memory-knowledges in the external man, was from the Divine thus conjoined with the Human. Hence the first rational, represented by Ishmael, was human; but it was made Divine by the Lord, and then it is represented by Isaac." So in our lives our first reasoning, although a faculty given us by the Lord, is exercised on the basis of natural knowledges and must later be corrected as we learn by experience that appearances are often deceiving and that spiritual causes and principles are the only true basis of rational thought. Wise parents recognize the "difficult" years in their children as merely a necessary step in their growing up, and draw a breath of relief when they see the first signs of maturer judgment.

It is interesting to note that Sarah dies some time before Abraham. Sarah, Abraham's true wife, represents the genuine affection for truths received in the simplicity of childhood. The child outgrows this affection when he begins to want to do his own thinking, but the good intention of childhood persists, joining itself to a different type of affection for truth — comparatively obscure — which is represented by Keturah, whom Abraham married after Sarah's death. Modern psychiatry, which delves into the inner experiences of the childhood of an individual, might well study the six sons of Abraham and Keturah and their descendants. They appear from time to time throughout the Old Testament story, usually as enemies of the descendants of Isaac, but we note in Genesis 25:5 that "Abraham gave all that he had unto Isaac." All our spiritual progress depends upon the development of the true rational whose judgments are based without equivocation upon the truths of the Word.

Abraham and Isaac both swore a covenant of peace with Abimelech, king of the Philistines, who represents "the doctrine of faith that looks to rational things." The truly spiritual man has no quarrel with interest in doctrine and reasonings about it. It was the Lord who sent Isaac down into the Philistine country in time of famine — to knowledges of doctrine, not to the mere natural knowledges represented by Egypt — and prospered him there. Isaac was even led to repeat the ruse twice practiced by Abraham (Genesis 12:11-20; 20:2-7) and to represent Rebekah at first as his sister. The difference between Rebekah as a sister and Rebekah as a wife is the difference between the affection for spiritual truth as an intellectual exercise and affection for the same truth for the purpose of directing the life. Swedenborg points out that with those who do not wish to change their ways of life, spiritual truth will be rejected if it is presented first as an exhortation to good, whereas in its merely intellectual aspects they may find it interesting and pleasing, and after it is accepted intellectually it may gradually affect the life. We should remember this in our missionary efforts.

Beersheba — "the well of the oath" — became Isaac's home. It is the southernmost city of the Holy Land, and we recall that the north and south direction is the measure of the extent of enlightenment, the north representing ignorance and the south enlightenment; so it is clear that

Isaac's settling in Beersheba, digging a well and building an altar there after his covenant with Abimelech, gives us the true pattern of spiritual enlightenment which is the necessary basis for a good life, both external and internal.

## 22:JACOB AND ESAU — Genesis 25:19-34; 27

### INTRO

Again we have a story about two brothers, but this time they are twins with the same mother as well as the same father. The teacher should fill in a little of the background by telling how Abraham sent his servant up to Haran, where his brother Nahor had settled, to bring back a wife for Isaac from his own people. Sarah had already died, and after Isaac married Rebekah, Abraham died also.

### Adult

There is plenty of discussion material here, especially in the thought that "natural good" - which is Esau — is never pure or trustworthy, and that our real spiritual progress is dependent upon Jacob, our interest in truth.

Swedenborg says: "There are in every man an internal man, a rational man that is intermediate, and an external, which is properly called the natural man. With the Lord these were represented by Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" (@AC 1893). The Abraham stage with us is our infancy, when the internal man is open to the heavens and is filled by the Lord with "remains" — innocent, trustful, happy states which can later be used in our regeneration. Then we develop into the rational or Isaac stage, and finally are ready to carry out in everyday life the knowledges and affections which we have developed in the previous stages. The rest of our life, if we regenerate, is spent in developing and then in bringing into order this natural or external plane and in gradually bringing it to act as the servant of the inner planes. So, although Abraham and Isaac come first, and in one sense are higher than Jacob, their descendants are called the seed of Jacob or the children of Israel (Israel being the name later given to Jacob by the Lord), and their history occupies the rest of the Old Testament. Our story today deals with Jacob and his elder twin Esau, and of how Jacob instead of Esau came to be head of the family. We have spoken before of the two divisions of our lives, symbolized by the two rooms in the ark — the will and the understanding. The natural plane of our lives has these two divisions, and they are pictured by Esau and Jacob, Esau good in the natural plane, and Jacob truth in the same plane. They are twins because the will and the understanding, good and truth, go together as equals in us from the beginning.

Esau is actually the elder because all power is from the will, even the power to think, and influx from the Lord or from the hells primarily affects our wills. Throughout most of our life, however, Jacob supplants Esau, because we have to learn what is right before we can do it: our understanding appears to take first place. The Lord permits this change, this inversion of the true order, to meet the changed conditions caused by man's turning to self and perverting his will. That is, because by inheritance our will is selfish, we cannot safely be guided by it but must be taught what is right. Jacob instead of Esau must be head of our house. But we note that Esau eventually is to break off the yoke of his brother. This means that when we are regenerated, when we have practiced doing as truth teaches until the Lord has been able to give us a new will, then we may again be ruled by our will and do as we please freely.

The literal story of Esau and Jacob has proved a stumbling block to those who believe that all those in the letter of the Word whom the Lord favors must be exemplary characters. Here is a man who cheated, lied, and stole, and yet was allowed to keep the fruits of his deception and to become the ancestor of the Lord's chosen people. How can we "get around" this obvious fact? In the New Church we do not have to get around it. The Bible characters, with the exception of our Lord, are not in themselves exemplary. Many of them are evil men, doing evil deeds. But the Lord can make use even of their evil deeds to teach us the ins and outs of our own souls and the nature of the humanity which He assumed and glorified. He makes use of evil to show how His providence foresees and provides for all our states and tries to lead us back to Him, however far we may have departed. In the inmost sense, which relates to the life of the Lord, the Word is all true and beautiful. In the inner sense, which relates to our own states, we see the Lord's love and truth acting upon our degenerate human nature in the effort to save us. In the letter we see this struggle acted out upon the stage of real life by the Hebrew nation, the nation chosen to portray it. Thus even in the letter, if we keep the whole face of it in mind when studying any given story, we can see good and evil, truth and falsity at work and trace their effects. We must not expect the letter to portray ideal conditions.

The objection to the story of Jacob and Esau is based on the desire to have all evil punished immediately and obviously. This is not the Lord's desire; it is a very earthly one. The Lord desires to show us our evils and to turn us from them, never to punish. Evil punishes itself, often not immediately or obviously, but surely in the end. The results of Jacob's evils can easily be traced in his fear of Esau not only immediately after his deed but even twenty years later when he returned and sought reconciliation with his brother. Furthermore, Esau himself is far from exemplary. He is willing to sell his birthright — his proper future — to satisfy his immediate physical hunger. Here is a lesson which all can see and understand. How often we put present pleasure above future good! How often for the sake of some trivial thing which we want now we do what we know is injuring our character and our prospects, and even what we know will bring us pain and sorrow later! We know that our eternal happiness depends upon our keeping the commandments, yet we continually allow carelessness, laziness, cowardice, and selfishness to lead us to break them. We know that our spiritual progress depends upon our learning about the Lord and doing His will, yet we let ourselves become absorbed in worldly pursuits and pleasures and neglect our regular reading of the Word and the writings and our worship of the Lord. We know that we are higher than animals just because we have spiritual possibilities which they do not have, yet we choose to live on the level of earthly satisfactions like animals. We think Esau was very foolish, but we do as he did every day.

We have seen that Esau pictures good, and Jacob truth, in the natural plane of our minds. We should all agree that the really important thing is to be good. Esau is the elder twin and the rightful head of the family. Why then does the Lord permit Jacob to supplant Esau? Why do we have to try to keep on learning truth, studying the Word and trying to understand it more and more deeply? If we do what we think is right, is not this all that can be expected of us? Many people today answer this question in the affirmative. Yet have we not often done what we thought was right and found out afterward that it was just the wrong thing? This is our key to the true answer. There is indeed some good in everyone. The Lord has seen to that. But there is also in each of us by our natural inheritance a great deal of evil, and we cannot distinguish between good and evil without truth from the Lord. If we think of ourselves as naturally good and as competent to judge right and wrong without instruction from the Lord, we shall judge and act from evil impulses quite as often as from good ones, and presently we shall believe that whatever we think is true and whatever we

want is good, and then we shall be unable to see any fault in ourselves or to improve ourselves in any way. No matter how well we are brought up, we never come to the point in this life when we can safely act from impulse without thought, and our standards are never perfect. Our wills are never wholly pure. We must keep on learning more and more of the Lord's truth and apply it to deeper and deeper states in ourselves. For all our time on earth, Jacob must be the head of our house and Esau must serve him. Not until we get to heaven, where our wills are wholly satisfied to serve the Lord, will Esau be able to take his rightful place.

## 23:JACOB'S DREAM — Genesis 28

### INTRO

We have three easy points of connection between this story and those which have preceded it, points which help us to review. And we must review regularly if we are to present the Bible as a continued story and not just as a number of separate stories. The three points are: first, Jacob's relation to Isaac and to Abraham; second, the place Haran; and third, the place Bethel.

### Adult

After the general meaning of the story, possible points of special interest may be the reason for going to Haran for wives, the reason why Isaac himself was not allowed to go there while Jacob was, and the meaning of "angel."

We recall that when Isaac grew up, Abraham sent his servant to Haran to find a wife from among his own kindred, and that the servant brought back Rebekah, the granddaughter of Abraham's brother Nahor. Isaac and Rebekah had twin sons, Esau and Jacob. They represent the will and the understanding on the natural plane. Swedenborg says (@AC 1893): "There are in every man an internal man, a rational man that is intermediate, and an external, which is properly called the natural man. With the Lord these were represented by Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." The Abraham stage with us is our infancy, when the internal man is open to the heavens and is filled by the Lord with "remains" - innocent, trustful, happy states which can later be used in our regeneration. Then we develop into the rational, or Isaac, stage; and finally we are ready to carry out in everyday life the knowledges and affections which we have developed in the previous stages. The rest of our lives is spent, if we regenerate, in bringing into order first this natural or external plane and then successively the rational and the internal plane. So, although Abraham and Isaac come first and in one sense are higher than Jacob, their descendants are called the seed of Jacob or the children of Israel (Israel being Jacob's later name) and their history occupies the rest of the Old Testament. Esau was the firstborn, and we readily recall the story of how Jacob cheated him first of his birthright and then of his blessing. Esau was the firstborn of the twins because Esau represents the will; Jacob, the understanding; and the will actually comes first. All power is from the will, even the power to think. But throughout most of our lives Jacob supplants Esau because we have to learn what is right before we can do it. It is only late in life that Esau begins to break off the yoke of his brother — that is, when by long practice in doing the truth we finally come to love what is good. Esau and his descendants (the Edomites) play only a small part in the Bible narrative. This is because that narrative is concerned with our life in this world, when for the most part we must be under the guidance of truth.

After Jacob had stolen Esau's blessing, Esau threatened to kill him, and his mother Rebekah persuaded Isaac to send him to Haran to find a wife from the family of her brother Laban. We recall that Haran was the place where Abraham and his family stopped for a time on their journey from Ur to Canaan, that Abraham's brother Nahor settled there, and that Abraham's father, Terah, died there. Terah represents the old, idolatrous state; and Haran, the first stage of our progress toward a really good life, before we have reached any real understanding of the truth. That is, Haran represents good and truth of a very external kind, or goodness in an obscure state. Yet this simple goodness is the beginning of all our spiritual progress, and we must constantly be going back and renewing in ourselves this fundamental desire to "be good." Abraham was told by the Lord on no account to allow Isaac himself to go back to Haran; yet Jacob was sent there and spent twenty years there. The reason for this is found in the difference in correspondence between Isaac and Jacob. Isaac represents the true rational, which must remain in the Holy Land of spiritual thinking and lift external and natural knowledges up to itself, as Rebekah was brought out of Haran to the Holy Land to Isaac. Jacob, on the other hand, represents the Lord's working on the natural plane of our lives; so he necessarily must spend a great deal of time in Haran and must unite himself to affections on that plane. We live on the natural plane of thought most of the time. In that plane we try to do right, to distinguish between right and wrong, to form good habits, and gradually to bring that plane up to the level set by the Lord's own example when He lived in the flesh. This is Jacob living in Haran, marrying there, having children, and accumulating flocks and herds — but always with the knowledge that eventually he was to take them all back with him to the Holy Land.

Jacob knew he was to come back to the Holy Land because the Lord told him so in the dream which is the subject of our lesson for today, and at the same time the Lord promised him that land for his inheritance. This dream was given him at Bethel. Bethel, the site of the second altar which Abraham built after he entered the Holy Land, pictures a heavenly state in which there is knowledge of celestial things. Jacob's tarrying here is a picture of spiritual preparation for daily life. It was toward evening — the end of the former state — and he took some of the stones of the place for his pillows and lay down to sleep; that is, he rested upon fundamental heavenly truths, and his consciousness of worldly things was for a time suspended. Then he saw the vision of the ladder or "way" reaching from earth to heaven, with the Lord at the top and the angels ascending and descending upon it; and the Lord spoke to him, promising him protection and favor.

Jacob's dream is always a beautiful and appealing picture, and it is all the more beautiful when we see its deeper meaning. What is the "way" which connects earth with heaven and the Lord? It is the Word. Its letter is made up of things of earth and is read and learned by us while we are upon this earth. But within and above the letter are meanings, higher and higher — first about the history of man as a race, then about the development of each one's soul, then about the angels and their life — and highest of all about the Lord's own life and work. From the letter our thoughts can ascend gradually to some knowledge of the Lord Himself; and once we have gained this knowledge, the Lord's spirit and teaching can reach down to us and instruct us even in the little things of life on earth. Perhaps we recall that angel means "messenger." In the Old Testament the same word is used of earthly and of heavenly messengers, and Malachi, the name of the last book of the Old Testament, means "my messenger." The same is true of the Greek word used in the New Testament. Literally, John the Baptist sent "angels" to the Lord to ask if He really was the Messiah. Can we not see our thoughts — like messengers from our minds — climbing up by means of the Word to the Lord, and his thoughts — like messengers — coming down to us through it? We are at the bottom; the Lord is at the top. And if we listen to the Word, we can hear the voice of the Lord telling us that the Holy Land of heavenly life is meant for us, and that He is with us and will keep us wherever we

go. But in order to have this vision, we must be in a state in which we rest on the foundation truths of our faith and put our concern for ourselves and the world to sleep.

Jacob needed this vision to keep him from becoming absorbed in the life of Haran. We need it to keep us mindful that heaven is our real home, and to keep us from becoming absorbed in the duties, cares, and pleasures of everyday life in the world. And when Jacob awoke, realizing that he had been granted a vision of the Lord, he set up the stone upon which he had rested as a pillar and poured oil upon it and vowed to serve the Lord and to give Him a tenth of all he should possess. This is a picture of what our reaction should be to the realization that the Word is our means of connection with the Lord. In our lives we should set up the simple, fundamental truths — the Commandments — as our testimony that we are to serve the Lord, and we should put love into the keeping of them, as Jacob poured oil on the pillar. And we should promise to obey the Lord, to worship Him, and to make everything that we have holy, recognizing that it comes from Him, by using it as He would have us use it; this is pictured by the giving of tithes.

## **24:JACOB'S WIVES AND SONS — Genesis 29; 35:23-26**

### **INTRO**

The early part of the story of Jacob and Esau and the incident at Haran should be reviewed very briefly. Then ask the pupils about the story of Jacob's dream, and go on from there to the lesson for today.

### **Adult**

Interesting discussion topics are: (1) the change in Jacob's correspondence as his story progresses; (2) the necessity of developing an orderly outward life as a basis for any higher development; (3) the difference between seeking such a life for the sake of self and seeking it from the motive of love to the Lord and the neighbor; (4) the difference between recognizing an ideal and achieving it; (5) the general correspondence of the twelve sons of Jacob.

It should not confuse us to find the correspondence of Jacob apparently changing, for it is the story of the beginning of our achievement of the good external life and of its gradual development from apparent to genuine good — that is, from a life which is good in the eyes of our neighbors to one which is good in the sight of the Lord.

With reference to Abraham and Isaac, Jacob represents the time in our lives when we are beginning to direct our own affairs independently of our parents. If we have been developing in an orderly way, the simple, trustful states of our infancy have passed into our subconscious, and we have also judged and put behind us the boastful, self-confident state represented by Ishmael. Isaac, the genuine rational, is head of our house. But Isaac is growing old. This does not mean that we no longer have to think and reason, but that the faculty is adequately developed and the time has come when our primary business is its application to the outward conduct of life.

For the successful pursuit of our new activities we must acquire new truth but — as in the case of

Isaac's marriage — this truth must not be sought for mere selfish and worldly purposes. Jacob's wife, like Isaac's, must be found in Haran. She must be an affection of truth springing from the same primary source, our original determination to serve the Lord. This is an important point to keep in mind in helping our children to begin their independent lives rightly. Whatever occupation they may choose, it should be chosen and pursued from a desire to serve the Lord and the neighbor rather than merely to find a secure and remunerative place in this world. In the historical interpretation, the representative church of the Jews had to be established in the line of Terah, who, we remember, signified the third and last Ancient Church.

There are differences between the story of Isaac's marriage and the story of Jacob's which are interesting. Isaac, we recall, was not under any circumstances to go to Haran himself. In the formative years when your higher rational is being developed, it must never be allowed to leave the Holy Land, the spiritual plane. Rebekah had to be brought to Isaac. But Jacob is driven to leave the Holy Land for a time in the search for his true wife. When we come to work out our religion on the plane of outward conduct, we must necessarily be concerned with external as well as with internal truths. Another difference is in the fact that Rebekah came to the well with her pitcher on her shoulder to draw water to be carried home. The emphasis here is on the acquisition of truth from the Word — the well — for later use. Rachel, on the other hand, came to the well bringing her father's flock, of which she was the shepherdess. As the family of Nahor, who left Ur with Terah and Abram but went no farther than Haran, picture simple, uninstructed goodness and obedience, so the flock of Laban, Rachel's father, pictures those who wish to be "led and taught" (@AC 3795). Rachel, therefore, represents a desire for truth for immediate, specific uses.

Swedenborg thus summarizes the meaning of the contents of chapter 29, one of our chapters, in @AC 3758 and 3759: "In the internal sense of this chapter by 'Jacob' is described the Lord's natural — how the good of truth therein was conjoined with kindred good from a Divine origin, which good is 'Laban'; at first through the affection of internal truth, which is 'Rachel.'" And in @AC 3793 he says: "Jacob therefore now puts on the representation of the natural, and Rachel the representation of truth; but as all conjunction of truth with good is wrought by means of affection, it is the affection of truth to be coupled with good that is represented by Rachel. Moreover in the natural, as in the rational, there is an interior and an exterior; Rachel representing the affection of interior truth, and Leah the affection of exterior truth."

The whole story of Jacob's marriages and of the birth of his sons is actually one of the orderly development of the good external life — which must have an internal in order to be good. Rachel is the ideal, glimpsed at first and then labored for long and patiently with inevitable delays and disappointments on the way.

In @AC 6335 occurs one of the simplest statements of the correspondence of the twelve sons as "all truths and goods in one complex." Another helpful definition of them is found in @AC 6448:

"By them are described all states of the church as to goods and truths, thus as to the spiritual life of everyone within the church." Individually their correspondence, like that of everything in the Word, changes slightly with the order and context in which they are mentioned. A very full statement of this variation in order of the twelve is found in @AC 3862 and a briefer one in @AC 6335. The general correspondence of the individual sons is briefly as follows:

Reuben = faith.

Simeon = faith in the will.

Levi = charity.

Judah = the celestial church, or the Lord as to the Divine celestial.

Zebulun = the cohabitation of good and truth.

Issachar = recompense from works.

Dan = those who are in the good of life from truth, but not yet from good.

Gad = works from truth and not yet from good.

Asher = the blessedness of the affections.

Naphtali = temptation and the state after temptation.

Joseph = the spiritual church, the Lord as to the Divine spiritual.

Benjamin = the truth of the good of the spiritual church.

Joseph was the last one born in Haran. Benjamin was born near Bethlehem after the return to the Holy Land, and Rachel died and was buried there. It is interesting also to find that it was Leah and not Rachel who was buried with Jacob in the cave of Machpelah along with Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah. Rachel was Jacob's inspiring ideal, but Leah was apparently his true mate.

## 25:JACOB'S RETURN — Genesis 35

### INTRO

This lesson requires more preparation on the part of the teacher than some. The teacher should be sufficiently familiar with the whole story of Jacob (Genesis 25:19 through Genesis 34) so that he can review it rather fully. He should also think out carefully the particular points in the lesson for the day which he thinks can be presented most interestingly and usefully to his class.

### Adult

Most of the Adult class will be more familiar with the other stories about Jacob than with chapter 35; so the teacher should begin immediately with the current lesson, only touching in passing on the earlier part of Jacob's life. Call attention especially to the burying of the idols and earrings at Shechem, the burial of Deborah at Bethel, and the burial of Rachel at Bethlehem. These three burials, followed by the burial of Isaac and by Jacob's final entry into his birthright, form excellent discussion material, especially in relation to the popular tendency to make external good works the first thing of religion.

The story of Jacob is a very important one for our thought about our everyday life, for Jacob and Esau represent the natural plane of life — Jacob this plane as to truth and Esau the same plane as to good. There is much emphasis in churches today upon external good works, and we all know that

these should be done. But if good works are genuinely good they must be an outgrowth of love to the Lord in the heart and an understanding of His nature and will in the mind — not a substitute for these inner qualities of religion. Those who love the Lord and the neighbor and think about their own shortcomings and the Lord's mercy do their external good works as a matter of course and do not talk about them.

Jacob and Esau were at first rivals and even enemies. Our natural good impulses are eager to express themselves and impatient of instruction, and our natural understanding of the truth is pleased with itself and not too scrupulous in its methods of advancing itself. Esau was a "hairy" man and Jacob a "smooth" man. Hair represents the part of the life which is most external. Jacob's long sojourn in Haran was necessary to teach him the true value of his home and the necessity of reconciliation with his brother. So a young person goes out self-confidently to make his place in the world, and it may take him a long time to realize that life is more than material success, and that he needs to go back and reclaim the good states and the spiritual principles of his childhood period of instruction.

In interpreting the story of Jacob, Swedenborg deals primarily with its celestial sense, in which it is a description of the Lord's progress toward the glorification of the natural degree. But he is careful to point out that the order of glorification with the Lord was the same as the order of regeneration with man. We recall that Jacob's name was changed to Israel after he wrestled with the angel (Genesis 32:28), and this change is repeated in our chapter for today. In the celestial sense this change marks the completion of another step in the Lord's glorification. Jacob represents the Lord's natural as to its external; Israel, His internal natural. This is why both names are used frequently in the rest of the Bible story, sometimes even in the same verse, Jacob coming to stand for the church of that day as a mere representative of a church, while Israel stands for the true internal which the ancient Hebrew rites represented. The names are not interchangeable and are never used in the letter of the Word without clear purpose.

The sons born to Jacob in Haran picture the faculties developed by each of us as he "finds himself" in the life of the world — Joseph being the final faculty of receiving and understanding genuine spiritual truth. It is after Joseph's birth that Jacob decides to return to Canaan. But Benjamin, who represents the good proper to genuine truth, is not born until after Jacob has returned, become reconciled to Esau, and performed his worship at Bethel.

Four very familiar places are mentioned in our chapter: Shechem, Bethel, Bethlehem, and Hebron.

The strange gods and the earrings which the people surrendered to Jacob were buried "under the oak which was by Shechem." The strange gods and the earrings represent falsities held in the mind and falsities made actual in life, and to bury under an oak is to put away forever. This was accomplished at Shechem because Shechem, Abram's first stop in the Holy Land, represents "the first of light, which is interior truth." Before we can worship the Lord truly we must be willing to put away every false idea and bad habit which we find to conflict with His wisdom and love.

Then Jacob advances to Bethel. Jacob in his return is following the same course which Abraham followed when he came into the Holy Land from Ur so many years before, stopping first at Shechem, then at Bethel, and finally at Hebron, and building altars as he went. This pictures of course an advance, little by little, into holy states of innocence and trust. Abraham's journey was a childlike following of the Lord. Jacob's is a more mature, though more worldly or natural obedience. Abraham was being led into these states out of ignorance and idolatry. Jacob is coming

back to them after a long period of wandering, caused by his own transgression. The Lord tells us: "Except ye become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." When Jacob comes back to Bethel, the "house of God," the Lord appears to him again and renews the promises He had made to Abraham and to Isaac.

The death of Rebekah's nurse Deborah at Bethel tells of the passing of former affections when new ones are developed. Deborah is the hereditary evil from the mother. Hereditary evil lies back of all our acts in childhood. We do things largely for the sake of self. Though children are directed by their parents and led by the Lord through angel associates, yet hereditary evil is within everything they do. But it does not become actual because they do not act from their own free will. This is the innocence of infancy. The difference between the innocence of infancy and the innocence of wisdom is that in the former "the innocence of infancy is without, and hereditary evil within," whereas in the latter, "the innocence of wisdom is within and evil both actual and hereditary without." (@AC 4563) The natural, purified of its falsities and evils, has come into a new state. Bethel — "house of God" — signifies this new state of the natural, for the house in which truth dwells is good. The altar Jacob built at Bethel is the worship of the Lord by the natural mind.

Our lesson marks the first appearance of Bethlehem in the Bible story. The birth of Benjamin and Rachel's death are the first incidents we connect with it. Bethlehem is near the border of the two lots later assigned to the tribes of Benjamin and Judah. As the birthplace of Benjamin, and later of David, and still later of the Lord, it marks the beginning of great changes. The death of Rachel near Bethlehem in the celestial sense pictures the expulsion by the Lord of whatever was hereditary and human in the affection for interior truth. In the human affection from the mother is the glory of self and the world. Good is done for the sake of self. The Lord felt this temptation and put it away, and we should recognize this evil in ourselves and try to overcome it with His help.

Isaac died at Hebron and was buried by his sons Esau and Jacob in the cave of Machpelah. (See Genesis 49:29-32.) Jacob became head of his family. It is helpful to fix in our minds the fact that of the three patriarchs Abraham pictures the celestial, Isaac the spiritual, and Jacob the natural plane of life, the planes through which we pass from infancy through youth to maturity. When we first consider ourselves "grown up," we are in the Jacob stage, when natural and worldly things are most interesting and absorb our time and thought. We branch out into many fields of interest, as Jacob's twelve sons headed families and eventually divided the land. Still we have in us our inheritance from our infant and childhood states and we have in us the deeper affections, represented by Joseph and Benjamin, to link us to spiritual and celestial things. Our early states are in us and affect all we do. So the places that are mentioned in the early chapters of Genesis recur again and again throughout the Bible story.

## 26:JOSEPH AND HIS BROTHERS — Genesis 37

### INTRO

The teacher should refresh his memory on the story of Jacob's experiences in Haran. It will be better to emphasize the length of time — twenty years — in Haran and the sons born there than to retell the story of Leah and Rachel, which cannot be explained briefly. Mention the Lord's promise to Jacob at Bethel and Jacob's longing to return to the Holy Land.

## Adult

Even with this class it may be necessary to review briefly the story of Jacob's sojourn in Haran and return to the Holy Land. Then speak of the correspondence of the twelve sons and of the meaning of Joseph's being sold into Egypt. Finally ask for comments and questions from the class, and let these determine the further discussion.

As Jacob represents the attempt to work out the Lord's teachings on the plane of daily life, his twelve sons represent all the good affections which are developed in the course of this task. We know that our lives are complex. We are constantly reading of psychologists' efforts to analyze our mental and volitional processes. Here in the story of Jacob's twelve sons we can, with the help of Swedenborg, find a complete outline of psychology given us by the Lord Himself. We can distinguish between higher and lower affections in our external life. We know, for instance, that love for friends is a higher affection than love for food, although the latter is a necessary and good affection. We are able to see that affection for the Lord and for heavenly knowledge is the highest of all our affections. The sons of Jacob may be grouped according to their importance, the two sons of Rachel being these highest affections, the sons of Leah the more external affections which lead up to them, and the sons of the handmaids the most external affections which minister to the others. All twelve sons except Benjamin were born in Haran, but Benjamin was born in Canaan.

Our lesson introduces the story of Joseph, one of the most—loved stories in the Bible. Joseph was Jacob's eleventh son — his first by Rachel, the wife he loved best — and consequently he was Jacob's favorite. Jacob made him a coat of many colors. [The Anchor Bible renders this "ornamental tunic" noting that "the traditional 'coat of many colors' and the variant 'coat with sleeves' are sheer guesses from the context." Swedenborg renders it "tunic of various colors" [tunicam variorum colorum] and the editor of the Standard edition notes that "the 'tunic' was the undergarment."] Colors picture the variety of ways in which spiritual truth is made attractive to different people by the Lord. But this singling out of Joseph aroused the jealousy of his brothers, and their ill feeling was increased to the point of hatred by the fact that he told his father of their wrongdoings — as our spiritual perceptions reveal the evils we try to hide — and later they resented the two dreams which likewise set him above them. When Jacob sent Joseph to Shechem to find his brothers and report to him concerning them, the first thing we read is, "And they said one to another, Behold, this dreamer cometh." We are all able to recognize that it is the man who dreams who leads others; but in practice many of us are inclined to belittle "idealists" and to try, like Joseph's brothers, to put them aside where they will not interfere with our worldly ambitions. The scribes and Pharisees treated the Lord this way when He came among them and rebuked their evils. We can all see how many points in the story of Joseph foreshadow the life of the Lord. Swedenborg tells us (@AC 4669) that Joseph "signifies the Lord's Divine spiritual Human," and more clearly, "the Divine spiritual which proceeds from His Divine Human" or "the Divine truth which is from Him in heaven and in the church." We should remember that it was as the Divine truth that the Lord came into the world to save the human race.

The story of Joseph is a true story. His brothers really did plot to kill him and finally sold him into slavery in Egypt. But the Lord uses this story to teach us a beautiful, practical lesson. He was with Joseph and turned his very troubles into a means of advancing him and eventually of saving his whole family. Egypt, we recall, represents the plane of memory-knowledge. We need memory-knowledge not only for our life in the world but for our spiritual development as well. And there is a time in our lives when it is especially orderly and appropriate that our attention should be

centered upon acquiring it. The instances in the Bible story of "going down into Egypt" for food and for protection are symbolic of this fact. The Lord takes special care of children until they have learned to take care of themselves. He gives us a long childhood because we need so much knowledge in order to face the problems of adult life. When He came into the world, He Himself went down into Egypt to show us that this is an orderly part of our lives, and also as a symbol of what He in His assumed human was learning: the letter of Scripture. We remember how constantly He used quotations from the Scriptures during His ministry. It was all stored in His external memory during His childhood. Swedenborg tells us that truth from the Lord does not flow into our minds and remain there for our use except as we have the vessels for receiving and holding it, which are knowledges of the Word learned in an external way. And the Lord constantly reminds us that if we wish to progress spiritually, we must continue to learn more from the letter of the Word throughout our lives. "Search the Scriptures." We should note that we are not obeying this command when we go to the Word merely to find passages to support our own ideas, or when we read only the passages which we enjoy.

All the stories of the Word relate inmost to the Lord's life and in their internal sense to the life of each one of us. The twelve sons of Jacob all represent necessary affections, good when properly used; but any of these may be perverted — turned to selfish purposes — just as Joseph's brothers turned against him. When this happens, the Lord makes use of the best things in us to try to save us. Joseph in us is our affection for truth from the Lord, our love of thinking about the Lord and His care over us. This is one of the "remains" stored up in us by the Lord from our innocent childhood states. As Joseph dreamed dreams and later was given the power to interpret them, so when we are thinking about the Lord from genuine affection, worldly things fall into their proper subordinate place; we see above and beyond them, and can understand the reasons for our various experiences.

But very often our more external affections get the better of our Joseph and put him away in the realm of memory-knowledge, where he is at first imprisoned. Even then the Lord works within us to preserve and strengthen Joseph against our time of need. When some experience comes which our worldly principles are unable to explain and in the face of which our worldly affections fail us completely, we are led to the rediscovery of Joseph and find him no longer a weak child, but a mighty ruler under whose protection we may willingly place ourselves.

## 27:JOSEPH IN PRISON — Genesis 39; 40

### INTRO

A short review of the last lesson will lead easily into the story of Joseph. For the background of today's lesson the important points to bring out are the length of time Jacob stayed in Haran, the number of sons born to him there, the fact that Joseph was Rachel's son, and the reasons why his older brothers hated him. In all the older classes mention the meaning of the series Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and recall the meaning of Egypt which they learned in connection with the story of Abram and Lot. All the classes above the Primary should be fairly familiar with the general outline of the Joseph story. It is a long and interesting one, and the events are so closely connected that it is hard to pass over any of it. If the teacher prefers, he may tell the whole story very briefly before concentrating on the events of these two chapters.

# Adult

The meaning of Joseph's imprisonment in Egypt and of the dreams of the butler and baker should be discussed in their application to our own states of temptations in the present materialistic age. The teacher will find excellent discussion material in @AC 5077-5078.

The stories of Joseph are among the best—loved in the Bible.

This is partly, no doubt, because of their variety and dramatic qualities, and partly because our sense of justice is satisfied by the triumph of right in spite of scheming and persecution. We know, however, that the real power in them comes from the fact that they picture states through which the Lord passed during His life on earth, and states through which we all pass in our youth, as well as repeatedly throughout our lives as we feel the temptation to stifle our spiritual promptings in the face of the pressure of our worldly environment.

We recall that Joseph was the eleventh son of Jacob and the first son of Rachel, the last of Jacob's sons to be born in Haran before they returned to the Holy Land. Jacob and his sons represent development of the church on the natural or external plane. His two wives, Leah and Rachel, represent affection for exterior truth and affection for interior truth. Jacob loved Rachel first but was given Leah instead, and he had six sons by Leah before he had any by Rachel; and, although Jacob at first was angry at Laban's deception, we find (Genesis 30:2) that after he had had four sons by Leah, he was angry with Rachel because she complained of her childlessness. So the natural man catches a first vision of a higher spiritual state, but readily settles down into satisfaction with external accomplishment. The sons of Jacob represent the gradual development of orderly living on the natural plane until, with Joseph, there is a beginning of true spiritual feeling, which is followed by the birth of Benjamin — its complementary truth — after the return to the Holy Land. Benjamin was born near Bethlehem and Rachel died at his birth. Jacob settled down with Leah and eventually they were both buried in the cave of Machpelah with Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah. This would indicate that Jacob's glimpse of something higher than the external order did not take very deep root in his life, and that Leah was actually his true wife. Nevertheless, Joseph remained his favorite son. Do we not see this illustrated in the case of many people who live orderly external lives? The external life satisfies them and they do not really wish to think more deeply: yet they like to remind themselves of a higher possibility within them which they recognized in their youth.

The representation of Joseph is described by Swedenborg in several phrasings: "the Lord's spiritual kingdom," "the spiritual man," "the celestial spiritual man," "the charity from which is faith, or the good from which is truth." In the Lord's life Joseph represents the "Divine Spiritual." In our lives we can perhaps best think of him as our inner desire to be good in the Lord's sight rather than just in the sight of our neighbors. Joseph is the "dreamer" who was disliked by his brothers because his dreams showed that he was their superior. We really know that this higher urge is the true ruler of our lives, but we rebel against the thought. Joseph also had the power to interpret dreams. That inner voice which brings the Lord before our minds is able to point out the true meaning of life and all its experiences. The Lord sees to it that each of us has his "Joseph," and that it is preserved no matter how hard we try to stifle or even destroy it. And if we come to the realization of our need, as Jacob and his sons did in the time of famine, we are enabled by the Lord to dig down into our memories and find our "Joseph" not only still alive but in a position to save and protect us.

Our lesson today finds Joseph a slave in Egypt. Egypt, we remember, is the land of memory-

knowledge. How often we relegate our Joseph to the land of memory-knowledge! Joseph was first sold to Potiphar, captain of the guard of Pharaoh. Because the Lord was with Joseph, under him Potiphar's affairs prospered and Potiphar advanced Joseph to charge over his household. The very fact that we have deep within us the recognition of our duty to the Lord serves to bring a type of order into our external lives, even though we do not understand the source of our outward success. But Potiphar's wife, who represents the affection which belongs to natural truth, is not satisfied. She wants to own Joseph. We see this temptation in the effort of the natural mind to explain away spiritual causes and to reduce everything in life to the level of the finite human rationality. Joseph resists and leaves the house, but his garment is left in the hand of Potiphar's wife and she uses it as evidence against Joseph. Garments represent outmost truths; Joseph's garment — like the Lord's nearly two thousand years later — represents "the ultimate of spiritual truth," the letter of the Word. Think how at times the letter of the Word is used to discredit religion! So Potiphar puts Joseph in prison. We put Joseph further and further out of sight.

Still, Joseph cannot be kept down. In prison he rises to be given charge of all the other prisoners. When we are bent on leading worldly lives, we keep many things in ourselves in prison: some good things because they would bring to our minds truths which would rebuke and correct us, and some evil things because they would lead us to acts which would lower our reputation in the world. The chief butler of Pharaoh and his chief baker represent these two kinds of prisoner. We are familiar with the thought that in the Holy Supper the wine represents truth and the bread good. In the butler's dream he is performing his proper office, pouring the wine into the cup of his master. But in the baker's dream the bread which he is carrying to his master is being stolen from his basket by the birds of the air.

Swedenborg says (@AC 5077-5078) that the butler represents the external sensual which is subject to the intellectual part of the internal man, and the baker represents the external sensual which is subject to the voluntary part of the internal man. This is why the chief butler was restored to his place and the chief baker was hanged. Our intellectual capacity often is able and willing to receive memory—knowledges of truth, but at the same time reject knowledges of good because we did not want to live according to them. In short, we often are eager to learn things but unwilling to put them into practice. Even in the letter there is a difference between the butler and the baker. When they told Joseph that they had been troubled by their dreams and Joseph said, "Do not interpretations belong to God? tell me them, I pray you," the butler had no hesitation in telling his dream immediately. But it is said of the baker, "When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was good," he proceeded to tell his own dream to Joseph. That is, the butler was willing to submit himself to the Lord's judgment, but the baker waited to see if the judgment was likely to be favorable to him. Still another indication is found in Swedenborg's translation of Genesis 40:16. The King James Version says the baker had "three white baskets" on his head, and the Revised Standard Version says "three cake baskets." The latter version gives no indication of any other possible translation, but the center column in the Oxford teacher's edition (King James) gives as an alternate translation, "baskets full of holes." [Two recent versions, the New American Bible and the Anchor Bible, have "three wicker baskets."] Swedenborg says "three baskets with holes in them" [canistra perforata], and explains the verse as meaning that the baskets represent the planes of the mind and their having holes in them means that the "interiors were without termination anywhere in the middle." Read here @AC 5145. Compare this with Haggai's rebuke to those who returned from exile (Haggai 1:4-6).

# 28:JOSEPH RULER OF EGYPT — Genesis 41

## INTRO

The story should be very familiar to all the young people of the Junior age and up, and a few questions and reminders should be enough except with the Primary class. The emphasis should be on the difference between Joseph and his older brothers in their outlook on life, and on the fact that because Joseph was gentle and upright, the Lord could be with him and make his very hardships stepping—stones to success.

## Adult

The most fruitful discussion topic is probably the application of this story to our own lives in our recurring states of temptation, especially the lesson of the Lord's wise providence in preparing for these states in us before we ourselves have reached them. The meaning of Joseph is worthy of careful study. It is not simple — but our mental processes are not simple — and we could all profit by a clearer understanding of what actually goes on in our minds and hearts and of the Lord's care over us.

The story of Joseph is so familiar to us and contains so many obvious lessons that we do not always stop to think of its spiritual meaning. In reference to the education of our children we see readily that Joseph sold into Egypt and there cast into prison is a picture of how the spiritual inclinations of childhood and youth are often pushed into the background and even willfully confined there as our young people grow up and become absorbed in the activities and pleasures of adult life in the world. If we have been careful to give them adequate spiritual instruction in their childhood and to foster in them an affirmative attitude toward religion and the church, we can be patient during this period of lessened interest, knowing that Joseph is still alive and at work under the surface and will in the Lord's good time be brought forth to interpret their problems and nourish them in the inevitable time of famine.

But no part of the Word is applicable to one period of life alone.

If we are making spiritual progress, we pass through various cycles of the Word again and again in the course of our lives. With every spiritual success — such as is pictured by the return of Jacob and his family to the Holy Land — there comes the temptation to be self-satisfied, to forget that our seeming goodness is not our own and to imagine that we shall not again be in want of spiritual instruction and help. The place we think we have earned for ourselves in the world is very satisfactory. Every time we close our minds to the thought that we still have shortcomings, "Joseph" is sold into Egypt.

Our own wisdom cannot prevent the recurring famine nor provide against it. Our chapter for today teaches us how the Lord foresees our coming need and prepares us to meet it. We recall that Joseph later said to his brothers, "God did send me before you to preserve life." (Genesis 45:5) Egypt pictures the plane of memory-knowledge. In that plane in our minds are gathered all the facts we have ever learned, not only the facts concerning the physical world and life in it but all we have read and heard of the letter of the Word and the instruction which has been given us in connection with it. The Lord's preparation for our time of need begins in this plane. He sees to it that a Pharaoh

— a ruling principle — comes to the throne in Egypt who wants to be enlightened. Then he inspires dreams which foreshadow the approaching trouble. Then, to interpret the dreams and provide for the salvation of the people, He causes the butler to remember Joseph and brings Joseph up out of prison.

We should try to come to some understanding of what Joseph and his experiences mean in our own lives, if we are regenerating. For this effort one of the most helpful passages is @AC 4286, where in connection with the changing of Jacob's name to Israel Swedenborg says: "That this signifies the Divine celestial spiritual now, and that 'Israel' is the celestial spiritual man in the natural, and thus is natural; and that the celestial spiritual man itself, which is rational, is 'Joseph,' is evident from what follows. This is the reason why it is said that Israel is the celestial spiritual man which is in the natural, and thus is natural; and that Joseph is the celestial spiritual man itself, which is rational. For in the universal sense all the good which is of love and charity is called celestial, and all the derivative truth of faith and intelligence is said to be spiritual." Another helpful statement is found in @AC 4585 in connection with the birth of Benjamin: "These things cannot fall into the understanding of anyone unless it is known what the external man and the internal man are, and that the former is distinct from the latter, although while man is living in the body they appear as one; also unless it is known that the natural constitutes the external man, and the rational the internal; and further unless it is known what the spiritual is and what the celestial."

The importance to us of the Lord's provision for our times of famine is impressed upon us throughout the interpretation of this part of the Joseph story in the Arcana. In @AC 5342 we find this especially clear and simple statement: "That truths adjoined to good are stored up in the interiors of the natural mind, and there preserved for use in after life, especially for use in temptations during man's regeneration, is a secret known to few at this day; and therefore something must be said about this. For by the 'seven years of abundance of produce' are signified the truths first multiplied, and by the corn being 'put in the cities' and 'in the midst' is signified that these truths adjoined to good are stored up in man's interiors; and by the 'seven years of famine,' and by the sustenance at that time from the gatherings, is signified a state of regeneration through truths adjoined to good, stored up in the interiors. ... It is these truths adjoined to good that in the proper sense are called 'remains.' In so far therefore as the man suffers himself to be regenerated, so far the remains serve for use; for so far a supply from them is drawn forth by the Lord, and is sent back into the natural, in order to produce a correspondence of the exteriors with the interiors, or of what is natural with what is spiritual; and this is effected in the state signified by the 'seven years of famine.' Such is the secret. The man of the church at this day believes that no matter what anyone's life is, he may of mercy be received into heaven, and there enjoy eternal bliss; for he supposes admission to be all that is necessary. But he is much mistaken, for no one can be admitted and received into heaven unless he has received spiritual life, and no one can receive spiritual life unless he is being regenerated, and no one can be regenerated except through the good of life conjoined with the truth of doctrine: from this he has spiritual life."

## 29:JOSEPH'S SONS — Genesis 48; 50:22-26

### INTRO

Here again we have a lesson in which a familiar story needs to be reviewed briefly by way of introduction — the whole story of Joseph. In the notes for each age group the attempt has been

made to suggest the particular features of the story best suited to lead into the lesson for the day with children of that age.

## Adult

The correspondence of Joseph and Benjamin and of Ephraim and Manasseh is the focal point of the lesson. In discussing the latter the teacher may want to read to the class the quotation from the writings found at the end of the lesson. There is excellent discussion material in the whole of @AC 6222.

One of the most striking features of the Bible story is the recurrent cycles, often involving very similar incidents. Our chapter for today, with its account of the blessing of Ephraim and Manasseh, takes us back to the blessing of Jacob and Esau, and still further back to the offerings of Cain and Abel. Each pair of brothers represents faith and charity, or truth and good, but in different contexts and at different levels. In each case a series of events leads up to and follows from the relationship between the two brothers. In the first instance, because of the immediate background of the story, the brother representing faith is born first. In the other two, although the brother representing love is the firstborn, he is supplanted by his brother. These repetitions are not accidental, and the lesson they teach is an important one. Our lives proceed in cycles, beginning anew with each new emergence of truth and good. If we are progressing spiritually, the cycles carry us ever higher. If we have turned away from the Lord, their course is inverted. We recall that the hells are described as a man upside down (@AC 3641).

The life of Jacob followed one cycle: He lived through his time of temptation and development, returned to his childhood home, became reconciled to his brother, and inherited his father's position as head of the family. Joseph and Benjamin, his last-born sons, were still in their childhood. But they constituted the beginning of a new cycle. They, too, represent love and truth; but this time the conflict was not between the two but between Joseph and his older brothers, and Joseph was the one who was despised and rejected. This is because Jacob was the last representative of the Ancient Church, which was a true church, as well as the immediate ancestor of the Israelitish Church, which was only representative of a church. You recall the difference between the names Jacob and Israel. Note their use in this chapter. A new period is beginning, in which the church is being built up. In order that it may exist at all, it must have some connection with the Lord, and that connection is established through Joseph. The spirit of the older brothers in the story is the spirit of that church toward any internal spiritual qualities.

In technical terms Benjamin represents "the spiritual of the celestial" and Joseph the "celestial of the spiritual." This is not a mere juggling of words. We can understand them and the difference between them if we remember that between the inmost or celestial plane of the soul, where the Lord's influx enters, and the outmost natural plane, which is in contact with the material world, there is the interior or rational plane, which opens both ways. Benjamin represents divine truth as it flows in from the celestial plane through the rational into the natural. Joseph represents the good — the celestial — which belongs to this truth. The older brothers are the various faculties developed in the natural plane itself. They are good or bad as they serve or resist Joseph.

In terms of the general development of the man or woman who is regenerating, the period of Jacob is the time when he is developing his independent life on the natural plane. At some point in that period he becomes conscious of the possibility of a higher development within him than the merely

worldly. This is the birth of Joseph. He returns to the Holy Land of his earlier years and reestablishes himself in worship of the Lord. But this is the signal for a new struggle. The natural faculties resist the encroachment of a higher authority. The older brothers say, "Behold, this dreamer cometh," and sell Joseph into Egypt. That is, at this point the first desire of our natural faculties is to relegate divine truth to the plane of memory-knowledge and keep it a prisoner there.

The story of Joseph is quite generally recognized as a foreshadowing of the Lord's life on earth. The Lord was carried into Egypt to escape the wrath of the jealous Herod. He, too, was lost to the sight of the recognized church and in obscurity "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man." In the regenerating person, the Lord's providence cares for and develops the faculty of receiving divine truth until a time of famine comes and the person realizes his own helplessness and is ready to submit his judgment to providence. Then a new learning period begins. Jacob and his whole family come to Egypt.

The book of Genesis leaves us with a picture of the Egyptian state when it is orderly. Pharaoh — the natural principle — is on the throne. But he has voluntarily placed Joseph in full control of the land, and Israel and all his family have been settled in the best of the land that they may be nourished and protected during the years of famine. It is a picture of an orderly learning period. Our freedom of choice is unimpaired, but we have chosen the Lord as our ruler, set our natural affections and thoughts in their proper relation to Him, and settled down to receive instruction from Him.

One feature of this picture is Jacob's final setting up of Joseph's two sons as equal to his own. He says, "as Reuben and Simeon they shall be mine." Reuben and Simeon represent faith and obedience on the natural plane. Ephraim and Manasseh represent faith and obedience on the intellectual plane. In @AC 6216 Swedenborg says, "The intellectual of the church is 'Ephraim,' and the will of the church is 'Manasseh.'" From this point on in the Word, the spiritual church is represented by Israel and the children of Israel, even though the Jewish Church, represented by Jacob, is not itself a true church even on the natural plane. We should note here a statement made by Swedenborg in @AC 6222 concerning Ephraim:

"This intellectual, which is called the intellectual of the church, is more interior than the intellectual which comes from mere memory—knowledges, for it is a perception that the thing is so, not from the dictate of memory-knowledges and philosophy, but from the dictate of the Word in its spiritual sense." Ephraim and Manasseh are adopted by Jacob, but they are actually the sons of Joseph, who represents the Divine as it enters the rational plane of the mind from above.

The placing of Ephraim before Manasseh by Jacob, although Manasseh was the firstborn, teaches a lesson which recurs so frequently in the Word and is also expressed so clearly in the writings that we have no excuse for ignoring it. The will is primary. We do or think nothing without an act of will. But before the will can accomplish any purpose, the mind must be instructed. And this cannot be done once for all. The same situation recurs in every cycle in the Word. However good our intentions may be, we make no spiritual progress unless we are constantly trying to acquire new truth from the Word and the writings. If we think our conscience, as already developed, is a sufficient guide for the rest of our lives, we are woefully mistaken. We have simply embalmed Joseph and put him in a coffin and settled down to take our direction from the Egyptians.

# **30:THE BIRTH OF MOSES — Exodus 1; 2:1-10**

## **INTRO**

The book of Genesis ends with the death of Joseph. At that time the Israelites were settled comfortably in Egypt and still respected because of Joseph. But as the years passed, and the Hebrews grew in numbers, the Egyptians began to resent them until one of the Pharaohs ordered that all male children born to the Hebrews were to be killed. This is where the story begins in the book of Exodus.

## **Adult**

The difference in meaning between Egypt under Joseph and Egypt under a Pharaoh "which knew not Joseph" should be clearly pointed out. Then give the correspondence of Moses and, with this as a basis of interpretation, take up the general outline of the life of Moses and its meaning.

When Jacob and his family came down into Egypt and were given the best of the land to live in because of Pharaoh's gratitude to Joseph and confidence in him, we have the picture of an orderly learning period, when the Lord is supreme in our thoughts and recognition of Him directs our acquisition and ordering of facts. It is a peaceful, happy, profitable state. We are in such a state not only in our childhood but also in adult life when we read the Word daily, when we study the writings of the church, when we attend Sunday school and church, and also when for the sake of our use to the Lord and the neighbor we study or refresh our minds on subjects other than the Word which we feel will help us.

This learning state is essential to progress, but it is not to be our constant state. The Lord had promised Jacob that He would bring the children of Israel out of Egypt again. Joseph before he died had exacted a promise from them that when they returned to the Holy Land they would take his bones with them — a promise which they fulfilled (Exodus 13:19 and Joshua 24:32). The land of Canaan was their true home. The Lord, when He called Abraham to leave Ur and go to the land of Canaan, had promised it to him and his seed forever, and had repeated this promise to Isaac and to Jacob.

Canaan has always been called "the promised land," and recognized as a symbol of heaven. Heaven is the inheritance the Lord wishes to give each one of us. But the Lord tells us, "The kingdom of God is within you." We do not go to heaven when we die unless heaven is within us when we die. So our Canaan is a heavenly character, and that is the object of our whole journey through life.

When the Israelites settled in Egypt, they prospered and increased greatly in numbers and possessions and, as we are all apt to do when everything goes well with us, they presently forgot that they were merely sojourners in Egypt and made no effort to return to Canaan. Then Joseph died, and his body was embalmed and put in a coffin in Egypt. So when we become wholly satisfied with our worldly prosperity, our higher spiritual perceptions are laid away out of sight in the memory, and we become more and more absorbed in the pursuit of the things of this world. The Israelites eventually became slaves to the monarchs who succeeded those who had originally befriended them, the later Pharaohs, who as time went on "knew not Joseph." They themselves at last forgot even the name of their own God — Moses had to be told the name Jehovah by the Lord

when He spoke to him at the burning bush. So if we fall in love with knowledge for its own sake or for the sake of what it can do for us in a worldly way and forget that it is given us by the Lord as a means to help us to serve Him and the neighbor, we come under the rule of a selfish and worldly principle and become slaves to it; our higher natures are made to serve worldly ends. But the Israelitish people had been chosen by the Lord to serve as a representative of His church on earth, and their history was so regulated by Him that it should represent the course of a person whose mind is not wholly closed to spiritual lessons. So they began to groan under their bondage and to long for deliverance from it. Every person who really intends to lead a good life eventually becomes restless and dissatisfied with his bondage to the world.

The command of Pharaoh that all the male infants of the Hebrews should be killed may be compared with Herod's slaying of all the babes in Bethlehem. It is the effort of the worldly nature into which all of us are born to destroy every seed of spiritual truth which might grow up to threaten our selfish interests. But the Lord sees to it that a saving element is preserved — knowledge of his law. Moses represents divine law. There are two elements necessary to the preservation of this knowledge. One is a genuine affection for it, represented by the mother of Moses, which is part of the "remains" implanted in us during infancy and early childhood. The other is an affection for the material rewards of keeping the law, self-esteem and the esteem of others, represented by Pharaoh's daughter. The ark of bulrushes, covered with pitch like Noah's ark, portrays a knowledge of the mere letter of the law - the rudiments of understanding it — preserved by love of self, since ignorance of the law gets one into trouble. The timing — which brings Pharaoh's daughter down to bathe just when Moses in the ark has been left at the water's edge — is the Lord's. So our opportunities are always timed by divine providence to give us the best possibility of correcting our mistakes. Moses grew up as the foster son of Pharaoh's daughter. We might think here of the rich young man who had kept all the commandments from his youth up and came to the Lord feeling that his orderly life should be sufficient. But Moses had his own mother always in the background, and was not allowed to lose sight of his birth and allegiance.

The life of Moses is divided into three periods of forty years each:

(1) The first period was spent in Egypt. It begins with his birth and preservation in the ark of bulrushes. We may see that this ark represents the simplest knowledge of what is right and fitting held together and kept afloat by the sense that one must observe the standards of his community if he is to succeed. Moses was brought up — as many of us are — in the learning of the Egyptians but in the tradition of the Hebrews; that is, in worldly knowledge but with some knowledge of the Word also. This period closes with the flight of Moses after he slew an Egyptian whom he saw smiting a Hebrew — our first impulsive attempt to preserve what we feel is important to our spiritual life.

(2) The second period was spent in the land of Midian, tending the flocks of Jethro, a priest of Midian, who became Moses' father-in-law. Midian was the son of Abraham by Keturah, whom he married after Sarah's death. In a good sense Midian represents a state of simple good, a thought which is further carried out by Moses' occupation there. A temporary return to the simple belief and resolution of our childhood is a necessary part of our preparation for the escape from bondage. This period closes with the call of Moses at the burning bush.

(3) The third period Moses spent in the actual deliverance of his people and in leading them from Egypt to Canaan through the wilderness.

We may think of the story of the Hebrews from the time of the Exodus as the story of our attempt to

attain a heavenly state of character, once we have realized that we cannot stay in mere memory-knowledge of what is good and true but must really apply it to our own personal life. This story proceeds under a series of great leaders of whom Moses is the first. The wilderness journey pictures the period of reformation when we are trying to bring our external lives into order from a principle of simple obedience to the ten commandments.

## 31:THE BURNING BUSH — Exodus 3

### INTRO

In order to connect with the last lesson, the point to emphasize is that Jacob and his family went down into Egypt to be fed and protected by Joseph just for a time, and then yielded to the temptation to stay there in comfort instead of going back where they belonged. It is another example of taking the easy way instead of the right way — like the choice Lot made. Reference to Lot will also give an opportunity for a brief review, which is always useful. Even the littlest children can get the idea that the thing which looks easiest is not always the right thing, and that to choose anything but the right thing always leads to trouble.

### Adult

The excuses given by Moses are perhaps the most fruitful source of discussion material for adults. Their Egyptian period should be over, and the question is, what are they doing with their lives? what are they doing for the Lord and the church?

The Israelites came down into Egypt to be protected and fed by Joseph during the years of famine. But because they were given the best of the land to dwell in and prospered in a worldly sense better than in their own land, they did not go back, and eventually, although they preserved their national identity, they forgot their home and even the name of their own God. We do this when we feel the lack of knowledge necessary to a useful life but, when we find it, become so interested in the knowledge of itself and so self-satisfied that we forget the true purpose of life altogether.

The life of Moses is divided into three periods of forty years each, and we remember that the number forty represents fullness of temptation. His first forty years was spent in Egypt in the court of Pharaoh, where he was educated in the learning of the most intellectually active nation in the world at that time, and also, through his mother, in the traditions of the Hebrews. The second forty were spent in the land of Midian, in the southeastern portion of the Sinai Peninsula. Midian in a good sense represents a state of childlike faith and obedience — Midian was a son of Abraham (Genesis 25:1-4). When worldliness threatens to master us and we awake to the necessity of saving our higher nature, our first need and impulse is to go back to the simple trust and obedience of our childhood, and to reestablish the good habits developed in that state.

But we cannot remain in the Midian state. Many people today try, as they say, to go "back to Jesus," back to an unreasoning acceptance of the finite human picture of Christ, closing their minds to the real problems involved in a rational consideration of the claim and teachings of Christ and to the need of the modern world for just such rational understanding, and imagining that this is the only way to save their souls. But when we remain too long in blind faith, Midian becomes an enemy, eating up the new developments and opportunities which are presented to us which ought to lead

us to greater spiritual insight and usefulness, as the Midianites of Gideon's time spread over the land like grasshoppers and destroyed the harvest. The Lord has more for us to do than merely to save our own souls alive. Moses was called to go back to Egypt and free his people. Moses, as we know, represents divine law. It is divine law which leads us out of bondage to worldliness and materialism.

The call to undertake this "going out" comes as a sudden prompting from divine love in the rudimentary truths we have stored in our memory: the fire in the bramble bush. It is significant that when Moses saw the burning bush, he was at Horeb, close to Sinai, and was feeding the flock. The call comes to us in moments when we are thinking of the commandments and trying to preserve something of the innocence which the Lord has stored up deep within us in the "remains" of our childhood states. The writings tell us that without these remains no one could be saved. Whenever we have sufficiently prepared the way in ourselves and the Lord sees that we are mature and strong enough to take a forward step, He brings to our consciousness something out of these remains to make us feel that He is present with us and urging us to new endeavor. But the first thing the voice said to Moses was: "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." If the Lord is to communicate with us, we must first put aside the everyday, selfish considerations which we call "practical," and be ready to listen to His voice even though it may point us to unexpected and difficult undertakings.

We do not hear the Lord speaking when we are bent on listening to the voice of the world.

Moses was not eager to accept the commission offered him.

He raised several objections. The first was a legitimate one: "Who am I" that I should do this great thing? His sense of his own weakness and unworthiness was praiseworthy and was answered by the Lord's assurance: "Certainly I will be with thee." Then he pleaded ignorance: he did not know even the name of his God. We often do this when we are asked to teach Sunday school or to lead a discussion group, or to make some new missionary effort: "I don't know enough myself." We should recognize this as an excuse, not a reason. The Lord answered it by telling Moses His name, a name signifying the quality of a thing. The Lord is giving us as well as Moses the simplest and most comprehensive information about Himself when He says: "I AM THAT I AM ... Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you." In the Hebrew Jehovah is another form of "I am." Jehovah is the name of the Lord which, we learn from Swedenborg, is always used in the Word when the divine love is under consideration, just as Elohim (translated "God") is used to express the activity of the divine truth. If we know that in the King James version of the Bible [a similar device is followed in the Revised Standard Version. See RSV footnote at Exodus 3:15. -Editor] Jehovah is almost always translated "the LORD" (in small capitals) and Elohim "God," we shall find the use of these names a very enlightening study. When we read "the LORD God," the Hebrew is Jehovah Elohim, and the emphasis is on the activity of divine love and divine wisdom together. When, therefore, the Lord tells Moses that His name is I AM, He is saying that He, divine love, is Life itself — the one reality and source from which everything in the universe has its life and its existence. To recognize this is basic to any belief in God and trust in Him. In the chapter which follows our lesson the Lord gives Moses the power to work certain miracles which will help to convince his people, as well as Pharaoh, that he is really commissioned by the Lord. Then Moses raises a final objection. He says that he is not eloquent but is "slow of speech, and of a slow tongue." How often we raise this objection when we are asked to approach others with the message of our church! And the Lord says to us, as to Moses: "Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I, the Lord? Now therefore go, and I will be with

thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say." Read here Luke 12:11-12. And the Lord gave Moses Aaron his brother to go with him and to speak for him. We are told in the writings (@AC 6998) that Moses here represents the truth as it proceeds from the Lord and Aaron the "doctrine of good and truth of the church." When we are called either to amend our own lives or to engage in missionary efforts for the church, we need to realize that if we recognize that the work is the Lord's work and the truth His truth and sincerely desire to serve Him and the neighbor, not looking to ourselves for wisdom and power, He will be with us and put the right words in our mouths. Our failures come from self-consciousness and from trust in self rather than in the Lord.

Another incident in our chapter for today should be noted.

The Lord told Moses (verses 21,22) that when the time came for them to leave Egypt, He would give them favor in the eyes of the Egyptians and that every woman should "borrow of her neighbor, and of her that sojourneth in her house, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment." This promise was carried out (Exodus 12:35, 36), and the things received from the Egyptians in this way were later used in the construction of the tabernacle. When we turn from worldly living to begin our journey to the promised land of heavenly character, we do not discard everything we learned in our former life. We take with us all the knowledge we have acquired which can be serviceable to our new life. To "spoil" the Egyptians is to remove these knowledges from their merely worldly context so that they can be made to serve their true use. Knowledge is power: power for evil or power for good, according to the use we make it serve.

## **32:THE TEN PLAGUES — Exodus 7-10**

### **INTRO**

Cover the necessary facts connecting this lesson with the last one as briefly as possible at the beginning of the lesson period. The teacher must use his own judgment in choice of details. Be sure to point out that if the children of Israel had gone back to the Holy Land after the famine was over as they should have done, they would never have become slaves in Egypt and would have been spared much hardship and suffering.

### **Adult**

There are plenty of discussion topics here: the change in Egypt from the time of Joseph to the captivity, the ten plagues themselves, the power of the magicians, Pharaoh's stubbornness. The quotations at the end of the lesson may also be used.

For anyone without a knowledge of correspondence, the chapters of Exodus which recount the story of the plagues present unanswerable questions. In the letter the Lord instructs Moses to lie to Pharaoh by telling him that the Hebrews merely want to go three days' journey into the wilderness to sacrifice to their God. In the letter it is said that the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart. The murrain, or plague, is said to have killed all the cattle of Egypt, but immediately afterward those Egyptians who fear the Lord are told to take their cattle into their houses to protect them from the hail. A question is raised, too, by the fact that the magicians of Egypt were able to perform some of the miracles which Moses performed.

But a knowledge of the essential nature of the letter of the Word, as revealed by the Lord in His Second Coming, not only answers all these questions but makes the whole story of the plagues a wonderful study in the specific evils inherent in a materialistic philosophy of life and their destructive effects.

In the first place we recognize that the letter of the Word took its form from the impact of divine truth upon the minds of those through whom it was written. Thus, the deception practiced by Moses represents the measure of his ability to comprehend and fulfill his mission. His own fearfulness intervened to twist the message, just as later his own pride prompted him to take credit for bringing water out of the rock and so condemned him to die without entering the Holy Land. The Lord permitted these appearances in the literal account for our instruction. In the same way, Pharaoh's stubborn resistance to enlightenment is permitted to appear as an act of God, because there are people who can be restrained only by fear of God and of punishment by Him. Pharaoh's repeated changes of mind were foreseen by the Lord indeed, but they were the result of Pharaoh's free choice.

We recall that the Pharaoh who made Joseph ruler over Egypt pictures the principle which rules the natural level of the mind of the person who is regenerating — what Swedenborg calls the "new natural." Recent biblical research tells us that this Pharaoh was of the line called the "shepherd kings." The Pharaoh of our lesson today — who was of a different line — represents the principle of worldliness which rules the natural level of the mind of the person who is not regenerating. This principle resists with all its power any effort to set free in the mind those higher spiritual faculties which are represented by the children of Israel. Perhaps we have had the experience of trying to introduce New Church teachings into the mind of some thoroughly worldly person and have been shocked at our inability to make any impression and at the revelation of what lay back of an apparently orderly and pleasant exterior. The story of the plagues is the story of such a revelation.

There were ten plagues, preceded by the miracle of the rod becoming a serpent, and followed by the "spoiling" of the Egyptians. These plagues were not in any sense arbitrary manifestations of divine power. Pharaoh, stubbornly insisting upon the bondage of the Israelites, pictures the natural level of the mind insisting on keeping the spiritual level in subjection. When a person is in this state, true order is inverted and power from the Lord flowing into his will and understanding is turned to destruction, the destruction of what is good and true. This destruction proceeds gradually, by successive steps, represented by the successive plagues; at first only annoying for a time, but later beginning to destroy the necessities of life and finally depriving him of all that is dearest to him. Swedenborg tells us that all noxious things are created through evils in men.

The plagues in Egypt actually took place, but they were wrought not as punishments from the Lord but as materializations — for our instruction — of the actual, inevitable results in the soul of centering one's affections and thoughts on the natural world and on self-gratification through it. In reading the story we note that the magicians of Egypt were able to reproduce the first two plagues but no further ones, and that as soon as their power was insufficient, they recognized that Moses had power from the divine (Exodus 8:18-19). We learn from the writings that the magic practiced in the eastern countries was accomplished by means of the knowledge of correspondence which they had by tradition from the Ancient Church.

A point which always strikes us in this story is Pharaoh's seeming stupidity in requiring so many disasters to convince him. But our own experience may be cited in answer. Have we, for example, never suffered from overeating, and did we learn from one such experience? When we are

suffering from the effects of some physical indulgence, we think how foolish we were to do it and resolve to change our habits, but how quickly we forget once the suffering is over! We are taught that no one is regenerated through punishments. Punishments, however, are inevitable results of wrongdoing, and the plagues are a wonderful study in the progressive devastation wrought by persistent materialism, one of the most universal temptations of our modern world.

The meaning of the various plagues can be studied in detail only by reading the Arcana, but we should note that they follow each other logically. For example, the first plague, the turning of the water into blood, represents the falsification of truth — what we do when we use truth or twist it to support what we want to believe — and when this is done, the next step is to derive enjoyment from constant reasoning from this falsity. This is the plague of frogs. Swedenborg develops the meaning of each of the plagues and gives many illuminating illustrations.

### The Plagues

1. All the water in the land was turned into blood: Truth being falsified.
2. Frogs were brought up from the river and filled everything in the land: The mind becoming full of the enjoyment of arguing from falsity.
3. The dust of the earth was turned into lice (or gnats): Sensual desires excited by the contemplation of earthly pleasures.
4. Swarms of flies settled on everything in the land: All sorts of false thoughts filling the mind.
5. A murrain — a wasting disease — killed all the cattle: All natural good impulses being gradually destroyed.
6. The people broke out with boils: Interior evils manifesting themselves on the surface of the life.
7. The hail and the fire following it destroyed the young crops: Falsity from evil destroying in the mind the truths of the church learned in childhood.
8. Locusts ate up the later crops: Falsity on the outermost plane destroying all remaining goodness.
9. Absolute darkness was upon the land for three days: The mind having become unable to see any genuine truth.
10. The firstborn of everyone in the land died: The "damnation" of those who are in faith separate from charity.

## 33:THE PASSOVER — Exodus 12

### INTRO

Discuss the change of state of the Israelites in Egypt and review briefly the birth and call of Moses. Do not try to go into detail about any of this or about the plagues, except for the final one, which is involved in the lesson for the day.

## Adult

It has been thought best to center the lesson in the Adult notes on two or three major themes. Other points may come up, however, and the teacher should be thoroughly prepared. Further very interesting discussion material may be found especially in @AC 7984, 7995, and 8005.

It is important to remember that the Israelites in the first place came down into Egypt to be nourished — under Joseph's protection — during the years of famine. They should have returned to their own country when the famine was over. But their home in Egypt seemed to promise more ease and prosperity than they had ever had. Joseph died, and his body was embalmed and put in a coffin in Egypt. If we should forget that the study of the letter of the Word and of the doctrines of our church is enjoined only for the purpose of enabling us to make spiritual progress, to serve the neighbor better, and so to draw closer to heaven and to the Lord, we may find that there are worldly rewards even for this study which may seem to us more real and desirable than heaven. But if we succumb to this appeal, gradually the plane of our daily life will come to be ruled by a principle which looks to self-interest rather than to the Lord's truth for direction. As Exodus 1:8 puts it, "There arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph."

Then the Lord has to let us learn "the hard way." The Israelites became slaves in Egypt. Life in this state is full of worldly cares and anxieties and becomes a burden. When Moses was called to lead his people out of Egypt, they had not only become slaves to Pharaoh but they were worshiping the golden calf [or so Swedenborg implies in @AC 9391[7]. There is no biblical statement to this effect. -Editor] and had forgotten even the name of the true God. They had to be taught by bitter experience the ruin in which they had permitted themselves to become involved. The ten plagues represent the gradual uncovering by divine law — represented by Moses — of the falsities and evils to which a purely worldly life leads. Not only did the Egyptians suffer, but Pharaoh imposed harder and harder conditions on the Hebrews as the plagues progressed. Only the final plague procured their release.

We are born natural, and the purpose of our life here is that we may become regenerate. "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." In the writings, faith is called the firstborn because it is the means by which falsity and evil are overcome and we become children of the first resurrection. The firstborn of Israel were saved. But when faith is destroyed, there can be no salvation. Spiritually the firstborn of Pharaoh is the faith of obedience from fear, without any love for doing what is right. This faith does not stand in the face of severe temptation. The firstborn of Egypt dies. This is the final judgment on the evil; all memory-knowledge of good and truth finally perishes, and with it the means of amendment.

But the possessions of the Egyptians are not in themselves evil.

Egypt represents the natural plane of life, not only our life in the world but the most outward state of the church — its rituals, forms, and ceremonies. As a church declines in spirituality, it tends to make its rituals more elaborate, its buildings more impressive, and to amass wealth in silver and gold. Yet these are all good and necessary things. They are a defense to spiritual life. Regular external worship, instruction, hymns and prayers, the recitation of one's faith, teaching about religion and the letter of the Word are necessary. The more we know of the letter of the Word the better we are prepared to understand its spirit. We acquire memory-knowledge of many important and useful things, and these can serve us in our spiritual life. So the Hebrews were commanded to "borrow" of the Egyptians, and they took with them into their new life the treasures so acquired.

We need to "borrow" of the Egyptians "vessels of gold and silver," the letter of the Word and the forms of worship which contain and protect the real treasure of the church, love to the Lord and the neighbor. And we also need to borrow "raiment,' the commandments in their letter, the moral truths and principles of life kept as laws of man and of earthly success. We should appropriate from what our memories receive everything that serves and supports spiritual life.

Following the last plague the Passover was instituted. It was to become the most important of the Jewish feasts, and was to be observed annually as a memorial of their deliverance from Egypt. And this festival has been kept by the Jewish Church down the ages to the present day.

We are probably familiar with the thought that lambs represent innocence, and that eating lamb represents appropriating this quality of innocence. But just what is innocence? We associate the quality with little children, and think of their simplicity and trust and their ignorance of any real evil. This is the "innocence of ignorance" of which Swedenborg speaks. But when the Lord says, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven," He is not asking us to return to a state of ignorance. Swedenborg speaks of another kind of innocence, which he calls the "innocence of wisdom." The word innocent means "not harming," and we need to recognize that all desires we may have to injure others — whether these desires are impulsive and fleeting or deep-seated and rankling — are from the love of self. In @AC 3994, in interpreting Jacob's choice of black lambs as his wages in Haran, Swedenborg says that black signifies what is man's own, and continues, "An own [proprium] that is innocent is to know, acknowledge, and believe, not with the mouth but with the heart, that nothing but evil is from one's self and that all good is from the Lord; and therefore that what is man's own is nothing but blackness; that is to say, not only the own of his will, which is evil, but also the own of his understanding, which is falsity. When man is in this confession and belief from the heart, the Lord flows in with good and truth." This is the innocence of wisdom, which the Passover lamb signifies.

To sprinkle the blood of this lamb on the doorposts and lintel of the house is to write this truth on every thought we permit to enter the mind and on every desire also. To eat the lamb "roast with fire" instead of raw or "sodden with water" is to receive it from love, not without love nor yet from the mere enjoyment of knowing it. Unleavened bread is truth purified from falsity and bitter herbs signify "by means of temptations." That all of it shall be used means that it shall be made part of us "from the inmost to the external." And verse 11 means that we should stand prepared to think and act in every respect from this deep conviction with regard to self and the Lord.

The journey from Egypt to Canaan was to be long and difficult, although the people were not aware of this. This journey is the symbol of our spiritual journey from natural to spiritual living, and the Passover was the preparation for it. At the Passover feast immediately preceding His betrayal and crucifixion the Lord said to the twelve, "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer." Then He instituted the Holy Supper, which for the Christian Church takes the place of the Passover and is given to strengthen and protect us in our journey of life. In this new Christian form the Passover will be celebrated forever.

The lamb that was sacrificed in the Passover represents the Lord.

So John the Baptist declared, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world." In its inmost meaning the lamb is the Lord as to His divine innocence, the offering up of every selfish and worldly impulse and the complete consecration to the divine will and guidance.

# **34:CROSSING THE RED SEA — Exodus 13:17-22; 14**

## **INTRO**

In general with the younger classes the emphasis should be on the crossing of the Red Sea, the story of the Passover being retold chiefly for the sake of getting the word Passover fixed in the children's minds in connection with the deliverance from Egypt.

## **Adult**

The lesson to be stressed is that if we are genuinely trying to obey the Lord and are willing to trust in Him, He will always open the way before us. We should learn to recognize anxiety as a sign that we are trusting in self instead of in the Lord and to see the difference between foresight and worry.

Our thought about our lesson for today should be prefaced by refreshing our minds concerning the Passover and its significance. Let us first look up four references: Numbers 9:1-5, Joshua 5:10-12, 2 Kings 23:21-23, and Matthew 26:17-30. These tell us about the first anniversary of the Passover celebrated in the wilderness of Sinai, the celebration of the Passover at Gilgal immediately after the entrance into the Holy Land under Joshua, the celebration of the Passover under Josiah after he found the book of the law which had been lost, and the celebration of the Passover by the Lord on the evening before the crucifixion. These are enough to indicate how necessary it is to have the signification of the Passover clearly in mind if only that we may understand subsequent Bible history. The Passover in general may well be associated in our minds with our thought of "conversion." In some churches much stress is laid on this experience, every effort being made through revivals and other means to lead people to it. In the New Church we recognize the necessity of conversion — of making the decision to turn away from self and toward the Lord — but we do not feel that it must necessarily take some immediate striking outward manifestation. Conversion is only the first step toward regeneration. We are all born natural, and must sometime, if we are to become spiritual, determine of our own free will to break our bondage to natural thoughts and affections and start on our journey toward a heavenly character. The Passover symbolizes this decision. The slaying of the firstborn of the Egyptians pictures the fact that it is impossible that any spiritual life should spring from the natural itself. The passing over of the houses on which the blood of the paschal lamb was sprinkled symbolizes the possibility of spiritual life with those who determine to look to the Lord for knowledge and power instead of to themselves. This decision is indeed a momentous one and we should keep it fresh in our memories, recalling it at the beginning of new undertakings, renewing it after periods of waywardness, and confirming it as we grow older by coming reverently to the Lord's Supper.

The actual feast of the Passover was one of the acts enjoined upon the Jewish Church as part of its representative worship, relating men to the Lord through correspondences during the period when they were actually so far from Him that there could be no interior conjunction. The Lord, when He was upon earth, bridged this gap Himself and reestablished the connection, and by instituting the Holy Supper did away with the need of continuing to keep the Passover. It was after He had eaten of the Passover with His disciples that He took the cup, broke the bread, and bade His disciples "do this in remembrance of me." Swedenborg speaks of this as the last Jewish and the first Christian

Passover. That is, the Passover commemorated the deliverance of the Jews from bondage in Egypt, and the Holy Supper commemorates the reality of which that was the shadow — the deliverance of man from bondage to hell by the Lord Himself. The bread of the Lord's Supper takes the place of the flesh of the paschal lamb and has the same significance as the blood of the lamb. The Lord speaks of the bread and wine as His body and blood, and He is called the Paschal Lamb.

The Hebrews by command ate the Passover feast with their loins girded, their shoes on their feet, and their staves in their hands ready to depart from Egypt. We have all experienced the first pleasure that comes with a new resolution, the eagerness to carry it out, and the ideas and plans which spring to the mind while it is in this first state. And we have all experienced the fact that this first enthusiasm does not last. For our resolution marks the beginning of a long period called the period of reformation. Before we can even enter the border of the Holy Land of spiritual living, we have the task of putting our external lives in order according to the Lord's laws. The journey of the Israelites to Canaan represents this period of reformation. The pillar of cloud and fire which led them throughout their forty-year journey represents the letter of the Word which leads and also protects us, both in our daytimes of clear understanding and in our nighttimes of doubt and uncertainty. Swedenborg tells us that the actual pillar was a "choir" of angels with the Lord in their midst. Clouds always picture the letter of the Word; a cloud with fire within it, divine truth from divine love. Moses represents divine law as it connects man with God.

The first great event of the journey of the Israelites was the crossing of the Red Sea. This represents the first practical test of our new determination, the first temptation to be overcome, confirming our decision. It is a vivid picture, and one which our own experience readily verifies. Here are the children of Israel hastening on their way, led by the wonderful pillar. They have left the land of Goshen in haste, but with rejoicing and eagerness and confidence. Suddenly they find the Red Sea blocking their path and at the same time realize that Pharaoh and his chariots and his horsemen are in close pursuit. They must either cross the apparently impassable sea or be captured and brought back to slavery. How often, in some moment of high thought, we make a decision to break the chains of a long-standing bad habit! Almost immediately we are tempted; we realize that the power of our past indulgence is pressing close upon us, that if we do not break this particular temptation now — immediately — we shall slip back into the same old ways; but it seems impossible to take the right way. The story says to us, "Trust in the Lord and go forward. The Lord is with you and will uphold you." The Red Sea pictures an accumulation of evils and falsities which bounds the worldly and selfish life — specifically hell — but when the hand of Moses - the power of divine law — is stretched forth over it, the threatening waters will roll back under the strong east wind of truth from the Lord, and we shall pass over on dry ground — the firm basis of good character.

And once we are across, the very temptation which has been overcome will prove to us that our former bad habit is powerless when we obey the Lord and trust in His help. Pharaoh's army and his horsemen are drowned in the Red Sea. The chariots of the Egyptians are the doctrines of falsity of the natural worldly man; and the chariot wheels, the power of advancing these doctrines against our spiritual purpose. We should remember this story. The conquering of the first temptation after a new good decision is very important. We recall that although the Israelites in the wilderness many times looked back with longing to the "good things" they had enjoyed in Egypt (Numbers 11:5), they never went back.

# 35:MARAH AND ELIM — Exodus 15

## INTRO

Cover briefly the story of Moses' return to Egypt and the events of the Exodus through the crossing of the Red Sea. Point out that one would think that after witnessing so many miracles the Israelites would never have doubted or disobeyed again. Yet the sense of deliverance, changing so soon to discouragement and murmuring is one of the keynotes of the whole wilderness story, and with the older classes this may be stressed as an experience common to all of us when we embark upon the effort to reform our lives according to the teaching of the Word. We are familiar with the expression "the ups and downs of life." This can be applied not only to changes in our worldly circumstances but to changes in our spiritual states as well. Our chapter starts with an "up" which is followed by a "down," and it ends in another "up." This gives an outline for taking up the lesson.

## Adult

There are many interesting points of discussion here. The adult can appreciate many of them from experiences of his own, and the younger members of the class will get help from hearing the older ones admit some of their earlier difficulties. Always, in discussions, have these younger members in mind. One of the troubles young adults have is that they so seldom feel free to talk about their inner feelings with anyone who can really help them. They are afraid of being smiled at and treated as children, and unfortunately this sometimes happens.

The story of the return of Moses to Egypt, the convincing of Pharaoh by means of the ten plagues, the first Passover feast, the appearance of the pillar of cloud and fire, the pursuit by the Egyptians, and the miraculous crossing of the Red Sea are familiar to all of us. It is enough for the purpose of this lesson that we recognize that they picture the first understanding of the spiritual destruction which results from a merely worldly life, the first determination to break the chains of worldliness and selfishness and to set forth under the leadership of the teachings of the Word upon a new course of reformation which will eventually lead to a heavenly character, and the first temptation to give up and turn back.

Our lesson for today opens with the song of triumph sung by the Israelites after they had safely reached the eastern shore of the Red Sea and had seen the pursuing Egyptians swallowed up in the returning waters. When we realize that we have miraculously passed safely through a temptation which at first appeared an impossible barrier to our progress, we do right to give thanks to the Lord through whose power the victory has been given us. In the Word song and music in general represent the expression of emotions. Music corresponds to the affections, and both expresses and arouses them. Different kinds of musical instruments correspond to different kinds of affections. In general, wind instruments correspond to affections for goodness and stringed instruments to affections for truth. The timbrel, which Miriam used, is a type of tambourine. Swedenborg says of it (@AC 8337): "As regards the timbrel specifically, it corresponds to spiritual good, that is, to the good of truth. The reason is that the timbrel is not a stringed instrument, neither is it a wind instrument, but as it is made with a skin, it is as it were a continuous stringed instrument, and moreover its sound is graver and deeper than is the sound of stringed instruments." Then he quotes several passages in the Word in which the timbrel is mentioned. The "good of truth" is the good which comes into our lives as a result of experience in the practice of particular truths — in this case the

truth that if we obey the Word, the Lord has power to save us.

Being heartened by their miraculous escape, the Israelites no doubt turned toward the wilderness with confidence, expecting a short and triumphant journey: but they were soon disillusioned. The wilderness is called the "wilderness of Shur" — the same wilderness into which Hagar fled when Sarai was angry with her (Genesis 16:7). Swedenborg says of Shur, "'Shur' denotes the memory-knowledges of the church which have not yet attained to life, thus such things as must attain to life through temptations, for spiritual life is acquired through temptations (which are spiritual combats, or combats against evils and falsities) and through victories in these combats." (@AC 8346) We all have many such "memory-knowledges of the church" which we have not made living through use against our evils.

Throughout the wilderness journey the children of Israel were led by the pillar of cloud and fire. Exodus 13:21 says: "And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead them the way: and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night." Swedenborg tells us that this signifies the continuous presence of the Lord. When we are in a state of enlightenment — by day — the Lord tempers His presence to our need: many times in the Word He is said to come "in the clouds," and we are told that clouds represent the letter of the Word which is according to our understanding and yet permits the light from the Lord to shine through as we are able to receive it. The pillar of fire by night pictures the fact that when we are in a state of obscurity, the Lord leads us by good (@AC 8105-8110). The Israelites were told to follow wherever the pillar led them, to stop when it stopped and remain there as long as it stood still, and when it moved on — whether it was day or night — to break camp and follow it. We seem to lead ourselves, but we know that our plans are often cut short or diverted by unexpected obstacles, and also that often the way opens before us when we least expect it. The Lord permits such experiences to come to us as are most likely to lead us to see and to correct our faults and weaknesses and to develop the particular abilities and qualities which will make us most helpful to others and so increase our spiritual worth.

When like the Israelites we have conquered some temptation and are feeling most confident, we often need the type of experience through which they passed after they had crossed the Red Sea. "They went three days in the wilderness, and found no water. And when they came to Marah, they could not drink the waters of Marah, for they were bitter." Our first thought when we begin the period of reformation is likely to be that the decision itself has changed us and that since we have decided that we want to lead a good life, we shall instinctively know what is good: that is, that what we want to do thenceforth will necessarily be good.

This is not the case, however. All our old habits and desires persist, and we have to learn a whole new way of life and practice it patiently until it actually replaces the old in our affections and thoughts. This is a long, slow process. We find at once that we do not know what is really right. This is the three days' journey without finding water. Then when the truth does present itself to us, it is not pleasant to us. It cuts across our natural desires. This is the bitter water of Marah. The tree (Swedenborg translates it "a piece of wood") which the Lord showed Moses is a symbol of good. Nothing can make truth sweet except the entrance of good into the will.

It is at this point (verses 25 and 26) that the Lord solemnly points out to Moses and the people that obedience to the truth is essential for their new life, but also that if they will obey, they will suffer none of the misfortunes which they had so recently witnessed among the Egyptians. Even in the beginning of our journey, it is well that we should realize that although the new life may not prove to be easy, it will be free from all the unhappiness and frustration which worldliness and

selfishness inevitably produce.

Then the Lord gives the people a taste of the happiness and peace which the new life will surely bring: "And they came to Elim, where there were twelve springs of water, and seventy palm trees: and they encamped there by the waters." "By the 'twelve springs of waters' are signified truths in all abundance" (@AC 8368). " ... seventy palm trees. That this signifies the goods of truth in like manner, that is, in all abundance, is evident from the signification of 'seventy,' as being all things in the complex, in like manner as 'twelve': and from the signification of 'palm-trees,' as being the goods of the spiritual church, which are the goods of truth" (@AC 8369). Have we not all from time to time, after we have passed through some difficult situation in which we tried sincerely to do right, experienced this sudden relief, refreshment, and new understanding? Because we have found the Lord's way the right way and His guidance adequate to our needs, our whole outlook is readjusted and we can go on with new courage and strength. Knowledge is truth in the memory: intelligence is the rational understanding of this truth; but wisdom is the certainty of the truth which comes only from having used and proved it in life.

## 36:QUAILS AND MANNA — Exodus 16

### INTRO

In review, the institution of the Passover should be mentioned in all classes because of the frequent recurrence of this feast in the Old Testament story and its importance in the story of the Lord's life on earth in the Gospels. The crossing of the Red Sea should also be mentioned, and the pupils should be reminded how the children of Israel were led on their long journey.

### Adult

The most obvious topics for discussion are the relationship of reformation to regeneration and the progression from natural delight to spiritual good, as pictured by the quails and manna. The latter discussion will be helped by pointing out the contrast offered by the story of the second sending of the quails in Numbers 11. Note also the complaint of the people in Numbers 21:5 just before the plague of fiery serpents.

The wilderness journey of the Israelites pictures, as we know, the period of reformation. This, as the writings frequently tell us, is the state in which we make ourselves do what we know we should do, not because we love to do it but simply because it is commanded by the Lord. There is much of self in this obedience.

The final plague not only convinced Pharaoh that he must let the children of Israel go, but also convinced the Israelites that they must break their Egyptian bondage at all costs and start at once for their true home in Canaan. The Passover feast, celebrated then for the first time, was to be repeated annually to remind them of their deliverance, just as the Lord at His last Passover feast on earth instituted the Holy Supper and commanded His disciples, "This do in remembrance of me." When we take the Holy Supper, we pray that it may be to us "the sign and seal" that we are the Lord's children. The decision to leave Egypt represents the decision which everyone who is to be regenerated must make of his own free will sooner or later: the decision to turn his back on worldliness and self-indulgence and to set his face toward the achievement of spiritual life. This

decision is the essential first step, but it is only the beginning.

We may remember from an earlier lesson on creation Swedenborg's statement in @AC 13 in connection with men's progress toward regeneration: "The greatest part at this day attain only the first state; some only the second; others the third, fourth, or fifth; few the sixth; and scarcely anyone the seventh." Regeneration is a lifelong process. This should not discourage us. It should rather lead us to look upon each day we are granted in this world as an opportunity to grow a little further toward the angelic stature which is possible for us. We know that the process of growth is not continuous. The wilderness story is a picture of the temptations, failures, hardships, and rebellions which attend our efforts to bring even our outward lives into order. And after the children of Israel reached the Holy Land there were still wars, back-slidings, and defeats. But the story is also a picture of the wonderful way in which the Lord leads and supports us, accommodating His providence to our changing states, and giving us victories and times of rest and refreshment for our encouragement all along the way.

Our story for today illustrates this constant presence and providence of the Lord. The children of Israel had come into a state in which they were looking back with longing at the external enjoyments which they had left behind, and forgetting the hardships of the bondage from which they had escaped. The Lord did not permit this state to lead to an actual turning back. He sent a new type of food to satisfy their craving for the "flesh pots" of Egypt.

Again we are reminded of the Creation story in which each day is described as advancing from evening to morning. In giving us the correspondence of the quail and manna in @AC 8426[2] Swedenborg writes:

That "in the evening" denotes the end of a former state, is because the changes of state in the other life are circumstanced as are the times of day in the world, namely, morning, noon, evening, and night, or twilight, and again morning. Be it known that in the spiritual world there are perpetual changes of state, and that all who are there pass through them. The reason is that they may be continually succeeding one another in order like the times of the day and the times of the year, never return quite the same, but are varied. The beginning of every state corresponds to morning on the earth, and also in the Word is sometimes meant by "morning"; but the end of every state corresponds to evening, and is likewise sometimes called "evening" in the Word. When it is morning they are in love; when it is noon, they are in light or in truth; but when it is evening they are in obscurity as to truths, and are in the delight of natural love. This delight is what is signified by the quail which they received in the evening, and the good is what is signified by the manna which they received every morning.

In our story the quail represent "natural delight through which is good." When we are not yet in states in which we can feel unselfish happiness in truth and goodness, we are permitted to feel satisfaction of a natural kind — that is, satisfaction in which there is a sense of self-merit — in doing right, because this encourages us to continue in the right path. We should compare this story, however, with the story in Numbers 11:10-23, 31-34, in which the quail were again sent and the result was disastrous because the people ate too greedily. We cannot safely remain long in any delight which smacks of self-righteousness. So our story shows us how divine providence leads us day by day, meeting our changing states with the kind of spiritual food which we can receive, and strengthening us to continue. We see immediately the connection between the instructions for gathering the manna and our daily petition, "Give us this day our daily bread." We cannot gather enough spiritual food on Sunday morning to last us all week. We need to go to the Word and pray

daily, because we change from day to day and the problems of each day are different from those of the day before.

The manna which came down with the dew in the morning represents "the good of truth in its first formation." A helpful discussion of this is found in @AC 8462 with reference to the people's calling the new gift from the Lord "manna": "That this signifies amazement at what was not known, is evident from the fact that the word 'manna' in its own tongue means What? thus, that which is not known. That from this the bread that was given to the sons of Israel in the wilderness was called 'manna,' is because this bread signifies the good of charity that is begotten through the truth of faith. Before regeneration this good is quite unknown to man, and it is not even known that it exists."

In an addition to the memorable relation in @TCR 695, which we find in Posthumous Theological Works, Vol. 1, p. 152 (also in Document 302 of Tafel's Documents Concerning Swedenborg), we read: "I told them further that they should know that the miracles which are recorded in the Word likewise took place by an influx out of the prior into the posterior world, and that they were produced by an introduction of such things as are in the spiritual world in corresponding things in the natural world; e.g. that the manna which every morning descended upon the camp of the children of Israel, was produced by bread from heaven being introduced into the recipient vessels of nature; that in like manner bread and fishes were thus introduced into the baskets of the apostles, which they distributed to so many thousands of men; again, that wine out of heaven was instilled into the water in the pots at the wedding where the Lord was present; further, that the fig-tree withered, because there was no longer any influx into it of spiritual nutriment, by which it was fed from the roots." So we see that the manna was actually, as it is called in Psalm 78:25, "angels' food."

## 37:AT REPHIDIM — Exodus 17

### INTRO

Several familiar stories — the crossing of the Red Sea, the sweetening of the bitter waters of Marah, the rest at Elim, and the giving of the quails and manna — form the background for this lesson. Each teacher will have to judge how much of the class time may safely be spent on the review of these stories without slighting the lesson for the day. The Lord's care and protection of the children of Israel is the unifying thought.

### Adult

The right approach to the Word and the importance of steady reliance upon the Lord in times of temptation, doubt, and discouragement are two lessons we all need. Often we think we believe in the Lord and His power to direct and save us, and we think we believe in the Word, but we do not fully use His help in the emergencies of our daily life.

The children of Israel ate the first Passover feast with their loins girded, their shoes on their feet, and their staves in their hands, and immediately started on their journey, and they reached the Red Sea before their first great impetus suffered a setback. But the setback came. It was inevitable. We cannot go through life on the strength of one good resolution. At the Red Sea the Egyptian army

caught up with the Israelites. All our former habits of thought and feeling are still with us in full strength. We need to recognize this and also to feel our inability to overcome them in our own strength. It is only the Lord, present with us in the form of our guardian angels, who stands between us and destruction. The writings tell us that the pillar of cloud and fire which led the Israelites throughout their journey and which stood behind them through the night at the Red Sea to hide them from the pursuing enemy, was actually a company of angels with the Lord in their midst. We read in the twenty-seventh Psalm: "For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion." And before we can really be free of our bondage to the world, we must have the further experience of seeing our way opened before us by the Lord and must be made to acknowledge the powerlessness of our enemies to follow us if we go forward. This is our "crossing of the Red Sea."

We have studied the stories of the sweetening of the bitter water at Marah, the welcome period of rest at Elim, and the giving of the quails and manna. These early experiences in the wilderness picture the first benefits we receive from the Lord in our efforts to reform our lives. For we recall that the whole wilderness journey describes the period of "reformation" through which we must pass before actual regeneration begins.

"Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness."

The hunger of the Israelites pictures our realization that of ourselves we have no goodness. The story of the giving of the manna is the promise that the Lord will give us of His goodness day by day to strengthen us on our way. Thirst represents our sense of need for truth. How often we say, "I wish I knew"! After the manna comes the giving of water from the rock of Horeb.

Moses was commanded: "Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go. Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink." This is our pattern for finding the truth which we need for our daily living — a pattern to follow every time we say, "I wish I knew." Here is how we may understand it: Moses as our leader represents our acknowledgment that we must obey the divine law. The rock in Horeb is the Word as the basis of our faith. The Lord always stands before us on the rock in Horeb. We are to go to the Word for the truth we need. But there are other specific directions. We are to take with us some of the elders of Israel — the principles given us in our doctrines — and the rod or power of the Lord as we have experienced it in past crises. We are to take the rod in our hand and smite the rock — that is, to go to the Word with the conviction that we shall be given the power to understand and use its truth. The Word does not yield the water of life to those who read it as a product of men or to those who go to it to find confirmation for their own ideas. This is one of the lessons we must learn early in our journey.

Our chapter today also contains another lesson which we all need many times in our lives. So far in the story there has been little for Israel to do but to follow the pillar of cloud and fire. Even when they crossed the Red Sea, the Israelites had only to go steadily forward. The Lord opened the way for them and destroyed their enemies. And in the experiences which followed, they had only to ask and the Lord provided their needs. But now they are permitted to encounter an enemy whom they have to fight. As soon as we have gone a little way on our journey toward the promised land and have gained a little confidence and strength, this strength must be tried.

The Israelites were at Rephidim, passing through a narrow valley leading inland, when they were attacked by the Amalekites.

Amalek means "valley dweller." Amalek was a grandson of Esau. He pictures an evil in the will, or a "low" state of the will. In Deuteronomy 25:17-18 we learn that it was the strategy of the Amalekites to spring out from ambush on the rear of the line of their enemy and attack the stragglers and the weary. How often when we are physically or mentally tired, we find it harder to resist the temptation to indulge in doubt and discouragement, and in hasty judgment or speech! Our will power is at a low point, and our individual weaknesses manifest themselves suddenly and are hard to control. It is these times which show us most clearly what our own real nature is — what we would be without the Lord's protection and help. We need this revelation.

Moses offered to take the rod of God in his hand and go up to the top of the nearest hill. This is a picture of the immediate attempt we should make to lift our thoughts to the Lord and, remembering His help in the past, to look confidently to Him for strength. Moses — symbol of the law as we find it in the Word — is our first reliance. As long as Moses' hands were lifted up, Israel prevailed.

But Moses' hands grew weary. We grow tired of fighting with only the stern "Thou shalt not" to support us. Swedenborg tells us that in this story Moses, Aaron, and Hur represent divine truth in three stages of its mediation to us. Moses represents truth received immediately from the Lord; that is, our knowledge of the Word itself. Aaron, who was presently to be appointed high priest and who had been Moses' spokesman from the beginning, represents the truth from the Word as it is explained in the doctrines of the church. Hur, who was one of the leaders of the people, represents this mediate truth again mediated, as, perhaps, it comes to us from our pastors and teachers and in our own meditation and experience. Aaron and Hur held up Moses' hands. When we are tired and discouraged and tempted to give in to our weaknesses, we should recall all that we have learned of the Lord's guidance and saving power from the Word, from the church, and from our own thought and experience. Moses sat on a rock and Aaron and Hur held up his hands until the sun went down and Israel prevailed. We must rest on our faith in the Lord, our Rock, and make use of all we know of His love for us and His power to save and strengthen us, until the sun of our self-love goes down and we are victorious.

Then we should give thanks to the Lord for His help. Moses built an altar of remembrance and called it Jehovah—nissi, which means "the Lord my banner." We have added one more experience to strengthen us for the next conflict.

## **38:THE TEN COMMANDMENTS — Exodus 19:16-25; 20:1-21**

### **INTRO**

First see how much the children can tell about the crossing of the Red Sea. Then remind them that when the people found other difficulties and dangers as they traveled through the wilderness, the Lord saved them each time. They reached Sinai in the third month after they left Egypt. The teacher in preparation should read carefully chapters 15-19, especially all of the nineteenth chapter, and begin the story for today with the events of that chapter.

## Adult

Stress the reason why the commandments were given as they were, and the primary importance of those on the first table. Then run through the ten, suggesting the deeper meaning of each, based on the outline given in the Senior notes. Finally call for questions and let these determine the points for further discussion.

Egypt is behind, but an unknown land, barren and rocky, is now being entered. When we take as an example the breaking of a bad habit, we know that one victory does not finish the conflict: it merely shows us that with the Lord's help we can conquer, if we go forward bravely. The story of the first two months of the journey of the Israelites through the wilderness pictures some of the experiences which come to us in the earlier stages of our period of reformation. They had to be undergone before the people arrived at Mount Sinai, where their nation was to be organized and fully instructed. They reached Sinai in the third month of their journey and camped at the foot of the mount.

The external laws embodied in the ten commandments were known long before the time of Moses: they are the basis of the oldest code of laws known to history. People who think of the Bible as a merely human composition have argued from this that the story of the giving of the commandments from Sinai is not a true story but merely an adaptation of an old myth. Swedenborg, however, explains why the Lord found it necessary to give the commandments to the children of Israel in such an impressive way. It was not because men did not know them, but because men had forgotten that they were the laws of God and thought of them as man-made rules which might be set aside or outgrown. Some people think of them in this way today. Not too many years ago a book was written by a Christian minister to prove that some of the commandments are out-of-date. But they are not out-of-date and never will be, and the Lord wished us to be very sure of this.

So there were thunders and lightnings, and Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, and all the people heard the voice of the Lord when He gave the commandments. And then they were written by the finger of God on two tables of stone that they might be preserved. They are divine laws, the foundation of all right and happy living both for the individual and for the social group.

We are told that there were two tables of stone. The laws of the first table were those telling of our duty to the Lord, and those of the second table were those telling us our duty to our neighbor. Many of these laws are prohibitions. This makes them seem harsh to those who do not want to obey them. But they must be put in this form for just these very people, which means for all of us part of the time. We are all often in a state of not wanting to do what we ought to do. In the story the people were not ready to receive the truth as it first came from the Lord on tables of stone taken from the top of the mount. We ourselves are not always willing to take the loving suggestions of our family and friends or to obey the Lord from love of Him. We persist in doing wrong, and the same advice, prompted by the same love, must take the form of stern command and harsh prohibition in order to reach us and affect our conduct. The second set of tables was hewed by Moses from stone found at the foot of the mount, which pictures the putting of truth in a form which would reach men in low states of life. We all need it in this form before we are prepared to see divine love and mercy showing through the harsh letter. We must stop doing wrong before we can learn to do right (Isaiah 1:16-17).

The Lord wants us to be happy, but we cannot be happy if we do any of the things forbidden by the

commandments or if we neglect to do any of the things required by them. They are the foundations of a happy life. When you are driving along the road in your car, you see a great many signs which tell you where the road leads and how to get where you want to go. Then — very often, it seems — you come to a sign which says Stop. You do not always want to stop; sometimes it is very inconvenient and sometimes you see no reason for the sign at that particular place. But you know that the signs are not put up to make trouble for motorists but to keep them out of trouble, and that if you are wise, you will obey them. The journey of the Israelites from Egypt to the land of Canaan, as we know, is a picture of our journey to the promised land of heavenly character. The commandments were given to the Israelites as their guide. They were told that so long as they obeyed them they would prosper, and that when they disobeyed, trouble would inevitably follow. They are given to us for the same purpose. If we recognize this, and write them firmly in our minds, we shall find that whenever we are tempted to do some wrong which will lead us into trouble and may even perhaps wreck our lives, the Lord will recall to us one of these commandments, just as a stop sign appears suddenly at a dangerous crossing. We often think we know better than the Lord what we can do without harm, but we do not. He tells us that these laws are absolutely essential to our welfare and happiness, and we may believe Him. The testimony of history, of reason, and of everyday experience shows that where the ten commandments are broken there is neither peace nor happiness. The twenty-fourth verse of the sixth chapter of Deuteronomy is a good verse to learn and remember:

"And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as it is this day."

All this is true of the commandments even in their literal sense.

But, like everything else in the Word, the commandments have depths of meaning within the letter. Suppose we take the third commandment as an illustration: "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." What does this mean? The first and obvious meaning is that we should not indulge in profanity. Most of us are brought up not only to know that this is wrong but to have an actual distaste for it. It is perhaps no temptation to us. Is this commandment therefore of no importance in our lives? A name is the symbol of the quality of a person or thing. The Lord's name is more than just the appellations by which He is called. It signifies all His qualities and especially the Word, which is the expression of His love and wisdom. When we in any way belittle the Word, allowing ourselves to think of any part of it as the work of men, to use its stories in jokes or in careless conversation, or even to let our minds wander to worldly thoughts when we are hearing it read in church, we are breaking this commandment. And when we indulge in this deeper form of profanity, we injure ourselves and also influence others to their hurt. This is especially true of the New Church person, who knows better - who knows the holiness of the Word and its source and has the responsibility of leading others to understand and reverence it.

We might go through all the commandments. We find them explained not only in (@AC 8859-8912) where this chapter of Exodus is covered, but in @TCR 283-331. [Also in the Doctrine of Life and the interchapter articles in @AE 950-1028. (This latter material has been abstracted and printed separately as "The Spiritual Life and the Word of God" [Swedenborg Foundation] and "Religion and Life" [Swedenborg Society].) Note that in this latter work, Swedenborg curiously followed the order of the decalogue as found in the LXX version, which reverses the "kill" and "steal" commandments.  
-Editor]

These are sections which we should all study seriously in order to understand the meaning and

relevance of the commandments in our lives. The Lord says, "If ye love me, keep my commandments."

## **39:THE ARK OF THE COVENANT — Exodus 25:1-22**

### **INTRO**

It is important that certain major events be mentioned briefly, because they prepared the minds of the Israelites to receive willingly the long series of instructions and laws which were given to them at Sinai. Note especially two things: they came to Sinai early in their journey — the third month — and during their eleven month stay there they were formed into an organized nation with a government which lasted them throughout their history and still to some extent persists with some Jews of the present day. Also call attention to the fact that the materials for the tabernacle and its furnishings were free offerings of all the people, and remind them of where they got those materials (Exodus 12:35-36). Some commentators have ridiculed the idea that the tabernacle was actually so fine a production, calling the Israelites a nomadic people who could not possibly have possessed the materials required or been capable of receiving so complex a system of laws. It is hard to see how they could forget that the Israelites had not been nomads for several hundred years and that Moses had been brought up as a member of the royal household, to say nothing of the plain statement as to the source of their material wealth.

### **Adult**

There are many important discussion topics in this lesson: the importance of the commandments, the different motives for obedience to them, the necessity for humility, the persistence of our selfish inheritance, the way in which divine providence protects us from ourselves, the time element in the journey and its relation to our experience.

As a background for this lesson, recall the stories of the giving of quails and manna, the bringing of water out of a rock at Rephidim, and the battle with Amalek, in which Joshua led the army and Moses went up to the top of the mountain and Aaron and Hur held up his hands to the Lord. We need to have them in mind, for the experiences confirmed in the children of Israel the certainty that the Lord was able and willing to provide for them and to give them victory over their enemies. They all belong, in their spiritual sense, to the very beginning of the period of reformation, for we are told in chapter 19 that the people came to Sinai in the third month. Their first experiences were the necessary preparation for their reception of the laws and instructions to be given at Sinai.

Another preparation is found in the story of the visit of Jethro to Moses (chapter 18). Jethro the Midianite, the father-in-law of Moses, represents a simple, childlike state of worship. Yet Jethro was very wise, as good children are often wiser than grown-ups. He found Moses overburdened with the tasks he had assumed in his leadership of the people, sitting all day hearing complaints and settling differences. Are we not likely, in the early stages of our journey heavenward, to think that we must stop to look into each little thought and act, and to become bogged down in the complexities of our nature? Jethro's advice to Moses was that wise judges be chosen from the tribes to hear and decide the ordinary cases, and that only the really difficult matters should be brought

to Moses. We should set up principles in our lives to govern us in the small affairs of daily life, and put our real thought upon our deeper problems.

We all know the story of the giving of the commandments from Sinai and that, in addition to the commandments, the many detailed laws recorded in Exodus and especially in Leviticus were given during the eleven months in which the people were camped on the plain at the foot of Mount Sinai. In fact, the whole system of laws by which the Israelites were to be governed throughout their history as a representative nation was given there. When they studied and obeyed these laws, they prospered; when they neglected to study them and disobeyed them, disasters came upon them. Their most pressing motive in keeping them was apparently the desire for worldly prosperity, not unlike the way a child often tries to do things he thinks will please adults without understanding any deeper reasons for his actions. In their letter the minor laws were for the people of that day, instructions by which the chosen judges might be guided in their decisions. They were abrogated — in their letter — when that era came to its end. But we know that in their inner meaning every one of them is a directive to us and can help us in setting our lives in order and keeping them in order. And the ten commandments, for which Moses himself stands in the story, are both in their letter and in their spiritual meaning divine laws for all people for all time.

Next to the commandments the instructions for making and furnishing the tabernacle and for its use are the most important. As the tabernacle was the center of the nation's worship, we think of it as representative of worship in our lives — primarily a place, but a state of life, a state so ordered that the love and wisdom of the Lord can be received. The three divisions of the tabernacle represent the three planes of our lives: will, thought, and act. The furnishings of each division picture the essential things which must be in these divisions if the life is to be heavenly.

We are concerned today with the ark. We know that each of us is kept alive from moment to moment by the influx of the Lord's life into the inmost of our being. This inmost presence of the Lord in our lives is pictured by the ark. Swedenborg says it represents the "inmost heaven." It was made of acacia wood, which pictures "the good of merit" which is in the Lord alone. It was overlaid within and without with pure gold, picturing the Lord's unselfish love. Its crown of pure gold and the golden rings by which it was carried are the encircling and support of the heavenly life by the Lord's love. The mercy seat — or, as Swedenborg renders it, the "propitiatorium" — is our cleansing from evil by the reception of that love. The golden cherubim picture divine providence protecting the good person from profaning that which he receives by attributing it to himself.

Swedenborg tells us many times that "the Divine of the Lord makes heaven." That is, no one can come into a heavenly state except as he puts self aside and so opens the way for the influx of the Lord's unselfish love. Obedience to the commandments is the essential at the heart of the heavenly life, but this heavenly life is not our first obedience through a sense of fear of consequences or the desire to be thought good; nor is it the second obedience from a sense of duty. It is obedience practiced until it has become willing and joyous, until it is so covered by our sense of the Lord's goodness and mercy that our natural self-righteousness disappears. The wood of the ark, the gold which overlaid it, and the golden crown around the top edge all picture the willing acknowledgment that all goodness and truth are the Lord's and not our own. The translation "mercy seat" was probably suggested by the fact that the Lord was to speak to Moses from between the cherubim, but it is not an accurate one. The Hebrew word is 'koppar', meaning merely a "covering," although the word "propitiatory" and the connotations of the Hebrew root indicate that it suggests the covering of our evils by divine mercy. The root is the same which comes out in "Yom Kippur," the day of atonement. We are told that even angels, when from time to time they begin to

lose their lively consciousness that they have no real life except from the Lord, are "let down" into their own states briefly until they realize again what is their own and what is the Lord's in them. So the mercy seat or propitiatory pictures exactly the way in which the Lord in His mercy hides our evils from our sight and so cleanses us when we have learned to obey the commandments from love.

Cherubim are frequently mentioned in the Word. They are symbolic figures representing the care and protection which divine providence exercises over us, especially protection against "profaning" the truth and good which we have accepted. Genesis records that when Adam and Eve were driven out of the Garden of Eden, the Lord placed cherubim at the entrance to prevent their return; this means that when self-love began to occupy the human heart, the Lord closed the inner way of communication with heaven which had been open in the first people so that this "perception" should not be used for selfish ends. We are also told that whenever the Lord sees that we are no longer willing to live according to a given truth which we have previously acknowledged, He takes from us the belief that it is the truth. Swedenborg says that in this way one may gradually kill his conscience. This by no means leads toward heaven; it merely prevents one from going deeper into hell. Read here verses 23 through 31 of the thirty-seventh Psalm. These words express very beautifully the state of the "good" person, who has set up the tabernacle in the midst of his life and the ark in the Holy of Holies of the tabernacle. "The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide."

## **40:THE TABERNACLE — Exodus 26-27**

### **INTRO**

The children of Israel reached Sinai three months after they left Egypt, and they remained there almost a year. The departure does not come until Numbers 10:11. The pupils should get a clear idea of this year at Sinai and what it accomplished. The giving of the laws and especially the establishment of the external forms of worship welded the people into a nation.

### **Adult**

The effort has been made in the notes for the Adults to outline the construction and furnishings of the tabernacle and merely to suggest their meaning. The teacher will use his judgment as to the points which his particular group will be most interested in discussing.

The commandments were given to the children of Israel from Mount Sinai as the essential basis of their life, and they are equally for us the only foundations for a good and happy life. We recall that after the giving of the manna the Bible story tells of the Israelites' thirsting and being given water out of a rock at Rephidim. It tells of the attack of their first enemy, the Amalekites, which they met successfully because Moses, with the help of Aaron and Hur, kept his hands uplifted to the Lord. It tells, too, of the visit of Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, under whose advice Moses appointed various leading men to handle the lesser complaints and problems of the people. They reached Sinai after about three months' journey and camped there, and all the people heard the giving of the commandments. These commandments were not new. They had been known and recognized as essential from the beginning of the church on earth. They appear in the laws of pagan as well as of Jewish and Christian peoples, having come to them through traditions handed down from the

Ancient Church. They were given again from Sinai with so many signs and wonders to impress upon us that they are the laws of God and not man-made laws. In our lesson today we find that they are to be given a permanent place at the very center of our life. Other things besides the commandments were also given to Moses by the Lord at Sinai: many laws and rites, and especially the plans for the tabernacle and its furnishings and for the worship to be carried on in it. The Israelites remained about eleven months at Sinai, and during this time they were to serve the world for all time as a picture of a life organized according to true order, with worship of the Lord at its center and reaching to every activity of the daily life. The tabernacle was the center and symbol of their national life. It was the center of their encampment and was carried in the center of their line of march, and in both cases every tribe had its appointed station with reference to it. And we recall that from the time when it was first set up, the pillar of cloud and fire rested upon the tabernacle.

All the details of the tabernacle cannot be taken up in any one lesson, or even kept in mind: but all, to the very least, have a meaning which may become clear and helpful to us at some point in our lives. We are all familiar with Paul's statement: "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God?" As the tabernacle and its ceremonies were the center of the whole life of Israel, so the worship of the Lord — our religion — should be the center of our whole life, reaching out into every least thing we do. The plan of the tabernacle is the plan according to which our lives should be built. We see the outward act, but within that is the thought which taught us how to perform it, and within the thought is the desire that inspired the thought. We may take a simple example from a familiar sport such as tennis. First there must be the desire to play tennis, then knowledge of the game and of how to go about playing it, then the practice. We sometimes think of practice as the all-important thing, that if we play often we shall inevitably come to play well. But this is not true. Much practice may confirm bad playing habits as readily as good ones, making it impossible for one to be a really good player. Furthermore, even given accurate knowledge of technique and much practice, if the impelling motive is not sound, failure may result. If we go into the game from a desire to make ourselves conspicuous, or if our desire to win is stronger than our love of fair play and willingness to recognize excellence in our opponent, we may easily spoil our game by playing to the gallery or by losing our temper. This is true in everything we do. Right action can come only from true thought, and true thought can come only from pure motive. This brings us back to the tabernacle.

The Most Holy Place stands for our inmost heart. Only the commandments of the Lord should be found there. Our inmost desire in all things should be to obey and serve the Lord. His laws should be "written upon our hearts." If they are, He will speak to us from the mercy seat of our conscience, from between the cherubim which represent the protecting power of the Lord. Here all should be gold — pure love — except that the foundations must be truths learned and obeyed, as the sockets or bases of the tabernacle wall throughout were of silver. Only occasionally did the high priest enter the Most Holy Place. In the same way, we are seldom able to penetrate our inner motives, but we are permitted to do so occasionally when we need to hear the voice of the Lord in a special way.

The Holy Place was not public either, though the priests entered morning and evening to burn incense and to tend the light. Here, too, the analogy holds true: our thoughts of the Lord are not open for everyone to see, yet they must never be neglected. In our minds there must always be an "altar of incense" (an attitude of prayer and humility), a "candlestick" (recognition that all our light comes from the Lord), and a "table of shewbread" (acknowledgment of the Lord as the giver of all good). Gold is the metal here, too: our thoughts must be loving thoughts.

The people could see all that went on in the outer court. Our external lives are open to view. The metal here is brass or bronze — natural good — but the curtains which form the wall are fastened

together with silver — particular truths which make our outward life a consistent whole. Here, too, the priests minister continually with washings and sacrifices. The necessity of the laver is easily seen: the need for constant cleansing of the outward acts according to truth. The great altar stands for the principle that we are to do good not because it pays, nor with the idea of self-exaltation, but from love to the Lord and a desire to advance His kingdom. We usually think of sacrifice as meaning "giving up" something. It often does involve giving up things which seem desirable to us, but this is incidental. The real meaning of sacrifice is "to make sacred." All that we do in our external lives should be made sacred by being offered to the Lord through the acknowledgment that whatever good we may seem to do is really done by Him through us, and is not in any sense our own.

Thus the tabernacle becomes for us a picture of what our lives should be: the commandments of the Lord in our hearts, working out through our thoughts into our daily lives, cleansing and setting everything in order so that we shall be in very truth temples of the living God. The tabernacle in its highest sense is a picture of the Lord's perfect divine human life. It is this life which is the real "pattern shown in the mount," and without this pattern we cannot form our lives wisely.

## **41:THE GOLDEN CALF — Exodus 32:1-24**

### **INTRO**

The teachers should review chapters 19, 20, and 24 in order to have clearly in mind the sequence of events from the time of the arrival at Sinai to the incidents of our lesson for today. Moses has been up and down the mountain more than once. Note especially 24:18, which introduces the situation in chapter 32. In all the classes stress the fact that all the people had heard the commandments given by the voice of the Lord from the mount, and that they had several times promised to obey.

### **Adult**

After reviewing very briefly chapters 19-31, it may be well to read aloud Exodus 24:12-18, as it forms a good basis for the introduction of the principal points in our story for the day. The important lesson is the insidious effect of neglecting the study of the Word and the writings and assuming that we can live good lives without such study.

We think of Sinai as the place where the ten commandments were given. The Word tells us that the mountain was covered with smoke, that there were thunder and lightning, and that all the people heard the living voice of the Lord speaking the commandments from the top of the mount. The objection which historians sometimes offer — that the commandments were not new with the Israelites but have been found embodied in codes of law existing before the time of Moses — in no way invalidates the account given in the Word. The commandments are the basic laws of order on which society has been founded from the beginning. They were known through perception by the people of the Most Ancient Church and through revelation by the people of the Ancient Church. They were embodied in the Egyptian code. But by the time of the Exodus men had forgotten that they were divine, not man-made laws, and what is regarded as man-made is subject to change by man. We have plenty of evidence of this in the attitude of our modern world toward the ten commandments. Every one of us needs spiritually to hear the voice of the Lord speaking the commandments. They are divine laws. They are not only laws of outward order, but spiritual laws

which cannot be broken without spiritual harm, whatever popular sanctions may do to weaken their outward observance and effect.

In considering our story for today, we should note that the commandments have been given, that Moses has been up and down the mountain more than once, receiving instruction from the Lord and bringing it to the people, and that each time the people have pledged themselves to obey the Lord in all things. But now Moses and Joshua have both been in the mount a long time. We should read verses 12 to 18 of chapter 24 to get the background of our lesson, recalling that Moses represents divine law as it is given us in the Word, Joshua "the truth fighting," Aaron the law as it comes to us through the church, and Hur the religious principles which we have confirmed by our own meditation and experience.

If ever we say to ourselves, "I really don't need to read the Word regularly myself; I was brought up on it and I hear it in church, and after all I can't understand it very well," Moses — spiritually understood — has withdrawn into the cloud on the top of the mount and we do not know what has become of him. Or if we say, "I haven't time to study my religion to see just how I should apply it; I know my principles are good and so I'm not likely to do anything really bad," Joshua has also left us and is somewhere up on the mountainside waiting for Moses to come down. Finally, if we say, "I'm a member of the church in good standing and respected in the community; that's enough for me," Aaron and Hur have been left in charge of us.

What had happened? Moses had told the people to go to Aaron and Hur if they had "a cause" (Exodus 24:14) while he was gone. They went to Aaron, but not for direction or advice. They said to him, "Up, make us gods, which shall go before us." And Aaron proceeded to make them a god out of their own earrings. We remember that when Jacob returned from Haran and was commanded to build an altar at Bethel, he prepared his people for worship by making them put away their strange gods. Genesis 35:4 tells us: "And they gave unto Jacob all the strange gods which were in their hand, and all their earrings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the oak which was by Shechem." The ear signifies obedience, and earrings the delight of obedience. In the Jacob story and again in our story today, the obedience and its delight were those of external and worldly loves.

When Moses later rebuked Aaron, Aaron said (verse 24): "And I said unto them, Whosoever hath any gold, let them break it off. So they gave it me: then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf." So Aaron disclaimed responsibility. But the fact was different, for verse 4 tells us concerning Aaron and the earrings: "And he received it at their hand and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf." Swedenborg says (@AC 10406) that this forming with a graving tool, when said concerning an idol, is "to prepare false doctrine from one's own intelligence, which is effected by the application of the sense of the letter of the Word in favor of the loves of self and the world; for when these loves reign, the man is not in any enlightenment from heaven, but takes all things from his own intelligence, and confirms them from the sense of the letter of the Word, which he falsifies by a wrong application and a perverted interpretation, and afterwards favors such things because they are from himself."

The golden calf is what results from this process. The calf represents "external or natural good," and the calf as an idol represents the setting up of "natural or sensuous delight" as the supreme object of life. That is, when we no longer depend upon the Word as our constant guide, and cease to make use of divine truth to expose and overcome the evils within us, these evils inevitably take possession not only of our hearts but of our minds; our worship is performed from motives of self-love, and our minds seek and accept only such things as agree with that love.

Then Moses and Joshua returned. We are suddenly confronted with divine truth and its judgment. How often this happens to all of us! We go along smoothly in our accustomed ways and build up a pleasing image of ourselves; then some story or quotation from the Word strikes home and brings us face to face with our real selves.

In our story two things happened. In the hand of Moses were the tables of stone hewn by the Lord from the top of the mount and inscribed by "the finger of God" with the ten commandments. Moses broke these tables. The Lord would prefer that we receive the commandments as laws of love, in their high spiritual form. But our minds are functioning on a low plane. The tables on which the commandments were later written — the ones which were placed in the ark — were hewn out by Moses from the foot of the mount. The letter of the law had finally to be given in the harsh form in which alone it would be listened to by the Israelites and by all in selfish and worldly states. And, although the golden calf was destroyed, the powder to which it was reduced was mixed with the water which the people drank. We may be brought to recognize and reject the principle of worldliness and self-interest, but the falsities which have come from it, like the dust of the golden calf, continue to mingle with the truth which enters our minds. So long as we are in this world we should see and acknowledge that there is an element of self in everything we think and do.

## **42:NADAB AND ABIHU — Leviticus 10**

### **INTRO**

It is easy to pass to the story of Nadab and Abihu by reminding the children that while the people were at Sinai the Lord gave Moses, in addition to the commandments, careful directions for the priests and for the people especially in regard to their worship. Review a little about the tabernacle, its three divisions and their furnishings, with special emphasis on the two altars: then tell them the law for the offering of incense which Nadab and Abihu broke.

### **Adult**

This lesson offers a good opportunity for discussion of our public worship and the spirit in which we should come to it. Another good discussion topic is the proper attitude toward a sinner and his punishment — whether the sinner be oneself or someone else.

In Our Heavenly Father's Book, part of the Bible series published for our Sunday School Association many years ago (1884), the Rev. Wm. B. Hayden writes concerning the book of Leviticus:

"The Hebrews call this book 'Vayyikra' meaning 'And God called,' from its first word 'And Jehovah called unto Moses, and spake unto him out of the tabernacle of the congregation, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, etc.' This is indeed the keynote of the book. It is everywhere the 'call' of the voice of God speaking to the church. This Divine formula is repeated at the head of every distinct section or enactment, thus of nearly every chapter; while the closing sentence of the book contains this averment: 'These are the commandments which Jehovah commanded Moses for the children of Israel in Mount Sinai.' Thus nothing is left in doubt as to the Divine origin of the book.

"Our name Leviticus is simply the Latin derived from the Greek Leuitikon, meaning Levitical, or

that which pertains to the Levites; in reference to the fact that its contents are so largely occupied with the duties of the Levites, in which body are included all the priests. It consists principally of laws, having historical matter only in chapters 8 to 10, relating to the dedication of Aaron and his sons to the priesthood, and the death of Nadab and Abihu for offering strange fire before the Lord. These laws relate to the offerings and sacrifices; to purity and impurity; to the priests, with the holy—days and festivals; and the regulations intended to mark the separation between Israel and the heathen nations. To which are added the blessings connected with obedience, and the evil consequences of disobedience, chapter 26, with the regulations concerning vows, chapter 27."

We recall that when the Lord called Moses at the burning bush, one of Moses' objections to his task was that he was not eloquent but "slow of speech, and of a slow tongue." Moses represents divine law. The law does not immediately appeal to the heart or emotions of men. The Lord told Moses that his brother Aaron should speak for him. He said (Exodus 4:14-16): "Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that he can speak well. And also, behold, he cometh forth to meet thee: and when he seeth thee, he will be glad in his heart. And thou shalt speak unto him, and put words in his mouth; and I will be with thy mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what he shall do. And he shall be thy spokesman unto the people; and he shall be, even he shall be to thee instead of a mouth, and thou shalt be to him instead of God." From that time Moses and Aaron were always together, and when the directions for the tabernacle and its worship were given Moses from Sinai, Aaron was appointed high priest, with his four sons as his assistants, and all the tribe of Levi were set apart for the service of the tabernacle and its worship. The high priesthood was to pass down in the line of Aaron. Nadab and Abihu were his two older sons, Eleazar and Ithamar the two younger. With the death of Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar became next in line and did become high priest upon Aaron's death.

Aaron, because he was high priest, in the inmost sense represents the Lord as to divine good, but in the spiritual sense he represents "what is outward of the Spiritual Church" while Moses represents "what is inward." Aaron's sons represent the doctrines of good and truth from the Word. The function of the priesthood is to lead in worship and to teach according to the pattern showed in the mount and under the direction of divine law. We recall that the ancient Hebrew Church was merely the representative of a church, maintaining — during the interval between the total loss of internal worship by men and the Lord's coming into the world to restore that worship — the connection between the Lord and man by means of the correspondence of their external worship. It was therefore essential that every detail of their worship be maintained exactly as commanded, and dire punishments were decreed and meted out for neglect of these details. We note in the literal story that Aaron and his two remaining sons accepted without question the justice of the punishment of Nadab and Abihu and the command not to observe mourning for them. This command and the permission to the people to mourn picture the fact that we are permitted in our natural and external states to feel horror and regret at the terrible consequences of evil, but that our higher spiritual understanding should recognize these as inevitable and right and as necessary to the preservation of the possibility of man's free reception of the Lord's love.

Nadab and Abihu broke the statute which required that when incense was offered in the tabernacle, the coals on which it was burned in the censers should be taken from the fire on the great altar of burnt offering in the outer court. [See notes on Intermediate and Senior pages.] This altar represents our humble acknowledgment that of ourselves we are evil and ignorant and powerless to do good, that all goodness and truth are the Lord's, and that to Him we owe all our powers. The fire on this altar is genuine love to the Lord arising from this acknowledgment. The

offering of incense represents our prayers and praises, especially those offered in public worship. The law means that our worship is acceptable only when it comes from genuine love to the Lord springing from recognition of our unworthiness and need of Him. "Strange" or unholy fire is a selfish motive prompting our worship. If, for example, we go to church "to be seen of men," to increase our self-esteem, to help our business, to establish desirable social contacts, or for any other reason which has self at its center instead of the Lord, we are taking strange fire in our censers. And such worship, by ministering to and increasing our self-love, destroys our spiritual life, just as the fire from the altar consumed Nadab and Abihu.

The camp of Israel, always arranged in the order given from Sinai, represents heaven or a heavenly character. When we offer worship from impure motives, we — like Nadab and Abihu — are carried "out of the camp." And we are carried out in our "coats." The coat — more properly "tunic" — was the inner, not the outer, garment of the priest, and represents the internal sense of the Word, or internal worship. When we profane external worship, all possibility of coming into internal worship is also destroyed.

In the letter the rest of the chapter seems to have no connection with the story of Nadab and Abihu. But in the internal sense there is a wonderful continuity and order. For example, in verse 9 the command to drink no wine or strong drink when they entered the tabernacle signifies that "worship of the Lord should not be from truths either spiritual or celestial, but entirely from good." And the rest of the chapter carries further the explanation of what true worship is and of the states which profane and destroy it. Indeed the whole book of Leviticus, which by many today is laid aside as outdated and irrelevant to our modern life and its needs, offers us in its internal sense teaching of the deepest and most essential and practical nature.\* We take up so little of it in our Sunday school lessons only because any adequate treatment of it would require many lessons. In the story of Nadab and Abihu, however, we at least touch the heart of the teaching of this book in a form which, like the Lord's parables, is easily grasped in its letter, and will stay in the mind.

[\* A helpful source of information on these deeper lessons is the New Church Commentary on Leviticus by Henry Maclagan published by James Speirs, London, 1912. -Editor]

## 43:THE TWELVE SPIES — Numbers 13; 14

### INTRO

It is suggested that in all classes the teacher read Exodus 31:1-7, then say that everything was made according to the Lord's directions, and that the tabernacle was finally set up in the midst of the encampment. Then read Exodus 40:33-38. Mention again the contents of the book of Leviticus and the reason for the name of the book of Numbers. Then read Numbers 10:33-36 as the beginning of the further journeyings of the Israelites, and tell the class briefly the story of the almost immediate murmurings and rebellion culminating in the rebellion of Aaron and Miriam. This shows the state of the Israelites at that time, and leads directly into the story of the spies.

### Adult

The general lesson here is the reason for our slow progress in spiritual living.

To the end of our lives we have the tendency to say, "I can't help it; I was born that way," to see the beauty of the truly heavenly life but to balk at the effort necessary to attain it. Point out that we always lose when we put off the all-out effort. The topic suggested in the Adult notes is also a fruitful one:

"What is the difference between the Church Universal and the Church Specific, and what is the function of the organized New Church in the world today?" Read @HH 308.

The book of Exodus ends with the setting up of the tabernacle and the descent of the pillar of cloud upon it. The book of Leviticus, with the exception of the account of the consecration of Aaron and his sons in chapters 8 and 9 and the brief incident of Nadab and Abihu in chapter 10:1-7, is entirely given over to laws of all kinds. With the book of Numbers the journey of the Israelites continues. The book takes its name from its first incident, the "numbering" or census of the people by Moses at the command of the Lord; but the name is also descriptive of the character of the book, since "numbering" is predicated of truth and the rest of the book of Numbers describes the testing of the Israelites as to their willingness to follow the truth which had been revealed to them. In our lives it pictures this same period of testing. In the New Church we are brought up to recognize the Word as our book of life. Theoretically we accept this fact. But we do not really "know" any truth until we have learned to practice it and proved it in practice. This is where our real testing begins.

When the cloud was lifted from the tabernacle, the Israelites resumed their march, and we read that after only three days' journey the people began to complain again. Note that this is the same period as the three days' march into the wilderness in the first place. The three days picture fullness of experience on the three planes of life: will, thought, and act. As soon as we bring new truth down into the plane of act, we meet temptation. This time the temptation reached even the higher thought and affection: Aaron and Miriam.

We may remember the words of the serpent in the Garden of Eden: "Ye shall not surely die" if one ate of the fruit of the forbidden tree. We look about us and see people apparently blessed and happy who are not concerned about obedience to the commandments or worship of the Lord. In chapter 12 it is said that Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because he had married an Ethiopian [or Cushite (from Cush, son of Ham). -Editor] woman. What they said was: "Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us?" Ethiopia in a good sense represents interior knowledges of the Word. So this rebellion pictures unwillingness to look to the Word alone for leadership. Miriam's leprosy is a clear picture of the hypocrisy involved in such apparent liberalism or "broadmindedness."

Finally — not long after this rebellion — the people arrived at Kadesh-barnea near the border of the Holy Land. The place has been almost certainly identified. It is only about forty miles south of Beersheba. In Numbers it is said that the Lord told Moses to send out twelve spies. The account of the same incident in Deuteronomy 1:19-46 says that the people asked that the spies be sent. Both are true. Our natural desire, before we embark on a new venture, is to look ahead and count the cost (Luke 14:28-32), and the Lord also wishes us to do so. But the Lord sees to it that in addition to our natural selfish affections and thoughts we have in us some good and true affections and thoughts represented by Joshua and Caleb. The perceptions which spring from our selfishness see the good qualities of the heavenly life — any rational person, as Swedenborg points out, can see the value of honesty and uprightness in moral and civil matters — but when it comes to a question of attempting the spiritual conquest which would give eternal value to these external virtues, they see only the difficulties in the way. They say, "Is it not enough to be a good moral person and a good

citizen? No one can hope to stand against the world or to change his inherited nature." Walled cities represent false systems of thought which have been developed in defense of selfishness, and giants stand for that deep-seated selfishness itself. The giants, we are told, were evil remnants left over from the Most Ancient Church. Selfishness is always the power behind false reasoning. This is again illustrated by the fact that in the time of David, the Philistines - who represent an interest in the truth without a desire to live according to it — sent out one of these atavistic giants as their champion. The arguments stirred up in our minds by evil spirits in our times of temptation always rely on our inherent selfishness as their strongest ally. These arguments are also pictured by the stones with which the people sought to destroy Caleb and Joshua.

When the people realized that because of their cowardly choice they would not be allowed to enter the land but would die in the wilderness, some of them sought to rush forward in spite of the divine prohibition and were overcome by the Amalekites. This is a picture of trying to accomplish by one's own power something which only obedience to the Lord can attain. Such an attempt is ended by the first discouragement. We recall that the Amalekites picture the discouragement which results from distrust of the Lord — they attacked from ambush and chose the stragglers and the weary as their victims (Deuteronomy 25:17-18; Samuel 15:2). We can accomplish nothing spiritually in our own power alone.

The punishment of the people for refusing to take the advice of Caleb and Joshua seems severe. Does it mean that one wrong choice will cut a person off from the possibility of entering heaven? Certainly not. All the Israelites of our story represent things within each of us. Caleb and Joshua are there as the promptings of our higher nature. The children — those under twenty years — are there as the possibilities in us which are undeveloped at the time of any given choice. Moses is there as the principle of obedience to the commandments, which continues to lead us toward the Holy Land. The people who were refused admittance to the Holy Land as a result of their choice are all those thoughts and affections in us which lean toward self and refuse to obey the Lord. They must die one by one in the wilderness. Even Moses, although he was allowed to see the Holy Land from the height of Mount Nebo (Deuteronomy 34:1-4), was not allowed to enter it. We may read the story of the reason for this in Numbers 20:1-13. Literally, Moses at one time exalted himself instead of the Lord in his dealings with the people and so was refused admission to the Holy Land. Spiritually, Moses in us represents obedience to the commandments from a sense of duty, and this often has in it something of self-praise. We do not actually enter the Holy Land until external obedience to the commandments has become a habit of which we no longer think with pride.

In Deuteronomy 2:14 we read that thirty-eight years passed after the first sojourn in Kadesh—barnea before the children of Israel were again brought to the border of the Holy Land prepared to enter it. It sometimes seems to us that we shall never reach the free and happy state which is promised to those who patiently seek to obey. The Lord alone sees the heart and knows when we are ready. We are told that He never allows us to be tempted beyond our strength to resist, if we will, and that He withholds temptations altogether from those who are not willing to attempt the conquest. Our spiritual strength is developed and tested little by little. If we can believe that the Lord is leading us, and if we can look upon every such testing as an opportunity for spiritual development, our progress will be much more rapid and easy. The constant murmurings and complaints of the children of Israel in the wilderness are recorded in the Word to show us in concrete form the folly of our own discontents and rebellions. And the patience of the Lord through all their weaknesses should help us to see and acknowledge His patience with us.

# **44:KORAH, DATHAN, AND ABIRAM —**

## **Numbers 16**

### **INTRO**

The lesson of defeat at the hands of the Amalekites was not long-lived. Israel was far from ready to resign itself to the necessary unquestioning obedience to the Lord through Moses. So again we find a challenge to the leadership of Moses and Aaron, again with devastating results.

### **Adult**

This story is one of many in the Bible given to shake us out of the easygoing self-satisfaction into which we all sometimes fall. The various elements which took part in the rebellion and the variety in their punishments make interesting discussion material.

We have seen that the wilderness journey of the Israelites pictures, in the life of the man or woman "who is to be regenerated," as Swedenborg frequently puts it, the period of reformation — that long, slow process of bringing the outward life into order from a principle of obedience to the commandments — which comes between the free decision to turn away from self toward the Lord and the real enjoyment of spiritual living which is regeneration. That period from its very beginning is punctuated by times of dissatisfaction, discouragement, and rebellion. The old selfish, worldly desires and reasonings persist, festering under the surface even as we plod forward, and from time to time breaking out, in spite of the constant evidences we have of the Lord's presence with us and power to save us and to supply all our needs. Sometimes these rebellious outbreaks are mere murmurings, quickly stilled by the Lord's merciful provision. But sometimes, as in our story today, they are the culmination of a long-unnoticed conspiracy of self-love and self-intelligence within us.

The rebellion which is the subject of our lesson came into the open when it found a leader in Korah. Korah was a Levite, a member of the tribe set apart by the Lord for the service of the tabernacle. But he was not of the house of Aaron, and only Aaron and his descendants could actually be priests. In the literal story Korah resents his subordinate position and tries to overthrow the authority of Moses and Aaron. The name Korah means "baldness"; conversely, hair represents outmost truth. Korah knew that Moses and Aaron had been specially appointed by the Lord, but his ambition prompted him to try to get around the acceptance of the literal fact. In order to do so he drew upon other statements of the Lord which he could interpret in support of his contention. His statement in verse 3 is taken from the Lord's words to Moses as recorded for us in Exodus 19:6. Isn't this something we church people are all prone to do? We profess to believe that the Word is inspired by the Lord and — in the New Church — that Swedenborg was the Lord's instrument in opening the Word and revealing its true doctrine; but when something in the Word or the writings runs counter to what we want to believe, we try to discount it and to find other statements more to our liking, instead of really examining what we read to find out the truth and applying it by changing our thought and conduct. The two hundred and fifty "princes of the assembly" who supported Korah in his rebellion represent just such precepts of the Word, given to govern us but taken out of their context and used to support us in doing what we like. This is what Swedenborg calls the "falsification of truth."

The punishment for such misuse of the truth is described in the punishment of the two hundred and fifty princes: "there came out a fire from the Lord, and consumed them." The "fire" which proceeds from the Lord is unselfish love. It is the very life of life which maintains us from moment to moment. When we profess to be seeking this life and then turn it into self-love, our souls perish. The brazen censers are a symbol of outward worship, the fire in them the motive which prompts it, and the incense the petitions we are offering in our minds. When we go to church professing to believe in the Lord and to be worshiping Him, and are really thinking about how good we are and hoping our worship will be properly credited to us and praying that we may be given the things we want, we are like Korah and the princes. We must note, however, that after these men were destroyed, the censers were preserved. People have been known to excuse themselves from going to church on the ground that there were "so many hypocrites in the churches." External worship is right and necessary. We cannot safely do without it. But our worship should be a humble offering of ourselves to the Lord and not an exaltation of self. This is what is meant by beating the censers into plates to cover the great altar of sacrifice.

There were two other groups concerned in the rebellion of Korah. One was the three Reubenites, Dathan, Abiram, and On. On is mentioned only in the first instance and apparently obeyed Moses and withdrew from the company of the others, as he was not included in their destruction. Reuben, Jacob's first son, represents faith — specifically faith in the understanding. This is the first step in the development of spiritual life; we must acknowledge divine truth with our minds before we do anything useful with it. But if we go no further than intellectual acknowledgment, divine truth has no real effect on our lives. Dathan and Abiram would not go to the tabernacle at the call of Moses. They stood in the door of their tents. Whenever we — any of us — fall into the idea that because we have joined the church and give lip service to the Lord we shall get to heaven without making any real effort to learn the truths of the Word and apply them in our daily lives, we are living in faith alone. When we do not try to learn of the Lord and to obey Him, we are led by our own ideas and the ideas of the world about us. We have cut ourselves off from the light of heaven. And eventually the earth opens her mouth and swallows us up and we go down alive into the pit (Sheol) just as really as Dathan and Abiram did. And all the affections and thoughts and deeds which we have produced and in which we take such pride are dragged down with us. Worldliness and self-interest are in all that we do.

The other group concerned in the rebellion were the people.

"The people" are all our everyday thoughts and feelings. When Dathan and Abiram insisted on remaining by their own tents instead of coming to the tabernacle, Moses gave the people a solemn warning: "Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest ye be consumed in all their sins." We are told in @AC 10130 that "by 'touching' is signified communication, transfer, and reception." Our minds touch other people's minds constantly in the course of our daily life in the world. How easily we fall into the habit of agreeing with our acquaintances without stopping to think whether we really should agree or not! It is so much easier to agree than to think, and the matter in question often seems unimportant. But in this way our own thinking is colored by the ideas of the world about us, and we sometimes wake up and realize that what we have been accepting as a matter of course is actually quite contrary to the principles we profess to hold. The Lord said, "Take heed how ye hear." In our story the people did withdraw from the tents of Dathan and Abiram, but many had been so tainted with the spirit of the rebellion that they still murmured, even after the terrible object lessons they received, and their murmuring took the form of the charge that Moses and Aaron were responsible for the death of their friends.

This, too, strikes home to us. How often, when we can no longer deny that we have been wrong, our first impulse is to blame someone else for our condition! The plague which struck among the people who murmured is a picture of the spiritual consequences of refusing to acknowledge and repent of our own sins. Every time of rebellion and disobedience in our lives leaves its trail of consequences in our minds and hearts. The plague was stopped by Aaron by means of a censer full of fire from the altar and incense laid upon it. If we look to the Lord for help with sincere humility and a desire to be shown our weaknesses and evils and are led to serve Him truly, the effects of our rebellion can be checked.

## 45:AARON'S ROD — Numbers 17

### INTRO

The teacher should read Exodus 28:1-4, 40-43 concerning Aaron, and review Numbers 16 as a background for the current lesson. He should also look over the route of the Israelites as found in Numbers 33 and as marked on a Bible map of the wilderness journey, and he should refresh his memory of the story of the spies in Numbers 13 and 14, especially Numbers 14:26-35.

### Adult

Discussion material is suggested in the Adult notes in the references to modern humanism and rejection of revelation. The lesson, however, should be directed toward self-examination rather than toward criticism of society.

We have studied the story of the destruction of two of Aaron's sons — Nadab and Abihu — because they offered "strange fire" in their censers (Leviticus 10:1-7); the story of the sending out of the twelve spies from Kadesh and the condemnation of all the adults who voted to follow the advice of the cowardly ten (Numbers 13, 14); and the story of the rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram (Numbers 16). All these stories show the steady disposition of the Israelites to set up their own will and their own intelligence in opposition to the Lord's commands and instructions. In these striking and dramatic stories it is easy for us to see and condemn the folly of the tendency in the Israelites to set up their own intelligence and their own will against the Lord, but we are slow to recognize this same tendency in ourselves and to acknowledge its foolishness. Yet it is an almost universal tendency. In national life it results in the belief in force rather than in righteousness, in social life in the struggle for money and power, in our individual lives in contempt for those who are different from ourselves and for anyone who disagrees with us. It appears most clearly of all in one modern theory that the Bible is the work of men — rather pretentiously described as "man's ascending search for God" — and in the tendency of churches, including our own, to measure themselves and their members in terms of external activities instead of in terms of justice and righteousness.

In our chapter for today the Lord gives the people a sign. The story is a simple one and we may wonder why the mere miraculous blossoming of a rod should have convinced the people. Yet the last two verses of the chapter indicate that, coming on top of the terrible events described in the preceding chapter, it did convince them, for the time at least.

What does this story mean for us? The Lord at Sinai had appointed Aaron to be high priest. His sons were also to be priests, and the high priesthood was to descend in his line. Aaron and Moses were

descendants of Levi, who among the twelve sons of Jacob represents charity. In @AC 342 Swedenborg says: "The church conceives and brings forth nothing else than faith and charity. The same is signified by the first children of Leah from Jacob; 'Reuben' denoting faith; 'Simeon' faith in act; and 'Levi' charity, wherefore also the tribe of Levi received the priesthood, and represented the 'shepherd of the flock.'" He says elsewhere that charity is love to the neighbor in the heart, springing from love to the Lord, and that recognition of the Lord and charity are the essentials of the church.

But among the Levites Aaron was singled out to be high priest.

Aaron, like other individuals in the Bible story, has his basic correspondence, but it takes on various colorings according to the context in which he appears. Basically he represents "the Lord as to Divine good or the priesthood." But before he became high priest, when he was assigned to Moses "for a mouth," he represents "the doctrine of what is good and true." We saw this representation in our lesson on the battle with Amalek. Whenever Moses and Aaron are named together, Moses represents the divine law as it is in its inward sense, and Aaron the same law in its literal sense. In our present chapter it is Aaron as high priest whose authority has been called into question. Since in that office he represents the Lord as to good, to question his authority is to refuse to recognize that "there is none good but one, that is, God." Whenever we find ourselves thinking of ourselves as good, finding fault with others because they are not doing what we do, assuming that our own motives are above reproach and that what we think the Bible ought to mean is what it must mean, we are rebelling against the high priesthood of Aaron. It is a sad commentary on our inherited nature that it is so hard for us to learn the lesson of humility which is taught throughout the Word and emphasized again and again in the writings. Swedenborg tells us that without innocence there can be no charity and, as we saw in our lesson on the Passover, he defines innocence as "to know, acknowledge, and believe, not with the mouth but with the heart, that nothing but evil is from one's self and that all good is from the Lord."

The rod is a symbol of power, specifically of the power exercised by truth. The twelve tribes represent all the goods and truths of the church in a complex. The rods of the tribes are symbols of the power exercised by these. We need them all, but each has its specific place and use, and their immediate importance varies with the circumstances in which we are from time to time. We learn this, for example, as we study the shifting order in which the tribes are named in different stories in the Word. But the office of the tribe of Levi remains constant. Levi is given no separate lot in the Holy Land but is established in cities in every part of it. When the rods of the twelve tribes were laid before the ark in the Holy of Holies, only the rod of Aaron for the tribe of Levi blossomed and bore fruit.

We are familiar with the correspondence of the seed—plant series.

The seed is truth from the Word, the tree itself represents a certain principle, the leaves thoughts from that principle, the blossoms particular thoughts leading to uses, the fruit the uses themselves. Nuts, because they last a long time, represent lasting goods. Of the almond Swedenborg says in @AC 5622: "This tree itself signifies in the spiritual sense a perception of interior truth which is from good, its 'blossom' interior truth which is from good, and its 'fruit' good of life thence derived." So the sign of Aaron's rod means that only the acknowledgment — from the heart — that the Lord alone is good can produce genuine good in the life. The laying of the twelve rods before the ark shows us that it is the Lord's judgment and not man's which counts.

The later laying up of Aaron's rod before the ark, "to be kept as a token against the rebels," tells us that the principle pictured by the fruitful rod should be taken to heart and never forgotten, so that we may not be guilty of setting ourselves up in judgment upon the Lord, the sin which caused the earth to open and swallow up Dathan and Abiram and fire from the Lord to consume Korah and the two hundred and fifty "princes of the assembly" who supported him in his rebellion. This is a lesson which is much needed today when some people are making a cult of the worship of humanity, claiming the innate goodness of human nature, attempting to build up a moral code without belief in revelation, and making external benefactions the test of goodness. The second of the two great commandments cannot be obeyed independently of the first; and the Lord's "new commandment" - "as I have loved you, that ye also love one another" — points with equal positiveness to the necessity of looking to the Lord for the understanding of what love to the neighbor involves and for the power to develop and exercise this love.

## **46:BALAAM — Numbers 22; 23; 24**

### **INTRO**

For review it is enough for the children now to recall that the Israelites wandered in the wilderness for forty years in all and had many adventures and trials, and that the events of our lesson for today took place close to the end of the forty years and constitute the last of their trials before they entered the Holy Land. In all classes stress the prophecy of the Star and point out that Balaam and the Wise Men came from the same country and possessed knowledge handed down from the Ancient Word.

### **Adult**

Note that the events of our lesson took place when the Israelites were in their final encampment near the Jordan. Then perhaps begin with the point made in the final paragraph of the Adult notes. The most important discussion topics are the way in which divine providence warns us, and hinders but does not force us to discontinue a wrong course, and the safety which comes with the proper ordering of our lives around worship of the Lord and in accordance with the commandments of His Word.

The story of Balaam contains a great many things of interest. In popular thought the incident of the donkey has come to seem the principal part of the story, but it is merely preparatory to the real lesson.

First we should note that Israel has completed the wilderness journey and is encamped "in the plains of Moab on this side Jordan by Jericho." Balak, king of Moab, is afraid of the consequences of their coming, but he knows that the Lord is with them and that he cannot hope to conquer them by force. So he turns to sorcery and sends far away to the east for the famous wizard Balaam to come and curse Israel for him. Moab in a good sense represents natural good, a kinsman of Israel, whom Israel was commanded not to injure. But this Moab, when it sets itself up against the higher things of the spirit, represents the adulteration of good. Many today exalt natural goodness, saying that it is not necessary to worship the Lord or even to acknowledge Him if only one lives a life of neighborly kindness, enters into reform movements, gives to charitable causes, etc. This thought is expressed frequently by the misleading half-truth: "There are better people outside the church

than many in it." This points to another and more subtle form of the same general thought — religious hypocrisy. of such people Swedenborg says: "They are, in general, those who are in external worship, which appears in some respects holy; but not in internal worship; and who seize upon as goods and truths the things which are of external worship, but reject and despise the things of internal worship" (@AC 2468). Later in the same number he says: "They who are in such good, care for external things only, and despise, reject, and indeed spew out the internal things of worship and doctrine." It is fitting that Balak should send for Balaam, for Balaam is the symbol of hypocrisy.

It is not easy to see this hypocrisy at first in the story, for one is impressed with Balaam's frequent declaration that he can speak only what the Lord gives him to speak. But it appears clearly later in his persistent attempt to satisfy Balak and win the rewards offered, and it is also stated in Revelation 2:14 where Balaam is named as the one who taught Balak how to lead the children of Israel astray. In interpreting this verse (@AR 114, @AE 140), Swedenborg tells interesting things of Balaam. He came from Aram, or Syria, also called Mesopotamia, where there existed remains of knowledge from the Ancient Word, which included a considerable knowledge of correspondences. Among the good, this knowledge was cherished; it culminated in the visit of the Wise Men to Bethlehem to find the newborn King. Among the evil, it was turned to sorcery and magic, as with Balaam. Even the evil, however, recognized that they could accomplish nothing by their own power, but only by the Lord's power working through the correspondences which they knew. It was this knowledge or correspondence which taught Balaam to instruct Balak to build seven altars and to sacrifice a bullock and a ram on each. And it was this knowledge in Balaam's mind through which the Lord could speak to him even to the point of enabling him to prophesy. We should note especially the wonderful prophecy in Numbers 24:17, referring to the Lord's Advent. The Star stands for the Lord as truth and the Sceptre the Lord as King: the smiting of the corners of Moab and the destruction of the children of Sheth show the Lord's complete conquest of evil and falsity in the natural man.

In general, the attempt of Balak with Balaam's help to undermine and overthrow Israel after they had reached the very border of the Promised Land pictures the last stand of the rebellious natural man against the spiritual. Even when we have fulfilled the requirements of the period of external reformation, have set our lives in order from the principle of obedience to the Lord, and are all ready to take the final step which will establish the spiritual principle within us and make us "at home" in heavenly living, friends instead of mere servants of the Lord ... even then all that is earthly and natural in our minds rises up and conspires to undermine our resolution, even attempting to draw arguments from the Word itself to confirm the superiority of external over internal living. Witness the cry for "practical" Christianity. The loaves and fishes were not the real blessings which the Lord sought to give to men.

The story of Balaam and the donkey is a wonderful picture of the Lord's providence over us when we are intent on doing evil. There is first the voice of conscience telling us that what we purpose to do is not the Lord's will: "And God came unto Balaam, and said." There is the second warning: "And God came unto Balaam at night and said unto him." But if we still wish to do wrong, the Lord permits us to go our way. He follows us, however, and puts obstacles in our path which appeal to our lower minds, since we have closed our higher selves to His counsel. The donkey represents the natural reason. From merely natural considerations it becomes increasingly evident to us that what we are planning to do will get us into difficulties: we even experience some of these difficulties, as Balaam's foot was crushed against the wall. Three times the angel appeared to the donkey and

checked Balaam's journey. The Lord leaves nothing undone which will show us the folly of pursuing our own way. The donkey of course did not speak, but the Lord spoke to Balaam through the mouth of the donkey as a symbol of the appeal of His truth to our natural reason. When Balaam finally listened to this voice, his spiritual eyes could be opened to see the angel in the way.

In spite of all warnings Balaam went his way and made his three attempts to curse Israel. But when he looked upon the encampment of Israel — in one case even upon a small portion of the camp — the curse which he intended was turned into a blessing. This was because the encampment of Israel — with the tabernacle in the center and each tribe in its assigned place with reference to it — was according to the order prescribed by the Lord. It represents a life organized according to heavenly order, with worship of the Lord at the center and all our affections and thoughts kept in their proper relation to this center. Balaam could not curse a people so encamped. If our lives are organized according to this divine pattern, no outside cause can prevent our entering the Holy Land of spiritual living in this world or the next. We may be severely tempted and may yield here and there (Revelation 2:14), but we shall be given light to see the evil and to stamp it out, as the Israelites finally destroyed Balaam (Numbers 31:8). A good man whose inmost desire is to know and serve the Lord may be deceived from time to time by false prophets and may fall here and there into external evils, but the Lord's power is with him and will eventually give him light to see and strength to overcome.

We need to be deeply impressed with the power and beauty of this story of Balaam in its internal sense, because it is one of the stories often held up to ridicule by those who choose to think of the Bible as a man-made book. If we can realize what a tragedy it is to stop in the letter of the story and thus make it a means of discrediting the Word and cutting oneself and others off from the possibility of being reached through it by the Lord, we may be emboldened to speak out against such profanation and so help others to a truer appreciation of what the Lord has for them in the Word.

## 47:THE CALL OF JOSHUA — Joshua 1

### INTRO

The transition to this lesson can be made by reminding the children of a recent lesson where Joshua played a major part. This is a discussion lesson rather than a story. It can well be introduced by a brief review of the whole Bible story so far. An outline for such a review will be found with this lesson. This review is especially important for the Juniors and Intermediates.

### Adult

The charge to Joshua offers plenty of material for discussion. The difference between reformation and regeneration is also a fruitful subject. The personal attitude toward the place of religion in life enters into both and carries over into our attitude toward the Word, the doctrines, and the church. There is a good deal of superficial thinking in regard to the organized New Church today. We need to go more deeply into the subject and to face our responsibility to the organization.

After the decision to follow the advice of the ten fainthearted spies, the children of Israel wandered for thirty-eight more years in the wilderness. There are three accounts of these wanderings: the

longer account (Exodus 15 through Numbers 32) and two summaries (Numbers 33 and Deuteronomy 1-3). Because many of the places named have not been identified, it is not easy to trace the wanderings on the map, but we know that they were in the general region of what is called the wilderness of Zin and the Arabah or Mount Seir, the country which lies between the Gulf of Aqabah and the Dead Sea. Some of the incidents of this period are studied in this course: the rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram; the blossoming of Aaron's rod; and the story of Balaam. There is also the story of the fiery serpents in Numbers 21 which we need to know because of later mentions of the serpent of brass which Moses set up at that time. The Israelites fought a number of battles and conquered such enemies as opposed them. Their leader in battle was Joshua, who had been chosen for this duty in their first battle against Amalek, before they reached Sinai. We recall that he was also one of the two spies who urged the people to go bravely forward and take possession of the Holy Land in spite of the apparent difficulties in the way.

All the leaders chosen by the Lord throughout the Bible story picture the Word of God in some aspect. Moses represents the Law as it appears to us when we obey it through hope of reward or fear of consequences. This type of obedience serves to set our outward lives in order and leads us to the border of the Holy Land, but it cannot cross the border. Moses had been told by the Lord that he would not be allowed to enter the Holy Land, although he would have an opportunity to see it before he died. Read Numbers 20:1-13. In the type of obedience represented by Moses there is a spirit of self-praise. In fact, Swedenborg points out (@AC 2946) that in the first stage of reformation a man does not believe that he is being reformed by the Lord but by himself. This spirit cannot enter the Holy Land. However, if the person in this first state wants to become good — if he longs for a more spiritual state — even if he goes no further in this life, he can be introduced into further states after death (@TCR 571). The wilderness, Swedenborg says, is predicated both of those who are afterward reformed and of those who cannot be reformed (@AC 2708[5]). In the literal sense of the story of the wilderness wanderings, the great mass of the people did actually die in the wilderness and never reached the Holy Land. But the children — those in states of innocence and trust — along with Joshua and Caleb — who in this application would represent those who progress to the point of regeneration from mature choice of truth and good — did go on into the Holy Land. The crossing of the Jordan represents the end of the state of reformation and the beginning of regeneration. Reformation and regeneration are two different things: reformation is the setting in order of the external life, and regeneration has to do primarily with the will. We may reform our conduct without making any effort to change our feelings.

We "leave the wilderness and cross the Jordan" when we are ready to face the evils and falsities in our hearts and minds and fight against them. Then we begin to use the truth willingly because we have proved it and found that it led us to where we really wanted to go all the time. Joshua represents "truth fighting." We still know that our "Holy Land" is full of enemies; that we have our severest temptations ahead of us, those evils within ourselves which we have not yet faced; but we are now eager to go forward and face them. The whole spirit is changed. Read the people's answer to Joshua in our chapter for today (verses 16-18) and compare it with their treatment of Joshua in Numbers 14:6-10.

The Lord's charge to Joshua was twofold. We always remember the first part of it because it is three times repeated in this first chapter and impresses itself on our memories: "Be strong and of a good courage." The children of Israel had learned by long and bitter experience that they got nowhere by trying to avoid conflict. Neither do we. When we refuse to recognize and fight evil and falsity, our character is weakened and with it our influence for good in the world. We get nowhere ourselves

and we are of no real help to anyone else. We should be "of a good courage." The charge is important to us at every step of our regeneration. To see an evil in oneself and regret it but say, "I was born that way; I can't change" is to close the mind to the Lord's promises and make it impossible for Him to give us power to overcome. To see so many evils in ourselves that we give up without attacking any one of them is not only cowardly but irrational. If we recognize our evils and fight them one by one, sure of the Lord's help, we shall progress steadily toward the desired goal.

The charge is also especially important to us in the New Church today. We are a small body and many of our societies have been dwindling and even going out of existence. Many have lost confidence in the importance of our organization. When we show this lack of trust and faith, our children are not inspired with love for the church, they are not adequately instructed in it, and no one else is made aware of what the New Church has to give them. In every community there are individuals hungering for just what we alone can give. We do not find these people by hiding our light under a bushel. If we believe — as we should — that our doctrines have been given by the Lord to meet the spiritual needs of the people of this new age, then we must take the Lord's charge to Joshua as a charge to each one of us.

And the second part of the charge is equally pertinent: "Observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left." To turn to the right hand is to err on the side of what we imagine to be charity, to refuse to recognize that sin brings inevitable punishment, not from God but from its own corrupting nature, to explain away the rational statements in our doctrines on the ground that the Lord could not have meant them. To turn to the left hand is to err on the side of intellectualism, to look at the Word from human reason and self-intelligence rather than accepting it as it was given and seeing divine wisdom in it. The charge goes on: "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein." The Word — as the Lord has given it to us, not as men would like to interpret and change it — is our bulwark and defense, our leader, the light on our path, the river which cleanses our lives and quenches our spiritual thirst. If we go forward obeying this charge and trusting in the Lord, we shall have good success.

To understand verses 12 to 15 we need to read Numbers 32.

Just as Lot long before had seen the rich Jordan valley and chosen it for his dwelling place, so now some of the tribes preferred it to the Holy Land itself. Many people want to know what is right and to do it, yet their real enjoyment is in outward activity, "good works" in the natural sense. But they should be like the tribes in our story rather than like Lot. They should be willing to cross the Jordan with their brethren and help in the conquest of the land before settling down in the valley; that is, to recognize their inner evils and fight and overcome them as a means to innocent enjoyment. The whole life must be set in order, inward as well as outward. Read here Joshua 22, which tells of the final settlement of these tribes and the altar they set up east of the Jordan as a reminder of their duty to the Lord.

## 48:CROSSING THE JORDAN — Joshua 3-4

# INTRO

The transition to this lesson is easily made through emphasis on the unwillingness of the Israelites to obey the Lord as the cause of their long stay in the wilderness. The lesson to be drawn from this is an obvious one for all classes. Then Joshua may be used as the actual connecting link, recalling his leadership of the fighting men throughout the wilderness journey and the story of the spies (Numbers 13-14), in which Joshua and Caleb alone trusted the Lord and gave wise counsel.

## Adult

Good discussion topics are: the meaning of the change from Moses to Joshua; the correspondence — good and bad — of the Jordan; and the central place that the commandments must take in our lives in the regenerate state as well as in the period of reformation.

We note that we have left the books of Moses. Most of our lessons have been from Genesis, Exodus, and Numbers. This does not mean that Leviticus and Deuteronomy are of less value than the other three, but merely that the instruction contained in them is for the most part too detailed for the purpose of a rapid survey of the whole Word. Each one of the statutes in the book of Leviticus has an inner meaning which applies to our life and conduct. The book of Deuteronomy, called the second giving of the law, was all delivered after the Israelites had reached their final encampment near the Jordan, and is in itself a summary of all that had happened to them under Moses and of all the instruction given them through him. Much of it is in the first person, as spoken by Moses directly to the people. In the first four chapters he rehearses briefly the story of their wanderings, bringing to their remembrance the wonderful way in which the Lord has upheld them together with a picture of their own weakness and disobedience. Chapters 5 to 26 are a recapitulation of the laws and statutes previously given to them, with a constant exhortation to obedience. In the rest of the book these laws are delivered into the stewardship of the Levites, and Joshua and the people are solemnly urged to observe them faithfully in the years to come, particularly in times of safety and prosperity, when they will be tempted to forget their dependence upon the Lord.

The leadership of Moses represents the first stage of our journey out of Egypt, away from the dominion of purely natural and worldly feelings and thoughts. As we have seen, these worldly motives and ideas cling to us and are constantly cropping up. The Israelites in the wilderness were always looking back longingly toward the fleshpots of Egypt. Throughout the period of reformation we have a tendency to look upon the law of the Lord as a hard master, and to take considerable credit to ourselves when we obey it. The higher part of our mind recognizes that happiness and peace can come only through conquering self and wholly following the Lord, but the old self persists in intruding itself in everything we do. The type of obedience represented by Moses can bring us in sight of the Holy Land of truly spiritual living, but cannot take us across the border line into it.

Joshua, whose name means "whose help is the Lord," represents another type of leadership — the truth fighting. When we have obeyed the Lord's law until it has become so interwoven with our lives that we no longer struggle against it, but see it in a new spirit as an expression of the Lord's love and look to its leadership as a matter of course, the truth becomes ours to use and we are ready to pass over from merely external living to genuine spiritual living, to apply the test of the Lord's truth to our inner motives and thoughts and to fight from it against deeper enemies than mere evils of conduct.

The conquest of the Holy Land is the period of regeneration, and the Lord wants us to go as far in regeneration as we possibly can. He will be with us in this deeper conflict as He was in the more external battles. He says to Joshua, "As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." But we must remember the charge. All our efforts must be founded upon the Word, and we must "meditate therein day and night." We never reach the state where we can discard the law or break the law with impunity, nor do we ever get so far that we cannot learn more about the Word and its meaning for us. Also, we must be "strong and of a good courage." The Christian life is an active, constructive, progressive life, in which we must always advance, never resting satisfied with what we have attained. It requires the highest form of courage, the courage to speak truth, to say "no" to temptation, to face our own evils squarely, often to go against popular opinion, to face ridicule, to love our enemies. And there is only one source of such courage: we must not look to ourselves as strong, but we must be strong and of a good courage "for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest." We must recognize that we have no strength except from the Lord, that our victories are the Lord's victories in us. This is a lesson which the Lord teaches over and over again throughout the Word: "Without me ye can do nothing."

The Israelites reached the Jordan at the time of harvest. The beginning of regeneration is the time of harvest for all the victories we have won in our wilderness journey. But the Israelites found one more barrier which must be overcome. The Jordan River stands for the Lord's truth coming down to the level of everyday life, the boundary of heavenly living. If we want to have eternal life, we must first of all keep the commandments. At the time when Israel camped before Jordan, the Holy Land was full of evil people who were ready to fight them. We all have selfishness deeply entrenched within us, and self-interest can turn even truth from the Lord into falsity. So Swedenborg tells us that the Jordan barring the way of entrance into the Holy Land represents falsity instead of truth (or, more precisely, truth falsified). Once it is passed it again becomes truth.

It was by the power of the ark that Israel passed safely through these waters. The commandments laid up in the ark in the Holy of Holies of the tabernacle represent the commandments "written on the heart." This is what enables us to enter the Holy Land of a regenerate life. When we examine ourselves to make sure that we have been doing right outwardly not just to avoid trouble or to seem "respectable" or even just to get to heaven, and when we determine to live from truly worthy motives, obeying the commandments from love to the Lord and the neighbor, keeping them written in our hearts and minds as well as in our outward conduct, then we really enter the Holy Land.

And even then we need reminders. We know that we all have a tendency to slip back, especially when things are going well with us, as Moses had warned the people before he died. We need something to bring frequently to our attention the remembrance of our past difficulties, of the Lord's saving power, and of our good resolutions. The twelve stones taken from the bed of Jordan and set up at Gilgal for a memorial picture this reminder. We need them for ourselves and we need them to help us in teaching our children the way of life and in teaching others. If the commandments are set up in our lives so that others see that they are of the utmost importance to us, we shall not belie our teaching by our practice. Read Joshua 4:20-24.

Other important events are connected with Gilgal. There the Israelites celebrated their first Passover in the Holy Land. This, as we know, was also ordained as a solemn reminder of the Lord's mercy and saving power. And at Gilgal the manna ceased and they began to eat the fruits of the land. When we reach the regenerate state, we know where our spiritual food comes from and how it is produced. We no longer have to say of spiritual nourishment, "What is it?" It no longer melts in the heat of the day or spoils when we store it up. It was here, too, that the ritual of circumcision was

restored as the sign of dedication to purity of life. The "reproach of Egypt" has been "rolled away" as we are told in Joshua 5:9 in explanation of the naming of Gilgal, which means either rolling or a circle [of stones].

## 49:AT GILGAL — Joshua 5

### INTRO

This lesson may be begun without special introduction as the story of the final arrival of the Israelites at their destination. The death of Moses, the succession of Joshua, and the Lord's charge to Joshua (Joshua 1:7-9) will come in naturally. The story of the crossing of the Jordan and the setting up of the twelve stones at Gilgal tie in with the first verse of the chapter.

### Adult

This is a wonderful chapter in which to bring out the completeness of detail with which the Lord gives us our instruction in the Word. The basis of regenerate living is all here. Nothing is omitted and nothing given here can be neglected.

The entry of the children of Israel into the Holy Land pictures the beginning of the period of regeneration as distinguished from the period of reformation. If we continue to follow the pillar of cloud and fire — if we obey the commands of the Lord as they come to us in the Word — our regrets and rebellions will die away one by one and we shall actually reach the point at which the Lord can give us a new will which is good. This does not mean that the old selfish will is gone and that we have no more work to do. Swedenborg tells us (@AC 3200) that our regeneration must go on throughout this life and to eternity in the other, for an individual "can never be perfected." But with the beginning of regeneration our rebellion is over. We are consciously and willingly on the Lord's side, and the Lord's power is so obvious to us that the promptings of the old selfish will and the falsities which linger in our minds — the enemies in the Holy Land — are weakened and can be controlled. As the first verse of our chapter says of these enemies, "their heart melted, neither was there spirit in them any more." This is true in this world and we are promised that in heaven, if we attain it, our inherited nature is held in complete check by the Lord so that we are never conscious of it unless we begin to become overconfident and need a momentary reminder that it is still there. The conquest of the Holy Land describes our progress in regeneration in this world rather than in heaven, however. In the book of Joshua, although we find no more looking back or rebellion, we do find mistakes in judgment, one outstanding case of disobedience, and in most places in the land a weakness in accomplishment. But, as verse 9 tells us, "the reproach of Egypt is rolled away" (Gilgal means "rolling"). We are no longer obeying Moses in fear, much as we formerly obeyed Pharaoh, but are free men. In the language of the Gospel: "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you."

It is significant that in the Bible the beginning of every new state is marked by the setting up of an altar of some sort as a "memorial," a reminder for future generations. It was an entirely new generation which entered the Holy Land under Joshua, and the first thing Joshua did was to set up at Gilgal the twelve stones which had been taken from the bed of the Jordan as they passed over. Read Joshua 4:1-5, 20-24.

Next Joshua was commanded to circumcise all the people. We are told in the writings that "circumcision is a sign of purification from filthy loves," and we read in @AC 4462: "As the foreskin covers the genital, in the Most Ancient Church it corresponded to the obscuration of good and truth, but in the Ancient Church to their defilement. For with the man of the Most Ancient Church, who was an internal man, good and truth could be obscured but not defiled; whereas with the man of the Ancient Church, being a comparatively external man, good and truth could be defiled, because it is external things — that is, external loves — which defile. For this reason they who were of the Most Ancient Church knew nothing of circumcision, but only they who were of the Ancient Church. From this church circumcision spread to many nations; and it was not enjoined upon Abraham and his descendants as anything new, but merely as a discontinued rite that was to be restored: and it became to his posterity a sign that they were of the church." Circumcision had been neglected during the wilderness journey because in the period of reformation we are concerned with our outward conduct and unwilling to face the necessity of self-examination and inward change. But this is one of our first duties when regeneration begins.

Then after the circumcision at Gilgal the feast of the Passover was celebrated. From the beginning of regeneration we must recognize and acknowledge that it is the Lord who has delivered us from bondage to the world and the flesh. And we recall that in the Christian Church the Holy Supper takes the place of the Passover feast. So our chapter for today should bring home to us the fact that the two Christian sacraments were ordained by the Lord as the orderly beginning of the regenerate Christian life. We cannot omit or neglect them without interfering with our spiritual progress. Through them the Lord reaches us in inner ways, and even though we may not be conscious of this presence of the Lord, we know it is a fact. We should observe these two sacraments because they have been commanded by the Lord, if for no other reason. The Lord knows our needs better than we know them.

After this celebration of the Passover at Gilgal we read that the people ate the produce of the land and that the next day the manna ceased. When the Lord has been able to give each of us a new will, we can be given something of His goodness as our own, with a feeling that we have a part in developing and preserving it. Our desire to partake of His goodness is expressed when we eat the bread of the Holy Supper. The manna in the wilderness is the form in which alone the Lord's goodness can come to us before regeneration — a little at a time, just enough to give us strength for the immediate need, melting away when the sun of self-love grows hot, spoiling when it is not put to immediate use, and never understood. We recall that manna means "What is it?" The grain of the Holy Land is lasting goodness, developed with our willing and conscious cooperation from the seed of truth from the Word, and wholly satisfying.

Our chapter closes with the appearance to Joshua of an angel with a drawn sword who commands Joshua: "Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy." Joshua represents "the truth fighting." If we are to make progress in regeneration, we must accept the challenge of the "captain of the host of the Lord." We must recognize that the regenerate life is a holy life and put off the materialistic ideas in which we are accustomed to walk and go forward to battle against our inward foes under the leadership of the sword of divine truth.

## 50:THE TAKING OF JERICHO — Joshua 6

## **INTRO**

The crossing of the Jordan should be briefly reviewed and compared with the crossing of the Red Sea; and the setting up of the stones at Gilgal, the celebration of the Passover, and the ceasing of the manna should be noted. Teachers should have read the first five chapters of Joshua in order to be sure of this background.

## **Adult**

In this lesson the emphasis should be on the necessity of recognizing that all goodness and truth and all power to do right are from the Lord alone. This recognition is a constant factor in regenerate living, and without it there is no regeneration. No matter how orderly and benevolent and even religious the outward life may be, if we cling to feelings of self-esteem we have not even conquered Jericho.

The occupation of the Holy Land represents the achievement of truly spiritual living, in which the crossing of the Jordan and the taking of Jericho represent the first steps. It is hard for many people to see the difference between spiritual and natural living, especially if the natural living is charitable and orderly. Natural living is living for the pleasures and satisfactions of this life, even though these may not be merely physical enjoyments. There may even be recognition and worship of the Lord, but from a principle of obedience only, with hope of reward and fear of the consequences of evil as the principal motives in obeying. Spiritual living is living in conscious knowledge of the Lord and His purposes, substituting eternal for temporal values, trying to make and keep the mind and heart as well as the outward conduct pure in the sight of the Lord. For example, the natural man is likely to look upon his troubles in this world as sent by the Lord for his chastening, upon death as a calamity, upon success as measured in terms of the good things of this world, upon worship as a duty, upon those who injure him as his enemies and those who favor him as his friends. This is because he does not live in spiritual light. The spiritual man looks upon his troubles as opportunities for seeing and conquering his own evils, upon death as an orderly and happy step, upon success as measured in terms of the ability to help others, upon worship as a privilege, upon those who injure him and those who favor him alike as the Lord's children whom he should help to do right and, where possible, turn from wrongdoing. The natural man is content with general knowledge about the Lord, while the spiritual man loves to learn more and more. The natural man sets an orderly external life as his goal, but the spiritual man examines himself for deeper evils and tries to overcome them.

To become spiritual one must be born again, born of the spirit.

Swedenborg says: "Before regeneration man acts from obedience; but after regeneration from affection." (@AC 8505) A familiar hymn expresses this desire to become spiritual: "Give us to think as angels think, and feel as angels feel." A good test to apply to our thoughts and feelings is just that: Can I imagine an angel thinking and feeling as I do now? The Lord expressed the difference in this way: "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you." (John 15:15)

The Lord intends us all to live spiritual lives, to attain the Holy Land of heavenly character, to live within its borders. But we are born with all sorts of inherited tendencies to evil and falsity. These

are the hostile peoples which occupied the Holy Land and the walled cities which had to be taken. For example, let anyone try genuinely to love his enemy and he will immediately become conscious of the foes which are settled within himself. It is comparatively easy to learn not to strike back — worldly prudence and even common politeness will teach us that — but it is not so easy to learn not to feel injured, not to allow the mind to dwell on the injury, but instead to think of the one who has injured us as someone needing our help. "A man's foes shall be they of his own household." (Matthew 10:36) We should accustom ourselves to thinking of all the evil peoples described in the Word as within ourselves - not in somebody else. If we examine ourselves honestly, we shall soon pick out the "giants." Our "walled cities" are entrenchments of false reasonings by which we seek to defend these evils. This will light up for us the story of the taking of Jericho.

First we come to the Jordan as the means of entrance to the Holy Land. This wonderful river, whose name means "descender," rushing down from the snows of Hermon to lose itself finally in the Dead Sea, is in general a picture of the Lord's truth in the Word, coming down from Him through the heavens and then through the minds of men in various states until it touches the lowest possible state of life. As a border of the Holy Land it pictures especially the simple truths which introduce us to the spiritual life, and when the land is filled with evil people and the Jordan seems to oppose the entrance of the conquering host, it pictures the perversions of truth, the falsities which would keep us from engaging in battle against our inner foes — such falsities as "I can't help it; I was born that way," and, "You can't change human nature."

It should be noted that when the people entered the Holy Land, the manna ceased (Joshua 5:10-12). The Sower (Vol. 2, p. 24) puts very simply what is meant by this: "The manna represents the strength from the Lord in times of trial. It does not represent the full satisfaction of a life that has become altogether heavenly. That satisfaction is represented by the Passover in Canaan and by the old corn of the land, and when the people had eaten of this, the manna ceased." The occasional sense of spiritual satisfaction which we get during the process of reformation is merely a foretaste of the steady joy of heavenly living. People who live spiritually are happy with a deep, abiding happiness which no natural satisfaction can ever give. "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." (John 15:11)

There were three elements in the Lord's charge to Joshua (Joshua 1:6-9): (1) the cherishing of the law, (2) active, courageous attack upon the enemy, and (3) trust in the Lord's power to save. These are wonderfully carried out in the story of the crossing of Jordan and the conquest of Jericho. (1) It is the ark containing the commandments which leads the way across Jordan. The twelve stones from the Jordan, representing all the introductory truths, are set up for a memorial at Gilgal; the ark goes before the people as they compass the city of Jericho. (2) The priests bearing the ark are commanded to go forward straight into the river, and the river does not part until the feet of the priests have touched it. The sevenfold marching around Jericho represents a complete examination of the falsities which defend our inner evils. (3) The Jordan is parted by a miracle. The people are commanded to celebrate the Passover, the memorial of their miraculous deliverance from Egypt. Seven priests with seven trumpets of ram's horn, signifying the power of divine truth from divine good, are to go before the ark when they compass Jericho. Jericho is delivered to them by a miracle.

The conquest of Jericho in general represents the change from a feeling that we can indulge our evils with impunity to a sense that we are safe only in the care of the Lord. Jericho was called the "city of palm trees," and the palm is the symbol of the principle that salvation is from the Lord alone. This is the first lesson we must learn if we are to live spiritually. The sense of self-sufficiency, the tendency of self-esteem, the pride of self-intelligence — which are deeply entrenched within

each one of us from our natural inheritance — must be recognized and overcome before we can go forward to face and root out our other evils and find our true homes in the heavenly land of promise. For the detailed correspondence of the story of the fall of Jericho, read the passage from *Apocalypse Explained* below.

## 51:THE CAPTURE OF AI — Joshua 7; 8

### INTRO

The teacher will need to review carefully chapters 2-6 and prepare himself to tell briefly the story of the events contained in those chapters. The emphasis in this summary should be on the fact that the Lord was showing the people His power to give them victory, and warning them against trusting in themselves or allowing the thought to linger in their minds that their victories were in any sense theirs. Then make the transition to today's lesson by calling attention to the Lord's command as to the spoils of Jericho.

### Adult

The way in which all the incidents of the first weeks of the conquest center about our need for humility and trust in the Lord offers a good opening for discussion. A brief quiz on the events connected with the cities of Jericho, Bethel, Ai, and Shechem may be rewarding. We often think we know our Bible story better than we do. The fate of Achan and his family and the meaning of the ambush toward Bethel are also fruitful topics.

We remind ourselves that the conquest of the Holy Land pictures the searching out and conquest of the evils and falsities within ourselves which stand in the way of our being truly heavenly people. There were, we recall, two elements in the Lord's charge to Joshua as found in Joshua 1:6-9: active, courageous attack upon the enemy, and the cherishing of the law. For the carrying out of these charges absolute trust in the Lord's power was essential, and the first incidents in the occupation of the Holy Land were designed to impress this upon the people. It was the ark containing the commandments which led them across Jordan, and the Jordan was parted by a miracle. The twelve stones from the Jordan, representing all the introductory truths, were set up for a memorial at Gilgal, and there they celebrated the Passover, the feast which commemorated their deliverance from bondage in Egypt. Then Jericho was delivered to them by a miracle, the ark again going before them, and they were commanded that none of the spoils of the city be taken for themselves, but that all should be destroyed except the gold and silver and vessels of brass and iron, which should be consecrated to the service of the Lord. We "conquer Jericho" when we see in ourselves and reject the feeling of self-sufficiency and security in wrongdoing which profanes the truth that the Lord alone saves and that we of ourselves are incapable of doing good — a general truth which we must recognize if we are to advance in spiritual living.

Ai, further up in the hills, is the next entrenchment of the enemy to which we come. In @AC 1453, in connection with Abraham's stop between Bethel and Ai on his first passage through the Holy Land, Swedenborg says that Ai represents knowledges of worldly things; and in @AE 655[8] he says that in the opposite sense Ai represents "confirmation of evil," and refers for proof to Jeremiah, 49:3-4. The story of the defeat at Ai and its cause shows us a very common tendency, one to which we are all subject: that is, the tendency to rest satisfied with a general recognition of our weakness

and sinfulness, and to feel that this general confession enables us to be safe in choosing our own way. Swedenborg tells us that we should indeed make this general confession sincerely, but that this is not enough. We must go on to search out specific evils in ourselves and look to the Lord for knowledge and strength to overcome them. This is what the Lord tells us in the story of Ai. When we secretly cherish some pet evil, as Achan took what appealed to him most in the spoil of Jericho and hid it in the earth in the midst of his tent, we are confirming that evil in ourselves, and so cannot conquer Ai — which represents just such confirmation of evil. How often children will offer to do anything except the one thing which their parents wish them to do. And grown-up children behave in the same way. They do not think much of the strength of Ai and so do not feel it necessary to fight it with all their might — "make not all the people to labor thither" — and so they fail. The command to keep none of the spoil of Jericho for ourselves means that we are to give up our own desires and thoughts whenever we see that they are not in accordance with the Lord's love and truth. The goodly Babylonish garment pictures the flattering thought that we ourselves are good — perhaps the thought that after all we are pretty good to have chosen to follow the Lord at all when some other people have not. The silver and gold are the truths and the good affections which we ascribe to ourselves.

When we find ourselves yielding to temptation and getting into difficulties, we are likely at first to blame everyone but ourselves - even to blame the Lord. Joshua said, "Alas, O Lord God, wherefore hast thou at all brought this people over Jordan, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us?" But the Lord says to us, as to Joshua, "Get thee up; wherefore liest thou upon thy face? Israel hath sinned." And He tells us in plain language: "Thou canst not stand before thine enemies, until ye take away the accursed thing from among you." The method of discovering the offender is very suggestive. In the first place, it is by lot, the decision being left in the Lord's hands. This tells us that we must examine our lives according to the Lord's truth and not according to any imagined wisdom of our own or of other men. Then the people are brought first tribe by tribe, then family by family, household by household, man by man. This suggests an orderly and thorough self-examination, beginning with general affections and working down gradually to more specific ones until the particular evil which is being cherished is discovered. Swedenborg tells us that we should examine ourselves thus thoroughly before we come to the Lord's Supper. The evil must then be confessed, subjected to the judgment of the Lord's truth and good, and wholly rejected, together with all the evils and falsities which have come from it, as Achan and his whole family were stoned with stones and burned with fire. "And they raised over him a great heap of stones unto this day" suggests the clinching of the matter with truths from the Word, which will prevent that particular evil from rising within us again and keep us reminded of its consequences.

After the death of Achan, the Israelites went about the conquest of Ai in a very different spirit, looking to the Lord for help and making careful plans. The ambush toward Bethel reminds us of the secret strength from the Lord which is with us when we try to obey Him, just as the horses and chariots of fire were round about Elisha (2 Kings 6:8-17). The apparent flight, as at first, is the humble recognition that we have no strength of our own. The drawing of the enemy out of their city and away from it is the separation of evils from the false reasonings which protect and defend them, so that they may be clearly seen and overcome. As Ai in a good sense represents "knowledge of worldly things," there are goods and truths connected with it, even in its perverted state, which may be singled out and appropriated; so Israel was allowed to take of the spoil of Ai. But the king, the ruling principle of evil, must be put to death, together with all the people.

The conclusion of chapter 8 is especially interesting in connection with the victory of Ai. Israel

fulfills the command of Moses by going to the valley between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim and renewing the solemn covenant. In order to get the whole picture in the letter we need to read Deuteronomy 27:11-13. In William Worcester's book *On Holy Ground* there are interesting photographs of the natural amphitheater at this place, and he says of it: "It is a remarkable valley; all travelers who climb the mountain—sides are surprised at the distinctness with which sounds and voices from the city below are heard. At the highest part of the valley there is a recess in the mountain on either side which seems as if made by nature for the gathering of the tribes, six on each side of the valley. Here they listened to the law as Joshua read it, and answered, Amen, from the side of Ebal, to the curses, and from Gerizim, to the blessings." Shechem, which is associated with first instruction in heavenly life, is situated in this valley. There Abraham made his first stop when he came into the Holy Land from Haran. He built his first altar there. Jacob also built an altar there and bought a piece of ground which he afterward gave to Joseph (Genesis 33:18-20; 48:21-22; Joshua 24:32). The bones of Joseph were to be buried there. This is also the site of Jacob's well, on which the Lord sat when He talked with the woman of Samaria (John 4:4-7). The rehearsal of the law and renewal of the covenant, coming as they do between the first victories and the further campaigns, teach us our need of returning regularly to the childlike state of openness to instruction and in this spirit reading the Word, meditating upon it, and renewing our pledges to the Lord as we pass from state to state in regeneration.

## **52:THE GIBEONITES — Joshua 9**

### **INTRO**

The lesson should be introduced by emphasis on the fact that when the Israelites returned to the Holy Land from Egypt, they found the land full of enemies, but the Lord had promised them victory if they obeyed Him. The teacher should be prepared to tell briefly the story of the fall of Jericho and the capture of Ai. The older pupils may be able to tell these stories themselves.

### **Adult**

An interesting study for the Adults is to trace the ancestry of the Canaanites and to identify them with the evil tendencies which we inherit from our earliest ancestry. The Lord's providence in making use of these tendencies to further our spiritual development is brought out by this story.

In the introduction to the story of Abraham, we learned that the origin of idolatry was in the perversion of the knowledge of correspondence possessed by the Ancient Church. The idolatrous remnants of that church were scattered all over the world, and the pagan religions are the descendants of those remnants. But there were also remnants which remained in the Holy Land itself. They were the several tribes grouped under the title of Canaanites from whom the country was called the land of Canaan. In the letter of the Word Canaan (Genesis 9:18) was the son of Ham, and Genesis 10:19 tells us that "the border of the Canaanites was from Sidon, as thou comest to Gerar, unto Gaza; as thou goest unto Sodom, and Gomorrah, and Admah, and Zeboim, even unto Lasha." Of the three sons of Noah, Ham represents "internal worship corrupted." Throughout the Word, therefore, the Canaanites represent those interior evils which by heredity lie deep within us and oppose the entrance of the Lord into our hearts and minds. In addition to the Canaanites there were in the land the giants, an evil remnant of the Most Ancient Church, who represent our

common tendency to exalt self.

The Canaanites were in the land when Abraham first came from Ur. We remember the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the kings who carried off Lot and were overcome by Abraham. These stories picture our first struggles against our inherited evils while we are in the tender and innocent states of little childhood. But the descendants of Abraham, as we have seen, did not remain continuously in the Holy Land to hold down these enemies. They went into Egypt and stayed there for two hundred and fifty years. And while they were away, the Canaanites increased and built themselves many strong, walled cities, and gained complete control of the land. So when the Israelites returned under Joshua, they faced a long struggle for possession of the country which had been promised to them. This is a true picture of our own experience. As little children, cared for and protected by our parents and trusting wholly in them, we have a taste of heavenly living. But then we go out from our homes into the world of school and work and begin to develop as independent individuals, and for a long time we are chiefly concerned with external things and with our outward conduct. Our battles during this period are on the external plane. When we return to the Holy Land to repossess it — that is, when we finally are prepared for the development of our minds and hearts — we find that the few inner enemies we had to fight when we were little children have gathered strength and have entrenched themselves in strongholds of worldly thought and argument.

The Lord gave Joshua victory over all these enemies and enabled the Israelites to possess the land. Yet it was never a final victory. From the rest of the Bible story we know how the enemies in the land persisted, how constantly the Jews were tempted to mingle with them and adopt their ways, how their enemies gathered strength whenever the Jews became self-confident, and how at times they gained the upper hand and put the Jews to tribute. This too we can see in our own experience. There is never a time in this world when we can take our ease and relax our vigilance against the evils within us, never a time when we are not in need of examining ourselves and turning to the Lord for help.

We are now taking as our lesson the incident concerning the Gibeonites. The Gibeonites were Hivites. Among the descendants of Canaan listed in Genesis 10:15-18 were Heth — the Hittites — and the Hivites. These two remnants of the Ancient Church all through the Bible story were more inclined to be friendly to the Jews than any of the other Canaanites. It was from the Hittites that Abraham bought the field and cave of Machpelah; Esau married two wives from the Hittites; and we have an occasional Hittite mentioned in the period of the kings as rendering good service — notably Uriah the Hittite, who was so faithful to his duty in David's army that David could not cover his sin with Bathsheba by deceit. We first encounter the Hivites in Genesis 34 when Shechem the son of Hamor wishes to marry Jacob's daughter Dinah, and his father offers Jacob any price for her.

Swedenborg tells us that the Hittites and the Hivites were the more upright of the Canaanites because they still cherished the knowledges which had come down from the Ancient Church: the Hittites, the external knowledges which regard life; and the Hivites, the interior knowledges in the rituals and representatives. In @AC 3058 Swedenborg says that the Gibeonites of our lesson for today represent "those who continually desire to know truths, but for no other end than to know them, while caring nothing for the use."

The ruse by which the Gibeonites deceived Joshua was a falsehood on the surface, but truth interiorly. They had indeed come from a far country, the Ancient Church. The "bread" which they carried — spiritual good — had come hot for their provision out of their houses in the day they

came forth, and the "wine—skins" - the doctrines of spiritual truth — had been new when the branch called the Hivites had first developed in the Ancient Church. Their "garments" and their "shoes" — their ideas of external life and their practical applications of these ideas — had been whole and new. Over the centuries they had all become dry and moldy and torn and patched. But the Gibeonites recognized that the Lord was on the side of Israel and they preferred to serve rather than to resist, knowing that if they resisted they would be destroyed.

And on Joshua's part, what in the letter was a weakness — he asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord but made a league with them — expresses a truth interiorly. As Joseph told his brothers (Genesis 50:20): "Ye thought evil against me: but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive." The Lord "knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust." His providence over us in the matter of the inherited evils within us gives us a means of turning into useful channels those evils which we would not destroy.

In our own lives this law means that there are many things in us which in themselves are weaknesses — "strangers" to the angel in us — yet which, if recognized and properly subordinated, may be made to serve our higher goals. We all have that which the Gibeonites symbolize within us: that natural desire to seek all kinds of information regardless of whether it is good or bad, useful or potentially harmful. Our fondness for looking into things and acquiring information can be made to show us the best means of helping others in material ways, and can bring us truths which are useful in our daily life. The Gibeonites were to hew wood and draw water for the house of the Lord, and we recall that it was only in the outer court of the tabernacle that wood and water were regularly used.

## **53:THE DIVISION OF THE LAND — Joshua 18:1-10**

## **54:DEBORAH AND BARAK — Judges 4**

### **INTRO**

In all classes some time should be spent on the accomplishments under Joshua and the character of the period of the Judges. Even the little children are not too young for the lesson that we never "know enough" to do right without constantly learning new truth from the Word.

### **Adult**

This story in its internal meaning connects with the experience of all of us. Cover the story and its interpretation briefly. Then read Judges 17:6, pointing out that this is the keynote of the period of the Judges, and base the discussion on the danger of thinking we know what is right without constant study of the Word in the light of the writings. Too many people even to old age remain in the period of the Judges as to their spiritual life. They recognize the necessity of constant study in connection with their business or profession and, in the case of housewives, of learning new methods and new recipes, but in their religious life they are content with a minimum of knowledge.

In Deuteronomy 6:10-12 we read: "And it shall be, when the Lord thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildest not, and houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not; when thou shalt have eaten and be full; then beware lest thou forget the Lord, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage."

The time of the Judges is the time foretold in these verses. The children of Israel have come into the land promised to their fathers, and through the power of the Lord have taken possession of it. Their conquests under Joshua were sufficient to give them peace for a time, freedom to settle down in homes and enjoy the fruits of the land. This was the reward to which they had been looking forward, and in their enjoyment of it they fell into just the temptation which the Lord had prophesied. So long as Joshua lived or any of the elders who had been eyewitnesses of the miracles which the Lord had performed for their salvation, they remained faithful, but as soon as these were gone, they began to mingle with the evil people of the land, to intermarry with them, and finally to worship their idols.

This is a picture of a temptation which comes to every regenerating man and woman. Our first efforts to lead a spiritual life have a certain zeal which carries us along. Joshua — the truth fighting — is alive in us, our leader; the many instances in which the Lord has helped us in temptation are fresh in our memories. Then we gain a measure of victory; we taste the satisfaction of living from spiritual motives; we feel that we are settled in the right way and may relax our vigilance. We forget that we have not completely destroyed the enemies we have been fighting, but have merely put them to tribute. And while we rest on our laurels, confident in our new—found security and peace, these enemies begin to stir again and to gain strength. We feel so sure that we have mastered them that we allow ourselves to yield a little here and there to the old uncharitable feelings, to compromise with the worldly reasonings; and presently we are setting up instead of the Lord our God the very idols which the world about us worships — success, pleasure, money, power.

This is the period of the Judges. We go along about so far and then we wake to the fact that we have fallen prey to some enemy we thought we had crushed. We struggle against it for a time in vain and then, when we have realized our weakness, the Lord recalls to our mind the needed truth which alone can save us from this particular temptation; this is the Judge raised up. Under its leadership we conquer, and again have peace for a time until some other slumbering foe awakes, gains strength, and masters us.

So long as we are in this world, we never gain a complete victory. Indeed some of our evil tendencies we can never destroy, although in the other life the Lord will keep them quiescent for us and we shall not have to struggle against them. In Judges 2:22 we have the reason given why enemies were allowed to remain in the Holy Land: "That through them I may prove Israel, whether they will keep the way of the Lord to walk therein, as their fathers did keep it, or not." It is through victory in temptations that we gain strength of character. In Psalm 55:19 it is said of the wicked, "Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God." Our souls grow strong by exercise just as our bodies do. When we are tempted, our weaknesses come to light and we can seek the Lord's help to overcome them. Swedenborg agrees with the apostle Paul that the Lord never permits us to be tempted beyond our strength (1 Corinthians 10:13), and further tells us that those who have no temptations are kept from them because the Lord sees that they would not resist them. We should look upon our temptations as opportunities to gain strength of character, and we should not be discouraged because as we grow older we see deeper and deeper evils in ourselves.

Swedenborg does not tell us much directly about this battle between Deborah and Barak on the one hand and Sisera on the other. In @AE 447[4] he says that it represents the "combat of truth from good against falsity from evil," and in @AE 434[13] he says that Sisera represents "falsity from evil destroying the church." The enemies in the north were falsities in the understanding. These falsities crop up again and again in one form or another and often gain control of us before we realize it. Take, for example, the falsity that we do not need to go to church. This is a very obvious falsity to anyone who has acquired the habit of church attendance. But even such a person may perhaps move away from the church he loves. He does not immediately decide what church to attend, or he attends one and does not like it. He says, "It irritates me to hear preaching which does not agree with my belief and so it does me no good to go to church." Another may say, "I have to work hard all week and I need to sleep or to be out of doors on Sunday in order to do my work properly." What we actually mean is that other things are really more important than going to church, that we can get along without it. In our story Deborah is the Judge. She was a prophetess and lived "under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel." We are told that Ramah represents the things which belong to spiritual truth from the celestial, and that Bethel represents knowledges of internal things. The palm tree is the symbol of the principle that the Lord is our Savior. Thus all that we know of Deborah points to the fact that she represents our affection for inner, spiritual truths which look to the Lord as our Savior. This is indeed the affection which leads us to fight against falsities. The military leader, however, and the two tribes chosen to furnish the fighting men are from the north, truths in the understanding which can most easily meet the attacking falsities.

The death of Sisera at the hands of Jael is one of the striking and terrible pictures from the letter of the Word such as the old painters used to love to portray. It is also one of the stumbling blocks to those who see nothing but the literal sense. In the song of Deborah in chapter 5, Jael is represented as blessed above women and the details of her deed are rehearsed with seeming delight. The Lord does not commend nor offer us as examples to be followed the cruel practices of a cruel day. Swedenborg tells us that He purposely spoke through people who had departed farthest from Him so that the letter of His Word might reach men in their lowest states. There are always people who need to be reached through fear — shocked into thinking — and we all have states in which this is true of us. But for our higher states there is the internal sense. Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, a descendant of the priest of Midian who was the father-in-law of Moses, pictures an affection surviving from our childhood states even in the midst of falsity. In the example we have used, this final blow may well be given by some Jael in us, perhaps the remains of our childhood affection for going to church and Sunday school. Since a tent represents what is holy, the tent peg would be some particular truth which has served to anchor this general state of holiness to the earth of good living, such as one of the commandments or some other verse we have learned in childhood. And the blow is struck in a quiet moment when the threatening falsity has been temporarily lulled to sleep. If we can form the habit of always thinking of the enemies in the letter of the Word as evils and falsities within ourselves, the stories of battle and conquest, of extermination of the enemy and destroying his cities will not only cease to trouble our modern civilized attitude toward violence, but they will offer us specific instruction and help in meeting our temptations and overcoming them.

## 55:THE STORY OF GIDEON — Judges 6; 7

## INTRO

In every class above the Primary, the teacher should read aloud Judges 17:6 as the keynote of the period of the Judges and explain the difference between looking to self and looking to the Lord for knowledge of what is right. Be sure to point out the difference between the Judges and the patriarchs and Moses and Joshua, and also the kings, who are to come later. The Judges were local and temporary leaders.

## Adult

There are any number of interesting discussion topics in this story: the characteristics of the period of the Judges, the altar to Baal, the dew on the fleece, and the Midianite's dream, as well as the immediately obvious ones.

The division of the Holy Land by lot among the tribes pictures the well—rounded spiritual life, and also the well—rounded spiritual society, in which good men and women of all types and gifts have their proper places and work together harmoniously in the Lord's service.

But the Israelites in their new prosperity forgot their duty to the Lord. So long as Joshua lived or any of the elders who had been eyewitnesses of the miracles which the Lord had performed for their salvation, they remained faithful; but as soon as these were gone, they began to have dealings with the evil peoples of the land, to intermarry with them, and presently even to worship their idols. Our first efforts to lead a spiritual life have a certain zeal which carries us along. Joshua — the truth fighting — is alive in us, our leader; the many instances in which the Lord has helped us in temptation are fresh in our memories. Then we gain a measure of victory; we taste the satisfaction of living from spiritual motives; we feel that we are settled in the right way and may relax our vigilance. We forget that we have not completely destroyed the enemies which we have subdued, but have merely, as it were, put them to tribute. And while we rest on our laurels, confident in our newfound security and peace, these enemies begin to stir again and to gain strength. This is the period of the Judges. The keynote of this period is found in Judges 17:6: "In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes."

In the story of Gideon, we have again impressed upon us — though in a new form - the lesson of the necessity of humility, obedience, and courage. The enemy this time is Midian. Swedenborg links Midian in a good sense with those of his own day who were brought up in the doctrine of faith alone and believed it because it was taught them by the church, and yet were in a good state of life. In a bad sense the Midianites, he says, are those who are in "truth which was not truth because there was no good of life." Sometimes, after a period of apparent security in our relations to the Lord, we are suddenly overwhelmed by an attack from without. This may perhaps take the form of ridicule from some person who seems to know a great deal more about the Bible than we do and uses the very stories which we have loved and reverenced against us as weapons to break down our faith, appealing to so-called "common sense" to support his attack. Thus our childhood's knowledge is made to raise doubts in our minds. Those of us who have skeptics among our acquaintances become very familiar with the attacks of the Midianites.

The angel of the Lord came to Gideon as he was threshing wheat in the winepress to hide it from the Midianites. Gideon was of the tribe of Manasseh, the tribe which represents love of the neighbor coming from its true source, the Lord, and expressing itself in the outward life. Gideon

acknowledged himself to be the least in the tribe, but he was found trying to preserve some wheat — some genuine good — from the Midianites. Even a very small amount of such genuine love can be used by the Lord to destroy the Midianites "as one man" if we will be faithful and brave. Gideon received the sign of fire from heaven consuming his offering as a proof that the Lord's power would be with him. His first act after that was to destroy the altar of Baal (Baal, like Babylon, represents the love of dominion from the love of self) which had been set up by his own father. Next he built an altar to the Lord in its place. After this he received the further signs of the dew on the fleece and on the ground, which picture the fact that the Lord is with all our genuine efforts to be good, whether these efforts seem to succeed or not. When we are attacked by the Midianites, the first thing necessary is the admission of our own weakness and need of help from the Lord. The second is that we see that what stands in our way is the altar to Baal in our minds; that is, when we find it hard to meet and overcome ridicule and worldly reasoning, it is because we really care more about what people around us think of us than we do about what the Lord thinks of us. Once we see and overthrow this altar, the Lord can show us the truths we need for our defense. If we can bring ourselves to think of ridicule as a test of our sincerity and courage, the battle is half won, and if we can be armed with truths from the Word with which to meet ridicule, we can go the rest of the way.

It is obvious, even in the letter, that the victory of Gideon teaches the lesson that the power to conquer in temptation comes from the Lord and not from ourselves. The details of the victory suggest the means by which the Lord's power is made effective in us. In addition to his own tribe, Gideon summoned men from the three northernmost tribes — representing truth to fight against falsity. Then all those who were afraid were sent home; we must put aside fear of failure and fear of consequences when we enter upon the Lord's battles. Finally only those who stooped and drank hastily at the spring, lapping water from their hands as a dog laps, were chosen to win the victory. This suggests that the battle with the Midianites calls for speed and zeal and our quickest wits to select hastily the truths which will answer our present external need for arguments. The army was divided into three parts, picturing attack on all three planes of heart, mind, and conduct; and it was placed so as to surround the enemy and made use of no ordinary weapons of warfare. The ordinary campaign of argument and reasoning cannot be used against those who employ ridicule or against the influence of such attacks in our own minds. These enemies must be attacked suddenly, upon all sides, and with weapons which are not generally thought of as weapons. Trumpets represent the power of the Lord speaking through the Word, and the torches within the pitchers are the truth which is hidden within the letter of the Word, truth which can flash out suddenly from an apparently dark or obscure verse.

The Midianites were thrown into confusion and destroyed each other in the darkness. The attack of those who ridicule faith in the Lord and the Word as childish can often be routed by a bombardment of simple quotations from the Scriptures which come from different angles of thought. Such an attack is always unexpected. The Lord's truth shines forth where they were convinced all was darkness; His power is manifest in one they thought an easy prey. They are thrown into confusion, and if they try to answer they destroy their own strength by self-contradiction.

We have the Lord's own example to follow here. Three times He answered the tempter by a simple quotation from the Scriptures, and again and again He put the scribes and Pharisees to rout in the same way. Study Matthew 22:23-46 for a wonderful illustration of this method. If we will think about what we read in the Word and memorize striking verses, we can all arm ourselves with Gideon's lamps and pitchers and trumpets. Verses like the following come to mind:

The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. (Psalm 14:1)

For lo, the wicked bend their bow, they make ready their arrow upon the string, that they may privily shoot at the upright in heart. (Psalm 11:2)

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways, saith the Lord. (Isaiah 55:8)

## 56:JEPHTHAH — Judges 11

### INTRO

The lesson should be prefaced by a reminder of Joshua's conquest of the whole land and its division among the tribes. Then should follow a statement of the conditions which prevailed during the period of the Judges, emphasizing the reason why the enemies in the land gained in strength. In the lesson for the day, Jephthah's rash vow may be compared with Joshua's hasty acceptance of the Gibeonites. Teachers of all classes should study the Adult notes as a preparation for answering questions which may be asked concerning Jephthah's daughter.

### Adult

Probably the best line of discussion is that of the constant pressure of the world about us and the ease with which we sometimes are led astray. The mistakes into which we may be led by thinking of good in terms of merely external benefactions is an important point also. The whole problem of Jephthah's daughter is interesting both in the letter and in the internal sense. The teacher will find various approaches to it in the notes for the other classes.

The period of the Judges is that time in our lives when we have set our outward conduct in order and made enough headway against our deeper temptations so that we feel that we are well established in spiritual living. Our tendency then is to relax our vigilance, to yield a little here and there to the thought and practice of the world about us. We do not realize how easy it is to slip back gradually into evils once we have begun to compromise. After the Israelites had conquered and divided the land and settled down every man under his own vine and fig tree, they stopped fighting the enemies around them and began to mingle with them instead. So they grew weaker and their enemies grew stronger. One after another they rose up and tried to throw off the yoke which Israel under Joshua had imposed upon them. The Judges whom the Lord raised up to meet these enemies were local leaders — Deborah, Gideon, Samson, and others. They represent particular truths from the Word which the Lord calls up from our memories when we are tempted, realize our own weakness, and turn to Him for help.

Most of the enemies and most of the Judges were in the Holy Land proper, but in our lesson for today the enemy comes from the cross-Jordan country. The Judge is from that country also, and the fighting is done there. This would indicate that the temptation pictured is an external one, and one which may be met and overcome by means of the simple truths of the letter of the Word. As we learn in Jephthah's message to the king of the children of Ammon, the Israelites took this land from the Amorites (see also Numbers 21:21-24), who represent evil in general. Between this country and the desert, on the southeastern and eastern borders of Reuben and Gad, lived the Moabites and the Ammonites, the descendants of Lot (Genesis 19). We remember that when Abraham and Lot came

up out of Egypt to settle in the land, Lot, who represents the sensuous or, as Swedenborg puts it in @AC 1547, "the external man and his pleasures which are of sensuous things," chose the Jordan valley as his home, and this led him into serious dangers. Like Lot, the sensuous plane of our minds stands in a precarious position. It is closely related to the higher planes and is a necessary part of us, but it is always attracted by external beauties and pleasures and is easily led astray through them. Moab and Ammon, the incestuous sons of Lot, represent departures from the true order of the sensuous, the adulteration of good and truth on the sensuous plane. In @AC 2468 Swedenborg speaks of them as denoting "those who are in an external worship which appears in a manner holy, but who are not in internal worship; and who readily learn as being goods and truths the things that belong to external worship, but reject and despise those of internal worship." He makes the further enlightening statement that "such worship and such religion fall to the lot of those who are in natural good, but despise others in comparison with themselves."

In our story they are now attacking Gilead. Gilead is the name given to a considerable portion of the more mountainous country east of the Jordan and parallel to it, from the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea, the inheritance of the tribe of Gad. Gad, we are told, represents in a good sense the "good of life," or good conduct springing from love to the Lord and based upon true doctrine (@AE 435). In @AC 4117[3] it is said that Gilead signifies "the first good, which is that of the senses of the body; for it is the good or the pleasure of these into which the man who is being regenerated is first of all initiated." In @AE 654[44] we are told that Gilead signifies, among other things, "reasonings from the sense of the letter of the Word." Thus in the chapter we are studying we have a picture of the outward life of the man who is regenerating, his conduct, his pleasures, and his worship all open to view and constantly subject to attack and especially subject to the temptation to compromise with evil, that "adulteration of truth" represented by the sons of Ammon (@DSS 183).

This temptation takes countless forms, but in substance it is perhaps this: So long as I support the church, attend worship regularly, give to the poor, etc., I'm a pretty good sort of person; standards of morality and of taste change; things that would have shocked people fifty years ago are perfectly all right now; one can't be prudish and have a good time; if I don't get ahead of the other fellow in business, he'll get ahead of me; why, doesn't even the Bible say, "Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness"? We argue with ourselves and with others in this way and presently we find that we have lost the power to judge clearly as to what is really right and wrong in conduct — we are helpless before the Ammonites. The man who is raised up as Judge in our story is not even a legitimate son of Gilead, but is one who has been cast out by his brethren and has gone to live apart. Swedenborg gives us no interpretation for Jephthah. The name itself means "an opposer" or "one who opens." We can think of him perhaps as representing some simple truth which has come to us through our sense experiences in their contact with false and worldly standards which the Lord can disentangle from the network of worldly reasonings into which we have fallen and can make the instrument of our deliverance.

Jephthah's oath pictures a recognition of what victory over the Ammonites involves. When we are fighting the temptation to compromise with worldly standards of conduct, we cannot hope for victory unless we are willing to give up particular indulgences which the Lord shows us to be wrong. Jephthah vowed to sacrifice as a burnt offering to the Lord "whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon." Jephthah, the mighty man of valor, performed his vow, even though it cost the life of his only daughter. When we enter the conflict with the Ammonites genuinely, it often seems as though the one sacrifice required of us is the thing dearest of all to our hearts. The same lesson in a less external conflict is taught in

the story of Abraham's temptation to sacrifice Isaac (Genesis 22). The fact that Abraham's sacrifice was prevented and Jephthah's was not\* suggests that Jephthah's daughter pictures an affection of self-love, which should be given up — although of course the burnt offering itself is in the internal sense an act not of destruction but of consecration through love to the Lord.

[\*Samuel Noble argued against this conclusion. See his Plenary Inspiration, pp. 475ff. and Appendix VI. See also his Sermons on Judges, sermons 18-20. -Editor]

The moral question involved in the letter of the story of Jephthah is paramount in most non—New Church commentaries. Did Jephthah do right in keeping a rash vow? The first and most obvious comment is that we should not make rash promises. The Lord says: "But I say unto you, Swear not at all ... But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil." (Matthew 5:32, 37)

In @AE 608 Swedenborg tells us that "Oaths are made by those who are not interior, but exterior men," and that the angels regard an oath as abhorrent, since it insults the integrity of one's motives. A promise is a serious thing, not to be lightly made and not to be lightly broken. But if one has been made which proves to be a foolish one, we have the problem of choosing, not between right and wrong, but between two evils; and it is right to choose the lesser. If keeping the promise involves only inconvenience to ourselves, it will perhaps serve us as a lesson and keep us from trouble later. But if it involves danger, injury, or even inconvenience to others, we may do less harm if we acknowledge our folly frankly and accept the blame and the loss of confidence resulting from a broken promise. Parents should not form the habit of constantly exacting promises from their children, and they should not allow their children to enter into pledges which they do not fully understand and whose consequences they cannot possibly foresee.

## 57:SAMSON — Judges 14

### INTRO

There is a very practical lesson in this lesson for every age, and the story of Samson himself illustrates the danger of carelessness and self-confidence, and our constant need of the Lord's guidance and protection. All the classes should be taught that Samson's strength was in his hair, and even the little ones can get some idea of the meaning of Samson's riddle. There is happiness in doing right.

### Adult

Good discussion topics are the meaning of the period of the Judges, Samson's riddle, Samson's strength and weakness, and the Philistine temptation. Swedenborg's teaching that the letter of the Word is the "basis, containant, and support" of all our spiritual knowledge and power is one which we particularly need.

The Israelites, before they moved out to take possession of their allotted homes in the Holy Land, had been charged by Joshua to continue in their own territories the fight against the enemies who remained there, and to root them out. The first chapter of the book of Judges tells us how far short all the tribes fell of fulfilling this charge. Only one individual — Caleb — seems to have made a

complete conquest of his inheritance. In @AE 768[21] we learn that Caleb represents "those who are to be introduced into the church." (In @AC 2909 we find a brief and very interesting summary of the history of Hebron and its meaning.) The rest of the people were too much interested in making themselves comfortable in their new homes to worry about enemies who appeared to be no longer threatening. The book of Judges teaches us that even after we have begun to regenerate, we cannot assume that we have reached a state in which we can settle down confident of our own spiritual security. Read Matthew 24:43. Self-confidence always betrays us. "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall." (Proverbs 16:18) Our inner foes gain strength, and we suddenly find ourselves in the throes of temptation again. It may take us some time to learn this lesson. The period of the Judges lasted about two hundred years. We recall that the Judges were not rulers of the whole people but local leaders raised up by the Lord to meet the various enemies in one part of the country or another. They represent particular truths called to our attention by the Lord to help us fight particular temptations. We have already studied Deborah, Gideon, and Jephthah.

Our lesson today is about Samson, one of the Judges, and his exploits against the Philistines. The Philistines, as we recall from our lesson on Isaac and Abimelech, were a people who lived along the western border of the Holy Land. Authorities differ as to their origin. One suggests that they were pirates of ancient Aryan stock, who forced themselves upon the Canaanites and settled permanently in the land. Genesis 10:14 makes them descendants of Ham, and they were a settled people in the time of Abraham. Abraham and Isaac both spent some time in the Philistine country and made treaties with them. At the time of the Exodus the Israelites were not allowed to go by the "way of the Philistines" (Exodus 13:17). From time to time throughout the history of Israel, the Philistines caused trouble. The Israelites often chastised them and even captured some of their strong cities, but never wholly overcame them. The story suggests an ever-present enemy to our spiritual peace, one with whom we are often tempted to compromise and against whom we must always be on our guard.

Swedenborg leaves us in no doubt as to what this enemy is. The Philistines, he says, represent those who are in the "knowledge of the knowledges of faith and charity," those in faith separated from charity, with whom "the knowledge of the knowledges of faith is the principal thing, but not a life according to it; consequently those who teach and believe that faith alone saves" (@AC 8093). The doctrine of faith alone was a widely accepted doctrine of the Protestant Reformation. Even Luther felt forced to adopt it in order to have a basis for separation from the Roman system, and in the course of time apparently argued himself into a belief in it. It has wrought tremendous havoc in the Christian world, and Swedenborg has much to say of its effects both in this world and in the spiritual world. Practically, it means that it makes no difference what we do so long as we acknowledge Christ and look to Him for salvation. We sometimes hear it said that this doctrine is no longer held today, but this is not true. Many still hold it even in its bald general form. But further than this, there are many less obvious manifestations of it, and none of us is wholly free from some form of it. For instance, whenever we go to church and come away critical of others and not equally dissatisfied with ourselves, we may know that the Philistines are upon us. Self-righteousness and the pride of self-intelligence are the earmarks of faith alone. For the more we know of the Lord and His ways, the more conscious we should be of our own shortcomings; if we are not, it is a sign that we are not genuinely trying to live the truth we learn, that we are satisfied to know without doing. This is the Philistine temptation.

It is significant that Samson, the Judge raised up against the Philistines, was from the tribe of Dan,

for Dan represents the "affirmation and acknowledgment" that we should believe in God and live a good life, which "is the first general principle with the man who is being regenerated." Samson won notable victories over the Philistines. In @DSS 49[2] Swedenborg says: "The Lord's power from the ultimate things of truth was represented by the Nazirites in the Jewish Church; and by Samson, of whom it is said that he was a Nazirite from his mother's womb, and that his power lay in his hair." @AE 619[18] and @AE 1086[2] elaborate this idea, with particular reference to Samson, and specify the sense of the letter of the Word as the ultimate in which the power of divine truth resides. Samson was tempted to ally himself with the Philistines, and was more than once overcome by them. In the same way, our affection for knowledge often leads us astray. We learn a great many things without due thought as to the use this knowledge should perform. This temptation is like the young lion which threatened Samson, and if we overcome it, we are given the joy pictured by the honey which Samson found in the carcass of the lion. This is a joy which comes only from carrying out in life the truth we learn. The Philistines could never have guessed Samson's riddle. No one who is not trying to do right can believe that he would find pleasure in it. Samson fell as a result of his desire for a wife from among the Philistines. We may think he was easily beguiled, but how often we ourselves feel the attraction of "the world, the flesh, and the devil," and take the easy way instead of the right way!

All the details of the story of Samson are interesting in their correspondence and useful in adding point to the lesson. But the principal truth with which we should be impressed is the fact that Samson's power was in his hair. The hair corresponds to the "ultimates of the Divine truth," and thus to the sense of the letter of the Word in which the Lord's power is in its fullness. It was on account of this correspondence that the Israelites were led to think of baldness as a disgrace; that the children who called Elisha "thou baldhead" were torn by bears; that the prophets, including John the Baptist, wore hairy garments; and that the Lord's hair is described so beautifully in the vision of John in Revelation 1:14. The letter of the Word is our only means of conjunction with the Lord and of receiving power from Him. It is through the knowledge of the letter of the Word which we store in our minds that the Lord can speak to us; it is through our reading of the Word that His presence and power can come into our daily lives. The Lord in His Second Coming has opened the Word and made it possible for us by prayerful study and constant application in our lives to understand more and more of the spiritual and celestial things which lie within it. But it is still the letter of the Word which is "the basis, containant, and support" of all we learn. We cannot substitute the spiritual sense for the letter, as Swedenborg himself tells us more than once. Samson's strength went from him when his hair was shaved. So his story contains a special warning for us of the New Church. We should not allow our delight in the new knowledge which is given us to beguile us into becoming separated from the source of all our spiritual strength.

## **58:THE BIRTH OF SAMUEL — 1 Samuel 1; 2:1-11**

### **INTRO**

Review the general character of the period of the Judges and speak of Samuel as the last of the Judges and the only one recognized as leader by the whole land. The story of the child Samuel is so touching and so well known that the work of his later life is often overlooked in our Sunday school teaching.

## **Adult**

There are several good discussion topics here: the disastrous results of self-confidence, particularly upon our worship; the Lord's preservation in us of our good childhood states; the harm we do to others as well as to ourselves when we neglect or misuse our worship; the meaning of the Lord's words about becoming as a little child; and the difference between the innocence of ignorance and the innocence of wisdom.

With the first book of Samuel we come to a new stage in the history of the church or of the person who is trying to live the regenerate life. The wars in the book of Judges picture the various temptations which assail those who have found their home in the Holy Land — that is, who have become settled in the desire and practice of living according to divine laws — but who have allowed themselves to become overconfident and careless and to slip back somewhat into the ways of the world about them. These temptations are both external and internal and they take many forms. We yield to them almost unconsciously at first; they grow upon us until we find ourselves subject to them and find we must take active measures against them. In the book of Judges the state of the people becomes worse and worse until, in the last chapters, the tribe of Benjamin — which represents spiritual or interior truth - becomes perverted and is almost destroyed. So sometimes we allow ourselves to "backslide" through constant yielding to small or subtle temptations until we find ourselves in a bad spiritual state and almost robbed of the sense of the internal meaning of life which makes conjunction with the Lord possible. A new beginning must be made if we are to be saved. We must return for a time to a condition of simple trust and obedience and allow this to lead us to a new peak of spiritual living.

The story of the child Samuel has always been one of the best loved of the Bible stories. The Sower beautifully points out its lesson for parents and children of all time. Parents should realize that all children are loaned to them by the Lord to prepare for His service, and should dedicate them to that service as Hannah dedicated Samuel. Children should see in Samuel a beautiful picture of simple trust and obedience and willing service. There are many similarities also between the early life of Samuel and that of the Lord, even to the expression (1 Samuel 2:26), "And the child Samuel grew on, and was in favor both with the Lord, and also with men." Compare this with Luke 2:52.

But the story has a wider application than that to physical childhood. Our childhood states of innocence, trust, and obedience are covered up as we grow older, but they are not lost. No matter how far we have wandered from them, if we realize the barrenness of our state and look to the Lord as Hannah did for a new birth, promising new consecration, the childhood states can be revived in us and lead us to new developments of spiritual living. This is very plainly told to us by the Lord when He says, "Verily, I say unto you, except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 18:3-4) Samuel's early ministry in the tabernacle is a picture of our return to a humble state of mind, in which we read the Word in simplicity, enter into the services of worship with genuine sincerity, and look to the church for guidance, as Samuel looked to Eli. Then we put ourselves in a state in which the Lord can speak to us and prepare the way for new growth. "And Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him" (1 Samuel 3:19).

The picture of the little Samuel is so striking and so touching that the dark background against which it stands out is often overlooked. Eli, the high priest and descendant of Aaron, is an old man

and his sight is dim. He has turned over the conduct of the tabernacle worship to his sons, Hophni and Phinehas, who are "sons of Belial" who "knew not the Lord." They profaned the sacrifices of the people by taking more than their due portion of the offerings and by taking it even before sacrifice was made to the Lord. "Wherefore the sin of the young men was very great before the Lord: for men abhorred the offering of the Lord." (1 Samuel 2:17) Eli is warned by a "man of God" that the priesthood will be taken from his house. He has remonstrated with his sons, but has not exerted his authority to put a stop to their evil practices. He is judged "because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not." This is a picture of a state in which worship is degraded by being used for self-interest and self-exaltation, and when the high priest in us — that inner dictate which relates us to the Lord - does not take steps to correct the evil, although it sees it.\* It has become dim of sight and is no longer able to receive directly the voice of the Lord. In 1 Samuel 2:17, quoted above, there is the suggestion of the harm which such a state does to others as well as to ourselves. Many people are turned against the church by the self-seeking and hypocrisy they see in some of its members. Our duty to keep our worship sincere and to live according to the teachings of the church is not for our own salvation alone. The Lord's service requires of us constant watchfulness and ever-renewed devotion. We must be on our guard against the thought that we are "saved" and cannot go astray as others may.

[\*This was also clearly the condition of the church when the Lord came into the world, and it is interesting to note that one of the two members of the Sanhedrin who accepted the Lord came from Samuel's birthplace. These two — Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, who like Eli did not "for fear of the Jews" oppose their worldly associates — were simple in heart and able to recognize and cherish the Messiah (John 19:38-42). Arimathea is a later form of Ramathaimzophim. The word means "twin watchtowers," suggesting an ability to lift the thought above the level of the world because goodness is united to truth.]

The Lord, in the letter of the Word, had promised the priesthood to Aaron, and his seed forever. Now He takes it from them. "I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me for ever; but now the Lord saith, Be it far from me; for them that honor me I will honor, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed." (1 Samuel 2:30) This degenerate state of worship is contrasted directly with the simple obedient service of Samuel, to whom the Lord can speak. Samuel's parents, like Mary and Joseph, were among those who made the prescribed pilgrimages to the tabernacle regardless of the corruption of the priesthood. They represent in us the remains of the sincere desire to serve the Lord from which a new beginning must come. In comparison with our more sophisticated worldly attitudes toward the church they are ignorant; but they have the fundamentals of true religion, humility and obedience. In @AC 9325[8] there is an interesting statement of this thought in reference to the church in connection with Hannah's prophecy (1 Samuel 2:5): "By 'the barren' are also signified those who are not in good because not in truths, and yet long for truths that they may be in good; as is the case with the upright nations outside the church; as in [Isaiah 54:1, Psalm 113:7-9, 1 Samuel 2:5]. In the above passages by 'the barren' are meant the Gentiles who are summoned to the church, and to whom the church is transferred when the old church ceases, that is, when those who before had been of the church are no longer in faith, because in no charity ... 'To bear seven' denotes to be regenerated to the full."

All the beautiful stories of children throughout the Bible teach this same lesson. Humility and obedience are the only means of conjunction with the Lord. "And the Lord appeared again in Shiloh: for the Lord revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the Lord."

# 59:The Lord Calls Samuel — 1 Samuel 3

## Adult

If there are parents of young children in the class, the first subject to be discussed should be the importance of bringing children up to serve the Lord. Then speak of the state into which the tabernacle worship had fallen, and call attention to its counterpart in the time of the Lord and in our own time. Finally the doctrine of remains and the necessity of simple obedience as a basis for all religious progress will make a good discussion topic. Our modern world is too much given to excusing the breaking of the commandments.

With the first book of Samuel we come to a new stage in the history of the church or of the man who is trying to live the regenerate life. The wars in the book of Judges picture various temptations which assail those who have found their homes in the Holy Land, that is, those who have become settled in the desire and practice of living according to divine law. These temptations are both external and internal and take many forms. We yield to them at first almost unconsciously and they grow upon us until we find ourselves subject to them and realize that we must ask the Lord's help in taking active measures against them. In the book of Judges the state of the people became worse and worse, until, for example, the tribe of Benjamin, which represents spiritual or interior truth, became perverted and was almost destroyed. So sometimes we allow ourselves to "backslide" through constant yielding to small or subtle temptations until we find ourselves in a bad spiritual state and almost robbed of the sense of the internal meaning of life which makes conjunction with the Lord possible. A new beginning must be made if we are to be saved. We must return for a time to a condition of simple trust and obedience and allow this to lead us to a new peak of spiritual living.

The story of the child Samuel has always been one of the best loved of the Bible stories. Parents should realize that all children are loaned to them by the Lord to prepare for His service, and should dedicate them to that service, as Hannah dedicated Samuel. And children should see in Samuel a beautiful example of simple trust and obedience and willing service. There are also many similarities between the early life of Samuel and that of the Lord, even to the expression, "And the child Samuel grew on, and was in favor both with the Lord and also with men." (1 Samuel 2:26) Compare this with Luke 2:52.

But the story has a wider application than that to physical childhood. Our childhood states of innocence, trust, and obedience are covered up as we grow older, but they are not lost. The Lord stores them up deep within us as the "remains" of which we read in the writings. No matter how far we may have wandered from them, if we realize the barrenness of our state and look to the Lord for a new birth as Hannah did, promising new consecration, the childhood states can be revived in us and lead us to new and higher spiritual development. This is very plainly told us by the Lord when He says: "Verily, I say unto you, except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 18:3,4) Samuel's early ministry in the tabernacle is a picture of our return to a humble state of mind, in which we read the Word in simplicity, enter into the services of worship with genuine sincerity, and look to the church for guidance, as Samuel looked to Eli. Then we put ourselves in a state in which the Lord can speak to us, and prepare the way for new growth. "And Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him."

The picture of the little Samuel is so striking and so touching that the dark background against which it stands out is often overlooked. Eli, the high priest, the descendant of Aaron, is an old man and his sight is dim. He has turned over the conduct of the tabernacle worship to his sons, Hophni and Phinehas, who are "sons of Belial" and who "knew not the Lord." They profaned the sacrifices of the people by taking more than their due portion and by taking it even before the sacrifice was made to the Lord. "Wherefore the sin of the young men was very great before the Lord; for men abhorred the offering of the Lord." (1 Samuel 2:17)

Eli is warned by a "man of God" that the priesthood shall be taken from his house. He has remonstrated with his sons, but has not exerted himself to put a stop to their evil practices. He is therefore judged "because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not." This is a picture of a state in which worship is being degraded by being used for self-interest and self-exaltation. Although the high priest in us — the inner dictate which relates us to the Lord - sees the evil and condemns it, it does not take steps to correct it. It has become dim of sight and is no longer able to receive directly the voice of the Lord. In 1 Samuel 2:17, quoted above, there is the suggestion of the harm which such a state does to others as well as to ourselves. Sometimes people have been turned against the church by finding self-seeking and hypocrisy in some of its members. Our duty to keep our worship sincere and to live according to the teachings of the church is not for our own salvation alone. The Lord's service requires of us constant watchfulness and ever-renewed devotion. We must be on our guard against the thought that we are "saved" and cannot go astray as others may. The Lord, in the letter of the Word, had promised the priesthood to Aaron and his seed forever, but the descendants of either of Aaron's two sons, Eleazar and Ithamar, were eligible (cf. 1 Chronicles 24:1-3). Now the Lord takes it from the house of Eli: "I said indeed that thy house and the house of thy father, should walk before me for ever: but now the Lord saith, Be it far from me; for them that honor me I will honor, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed." (1 Samuel 2:30)

This degenerate state of worship is contrasted directly with the simple, obedient service of Samuel, to whom the Lord can speak. The child Samuel is called by the Lord in the night three times. The night is the state of the church at that time. Three, as we know, represents a full state in which all three planes of life are conjoined. This teaches us an important lesson. We may read the Word and take in its literal meaning through our physical senses and stop there; this is the first call — we think the message is from men. But we may go on to meditate upon it and come to see it with our rational mind; this is the second call. We may still imagine we are merely hearing the voice of the church. It is not our will that is reached as yet. But if we hear the third call, we may then know we are hearing in the Word the voice of the Lord speaking directly to us, and that we should answer, as did Samuel, "Speak; for thy servant heareth."

Hearing represents obedience. In the story, Samuel was given his name because his mother felt that God had heard her prayer. The name Samuel means "God hath heard." Hearing — obedience — is the keynote of Samuel's whole life and work. We recall that Moses also represents obedience to the law, but he is obedience in its first aspects, when it is prompted somewhat by the desire for worldly honor and rewards, and at best by a sense of duty. The Israelites have come a long way since the time of Moses. They have gained the Holy Land. But in their satisfaction with their success they have allowed themselves to forget the fundamental requirement — obedience. They had to be brought back to obedience before they could progress further. It is a lesson we all need again and again.

# **60:THE CAPTURE AND RETURN OF THE ARK**

## **— 1 Samuel 4:1-11; 5; 6:1-16**

### **INTRO**

Review briefly the general character of the period of the Judges and the difference between them and the former great leaders who had been over all the people. The teachers should be prepared to give a brief review of Samuel's birth and call, first letting the pupils tell what they know about it.

### **Adult**

The "Philistine state" and the relation of the commandments to it should furnish an excellent basis for discussion, with the details of the story introduced by way of enlightenment and emphasis as you proceed. They are very forceful brought in this way rather than told in story form.

The first book of Samuel tells us about the end of the state of life pictured in the book of Judges and the beginning of a better ordered and directed life, beginning, as it does, with the birth of Samuel and continuing through the whole reign of Saul.

Samuel was the last of the Judges and the only one who came to be recognized by the whole nation as their divinely appointed mentor. In 1 Samuel 3:20 we read, "And all Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord." We are all familiar with the story of the child Samuel and realize that he represents a calling forth in us of "remains" - states of innocence and trust from our own early childhood — to which we must return if we are ever to break away from our self-confidence and pride in our own intelligence and come again under the direction and protection of the Lord. Samuel's call carried with it a condemnation of the current high priest Eli because he had allowed corruption to creep into the very worship of the tabernacle.

In today's lesson the Lord's prophecy to Samuel is fulfilled and we have the culmination of the state which had been developing throughout the book of Judges. Eli and his sons die, and the ark is captured by the Philistines.

In @AE 700 Swedenborg says: "The Philistines conquered when the sons of Israel departed from the statutes and precepts in not doing them." And in 1 Samuel 7:3 Samuel tells the Israelites how they can conquer: "If ye do return unto the Lord with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the Lord, and serve Him only." The Israelites had thought to turn the tide of battle by invoking the power of the ark as a sort of fetish, without examining their conduct to see if it had been in accordance with the words written on the tables preserved in the ark. For this reason the ark did not save them. Its being captured by the Philistines was a symbol of what the Israelites had done to the commandments. They had kept the tables in the ark in the Holy of Holies but had not lived them out in their hearts and lives. This is exactly the Philistine state of knowledge separated from the good of life. The priesthood of Eli and his house perished because, while continuing the formal worship of the Lord, it permitted abuses to creep in, even to the setting up of other gods. It is the same with us whenever we continue going to church and taking our part in the Christian group to which we belong, yet at heart allow ourselves to be led astray into following worldly objectives and indulging in selfish practices: the

commandments are still nominally our rules of life, but they are really only in our memories and have no vital connection with our thought and conduct. Our "ark" is captured by the "Philistines."

But our ark cannot remain with the Philistines. The very knowledge of the commandments, if we are doing things contrary to them, will plague us by showing us plainly the ugliness of what we are thinking and doing. The plagues of tumors and of mice were merely the manifestations of the evils into which the people had fallen, habits of sensual living which, as Swedenborg says, "eat up and consume all things of the church." The Philistines represent "those who are in the memory-knowledge of the knowledges of faith, and are not in a life of charity" (@AC 8093). The Philistine state is the state into which we come when we stubbornly persist from day to day in doing what we find pleasant and convenient instead of looking to the Lord for guidance and applying His laws — which we know — in our thought and conduct. Dagon, the god of the Philistines, had the body of a fish and the head and hands of a man. We recall that fish represent affection for knowledges. So the breaking off of the head and hands of Dagon by the presence of the ark, leaving only his fish body, is an interesting picture of the effect of the commandments in showing us our own Philistinism.

How often also, when our knowledge of the commandments rebukes us and shows us our evils, we move them about from place to place in our minds (as the Philistines moved the ark from Ashdod to Gath and from Gath to Ekron) trying to find some abiding place for them where they will be quiescent and cause us no discomfort! But wherever they go, their power exerts itself to reveal hidden sins, until we realize that only by restoring them to their rightful place in our lives can we have peace.

Swedenborg gives us the correspondence of the return of the ark in considerable detail in several places: in @TCR 203, @DP 326[12], and especially in @AE 700, as well as fragmentarily in other passages. When the Philistines determined to return the ark, they called for their diviners to tell them how to go about it. This recalls the story of Balak and Balaam. The fact that the diviners employed correspondences shows that the knowledge of these persisted in Philistia as well as in the eastern country. The golden emerods and the golden mice which were to be returned with the ark are symbols of the renunciation of the evils which the ark had exposed. They are called a trespass offering and involve the recognition of sin and the intention of putting love to the Lord and the neighbor in place of self-love as the motive of our outward conduct. The new cart is a "new but natural doctrine." The Sower suggests that it may be a new acknowledgment of the duty of carrying out the commandments in life. The milk cows on which no yokes had come are good natural affections "not yet defiled by falsities." It is not easy to separate these natural affections from the worldly objects upon which they have been fixed, and this reluctance is represented by the shutting up of the calves at home and the lowing of the cows. We may find an example of this in the difficulty we all find in learning to do good to others without any thought of the gratitude and praise we may receive, or to take our part in the work of our church without expecting everyone else to approve and follow our methods and example.

The cows, under the urging of the divine power of the ark, drew the cart on the road straight to Bethshemesh. Bethshemesh was the nearest of the Levitical towns, where the men had the right to lift the ark from the cart and to make the sacrifice of the cows with the wood from the cart. Spiritually this means that when we do acknowledge our evils and submit to the guidance of the commandments, they gradually resume their true place in our lives, and our natural affections and natural ways of thinking are consecrated to the Lord's service. We may note here that the ark never returned to Shiloh, but passed from city to city until David finally restored it to its place in the Holy of Holies in the new tabernacle which he set up for it in Jerusalem. When we have fallen into the

Philistine state, we can never return to exactly the same simple attitude toward the commandments which we had in the period of our early zeal, but if we persist in submitting to their guidance, they will gradually be restored to the central position in our lives and again be written on our hearts, with a new understanding of their force and application.

## 61:ASKING FOR A KING — 1 Samuel 8

### INTRO

In all classes the difference between Samuel and all the Judges who preceded him should be made clear, and Samuel's birth and call should be covered briefly.

### Adult

The quotations given with the Adult notes should provide ample discussion material. We shall continue our consideration of Samuel in lessons which follow, but his relation to the proposed king — the fact that he continued to be the Lord's prophet, so recognized by all the people — should be stressed.

Our spiritual life advances in cycles. Our lesson for today marks another beginning — a transition from one cycle to another — characterized by the familiar choice of truth rather than good. In this story we do not have the simple picture of the older and younger brothers. The choice is more subtle and complex, for Samuel retains his actual control even though the king apparently supplants him.

We are all very familiar with the story of Samuel's birth and call, but we do not always stop to think of his actual position in the Bible story. Because his story does not begin in the book of Judges, we are likely to forget that he was actually the last Judge. And because we think of the period of the Kings as immediately following that of the Judges, we forget that Samuel overlapped the period of Kings, that he lived to anoint the second King, David, and that the second book of Samuel takes us almost to the end of David's reign. This is an illustration of the fact that changes are never sudden either in the Word or in life. They may sometimes seem sudden to us, but on the Lord's part there is always foresight and preparation, and the Lord helps us to adjust to new conditions.

It is rather curious that, in spite of the fact that two books of the Word bear Samuel's name, there are only a few brief mentions of Samuel in the writings. We are told in @AE 750[21] that Moses and Samuel "in the representative sense signify the Word." This confirms a point which seems obvious from the letter, since Samuel was Judge over the whole nation, whereas his predecessors — who, as we remember, represent particular truths — were local Judges. We also recognize easily from the letter that Samuel's influence was religious rather than military, although he was the spokesman of the Lord in the battles fought during his lifetime.

The writings do give us, however, in two places a clear picture of Samuel's function. In @AC 6148 we read: "The Divine good was represented by priests, and the Divine truth by kings ... In the Ancient Representative Church the priesthood and the royalty were joined together in one person, because the good and truth which proceed from the Lord are united, and in heaven with the angels are also joined together ... Moreover as a representative church was instituted with the posterity of

Jacob, therefore in one person conjointly was represented the Divine good and the Divine truth which proceed united from the Lord. But on account of the wars and of the idolatry of that people, these two offices were at first divided, and they who ruled over the people were called 'leaders', and afterward 'judges'; while they who officiated in holy things were called 'priests', and were of the seed of Aaron, and Levites. Yet afterward these two offices were joined together in one person, as in Eli and in Samuel." It is evident, therefore, that Samuel, although not a Levite, was considered a priest as well as a Judge. We know from 1 Samuel 3:20 that he was early recognized by all the people to be a "prophet of the Lord."

The period of the Judges culminated in Samuel. The people, after a bitter experience during about two hundred years of trying to get along without divine leadership, had finally come back to united worship of the Lord. Samuel, as we know, was brought up in the tabernacle at Shiloh, and his later home was at Ramah, also in the center of the land. From there he went out to other towns in a circuit to judge the people. Yet we recall that in Samuel's childhood the ark had been taken out of the tabernacle and had been captured by the Philistines in battle; and that although it had been returned to Israel, it had never been replaced in the tabernacle. This suggests the hollowness of the worship which the people now offered. This is confirmed in the continuation of @AC 6148[5]:

"But because the people were of such a character that a representative church could not be instituted among them, but only the representative of a church, by reason of the idolatrous disposition which prevailed among them, therefore it was permitted that the two offices should be separated, and that the Lord as to Divine truth should be represented by kings, and as to Divine good by priests. That this was done at the will of the people, and not of the Lord's good pleasure, is manifest from the word of Jehovah unto Samuel (1 Samuel 8:7 ff. and 12:19, 20)." The people wanted to worship the Lord not in childlike trust and obedience — which the sole leadership of Samuel represented — but in order that they might be "like all the nations" and overcome their enemies by their armed strength.

@AC 6148[6] gives us further light on our chapter: "Divine truth separated from Divine good condemns everyone; whereas Divine truth united to Divine good saves. For from Divine truth man is condemned to hell, but by the Divine good he is taken out therefrom, and is elevated into heaven. Salvation is of mercy, thus from the Divine good; but damnation is when man refuses mercy, and thus rejects from himself the Divine good; wherefore he is left to judgment from truth." And @AE 2015[11] (see below) uses this same thought to explain why the Lord told Samuel to tell the people "the manner of a king" they would have if they persisted in their desire. All the demands which are mentioned in verses 11 to 18 of our chapter picture the demands which truth separated from good makes upon us.

The explanation of this chapter given us in these passages from the writings is given as to the internal historical sense, showing the application of the chapter to the history of the Jewish Church, but it is not difficult to transfer this explanation to our individual lives. We have seen that the period of the Judges pictures the time in our lives when we believe ourselves to be established in the regenerate life and think we can rest on our oars and enjoy ourselves without further struggle against temptation. The results are disastrous and in time we have to return to the admission of our own evils and weakness and our dependence upon the Lord. This admission, in its first form, takes on the appearance of a return to our childhood state of simple trust and obedience. Samuel, the Lord's prophet, becomes our leader. But we are not actually children. The time of the innocence of ignorance is long past and we still have a long way to go before we attain the innocence of wisdom. We want to see and understand for ourselves the religious principle we shall follow. And the Lord

never interferes with our freedom of choice. He adapts His unseen government to our wayward state and lets us have our king, but with a clear warning of the sacrifices which will be required of us by the principle He foresees we will adopt.

## 62:THE CHOOSING OF SAUL — 1 Samuel 9; 10

### INTRO

All but the youngest children should be able to tell about the characteristics of the period of the Judges and why the people were always getting into trouble in that period. The teacher in his preparation for the lesson should reread 1 Samuel 8 and be able to give the class this background for the lesson. Be sure the children understand that Samuel is now an old man and a very great man, who speaks to the people for the Lord — a prophet or "seer."

### Adult

This lesson with the Adults may well be geared to improving the underlying attitude of the older people in the church toward the younger people. In many even of our own societies there is a cleavage between the two groups which is damaging to both and to the church as a whole, and which need not exist if the older people have understanding and patience.

With this lesson we enter a new phase of ancient Hebrew history, and we should have the general outline of the history to this point in mind, beginning with the patriarchal leadership of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob which in the individual life pictures the period of infancy, childhood, and early youth, when we are under the control of our parents albeit with ever-increasing understanding and initiative of our own. After the sojourn in Egypt a new type of leadership is introduced in Moses, who represents the Law. This is a period of self-compulsion which lasts until, by experience, we are so convinced of the effectiveness of an orderly life and the disastrous results of disobedience that external obedience to the commandments has become a matter of course in all ordinary affairs. Then we are ready to take the next step and attack the evils in our inner lives. Joshua comes to the fore — the truth fighting — and we follow him until we feel that we are really established in the good life — until the Holy Land is conquered.

But the book of Judges shows us that the conquest is not complete. As soon as we cease to examine ourselves and to fight temptation, our enemies both within and without begin to gain strength again and our lives become a series of battles waged under the leadership of one or another truth, represented by the various Judges, with periods of rest between. Throughout all the time from Moses to the end of the book of Judges the office of priest is separate from the office of leader, the priest representing good and the leader truth. So far as they work together the leadership of the people is sound, but if they are out of harmony — if either is corrupt — disorganization and disaster result. In Samuel the two offices are for a time united, but presently we read: "It came to pass, when Samuel was old, that he made his sons judges over Israel." And his sons were corrupt. Here we have the lesson of the necessity of constant watchfulness; our own ideas creep in and corrupt the divine order in which we think we are established. A new beginning must be made.

The desire for a king can be most easily illustrated from the experience of young people. They are often genuinely perplexed by their parents' reaction to their conduct. "Why should my mother

allow this thing and forbid that? I can't see that there is more harm in the one than in the other. How can I tell what I ought to do?" It is the demand for a constant principle of action which will apply to all cases. They have reached the point where they wish to be able to judge for themselves what they ought and ought not to do. They do not want to be always asking permission. This is a natural development. The Lord foresaw its expression in the history of Israel. In Deuteronomy 17:14-20 it is foretold that Israel will demand a king, and the people are commanded to take the king whom the Lord shall choose.

There is an element of loss in this desire for independence from priestly authority. The celestial state desires nothing else than to look to the Lord as a little child to his parent. Self-dependence, even when the desire is to obey the truth, involves ignorance, mistakes, and disasters. Loving and wise parents often sigh when their children reach this stage, as Samuel disliked and feared the change. Yet it is a natural stage, and the Lord has provided for it. The Lord told Samuel to let the people have their way but to warn them that life under a king would not be easy. A king represents truth judging, apart from good, and truth apart from good is always a hard master. In @AC 8770[2] Swedenborg makes an interesting distinction; he says that the kingdom of the judges represents the rule of divine truth from divine good; the kingdom of priests who were also judges (Eli and Samuel), the rule of divine good from which is divine truth; but the kingdom of kings, the rule of divine truth without divine good. In @AC 1672, in making the distinction between the meanings of "nation" and "people," he says: "Before the sons of Israel sought for kings, they were a nation, and represented good, or the celestial; but after they desired a king, and received one, they became a people, and did not represent good or the celestial, but truth or the spiritual; which was the reason why this was imputed to them as a fault." See also @AE 2015[11] (below). The Lord tells Samuel, "Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee; for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them." The desire for independent judgment goes deeper than mere rebellion against parental authority; it is rebellion against all authority which is not felt to be self-derived. Parents cannot prevent it; they can only point out the dangers and try to give their children principles in accordance with divine order — the king whom the Lord shall choose.

Saul was the Lord's choice as king. Not only did the Lord tell Samuel to anoint Saul, but the lot taken at Mizpeh fell upon Saul. Yet Saul's time of favor with God was to last only a short time. His victories would be few, and he would prove wholly inadequate to save Israel from most of their enemies. Why did the Lord choose Saul? Why did He not at once choose a David or a Solomon? Because the people were not ready. They would have rejected a wiser leader, while, except for a few "sons of Belial," they accepted Saul gladly. We have said that what young people demand is a consistent principle of action. There is only one such principle — the law of love — but they are not ready for it. We begin to understand and appreciate the law of love only after a lifetime of effort and experience. This may not seem to be so. We like to think we are acting from the law of love when we follow our natural good impulses, and many never outgrow this superficial idea of goodness. But the law of love is the law of divine love, which cannot be separated from divine wisdom. It has nothing to do with our natural impulses or with the outward appearance of things. The people accepted Saul gladly because of his external appearance of superiority. He stood head and shoulders above all the people. They had to learn by experience that he was not adequate to their needs.

Yet Saul had a measure of fitness for his office. He was to conquer some enemies. We cannot expect of young people the wisdom of experience. We can expect them to recognize the Lord and to try to

do the Lord's will as they see it. They will inevitably at first judge by appearances. They will often be misled by specious arguments and apparent results. They do not like to wait for their results. Saul's size and power appeal to them. They must learn by experience — their own experience — in many cases. But we can help to prepare our children for states and experiences beyond their present knowledge, especially by means of these stories from the Word. The Lord did this with His disciples: "And now I have told you before it come to pass, that when it is come to pass, ye might believe." Saul represents divine truth in a natural and external form, suited to the needs and comprehension of certain states through which we all pass in youth and in which we sometimes remain long after we should have grown wiser. "By a king, or by the royalty which belonged to Saul, is signified Divine truth in respect to protection and judgment." (@AC 10540[7]).

## 63:SAUL'S IMPATIENCE — 1 Samuel 13

### INTRO

Samuel, his character and office, forms the link between the period of the judges and that of the kings. The difference between the time of the judges and the time of the kings can be brought out, and the children should get clearly in mind the difference in office between Samuel and Saul and the reason why Samuel really stood above the king and why he had to continue through Saul's reign and until David had gained the confidence of the people. The reason for the people's desire for a king should be pointed out, as well as Samuel's reaction to it and the reason for the Lord's permitting them to have a king even though it was in a sense a rejection of both Samuel and the Lord. In the older classes this should be discussed especially, as it brings out the necessity for our freedom of choice.

### Adult

Here again the Philistine temptation is an important topic, as well as the various aspects of truth presented in the lesson: the Judges, Samuel, the kings, the weapons, and the agricultural implements. The note on verse 21 can well be tied in with the discussion of the meaning of the Philistines.

In 1 Samuel 7:15-17 we learn that Samuel judged Israel "all the days of his life," holding court in a circuit of three towns near the center of the land. Samuel, we recall, represents a necessary return to a childlike state of trust and obedience after we have experienced the unhappy results of trying to direct ourselves. Samuel lived to anoint David as the second king of Israel. His death (1 Samuel 25:1) came before that of Saul but after David had risen to popularity. Samuel, as prophet and judge, represents the Word of the Lord, accepted in childlike faith, instructing and judging us as we pass from a state of reliance on our own ideas of right to one of intelligent acceptance of the Lord's guidance. Just as Moses had to remain in the land of Midian for forty years before he was prepared for his call to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt, so Samuel had to retain the actual power in the Holy Land until the people had reached the point when they would accept as king a man "after the Lord's own heart."

Throughout the Word a king represents truth (or falsity) ruling.

Recall the Lord's answer to Pilate in John 18:37. The three kings of Israel all represent the Lord's

truth ruling in our lives, but they represent that truth seen by us in three different ways, at three different levels of understanding. All three of these levels are adult states and they are necessary stages in our regeneration. Ideally we might live out our lives under Samuel's direction, and some few people do. We recall that when the people asked for a king, Samuel was displeased because he felt himself rejected, but the Lord told him that the people, in rejecting him, were really rejecting the Lord. The Lord then told him to do as the people asked. We are not in an ideal state and we must choose our leaders in freedom, but the Lord provides that with each person who truly wants to do right, the childlike trust represented by Samuel shall remain in control until he has come by the way of experience into the recognition of the higher rational as his leader. David would not have been accepted by Israel at first. Only their experience with the results of Saul's weakness made them see David's strength.

Saul was accepted immediately because of his appearance, because "when he stood among the people, he was higher than any of the people from his shoulders and upward." The shoulder corresponds to power. The people were looking for a strong man to lead them against their enemies. Saul as king represents divine truth in its hard, external aspect, untempered by mercy, as it appears to those who have not yet gained any depth of experience and wisdom; to young adults, for example, who are just beginning to form their own independent judgments as to conduct. Saul was completely victorious in his battles with the Ammonites (1 Samuel 11) when they attacked Jabesh—Gilead, because Gilead, in the territory of Gad across the Jordan, represents good works, and even a superficial understanding of the truth is able to recognize and repel the false arguments which would blind and enslave the affection for doing external good works.

But the Philistines, who are the attackers in our lesson today, were an enemy of a different and more subtle character, an internal enemy, the ever-present and powerful temptation to rest satisfied with knowing what is right without making the effort to do it. It is obvious that truth understood only superficially cannot overcome this enemy. Samuel had told Saul to wait at Gilgal seven days, until he should come and sacrifice to the Lord and assure victory. But Saul was impatient. It appeared to him that his men were leaving him, that the delay was weakening his military strength, and finally he took matters into his own hands and offered the sacrifice himself without waiting for Samuel. Young people almost always feel a good deal of sympathy for Saul in his impatience, which is good evidence of the truth of the correspondence. When we are young and active, we do not like to wait for the right time and way of doing what we believe ought to be done. We may know that we ought to wait, as Saul did, but things seem to be going from bad to worse. We judge by appearances and act before our remains of childlike trust have had time to fulfill their true mission. Actually we put our own judgment before the Lord's. The failure which inevitably results shows us that the principle on which we have been depending is not adequate, that if our good intentions are to have good results they must have a new principle of a different degree from the mere external judgment, something which goes deeper. The kingdom is to be rent from Saul and given to another. "The Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the Lord hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the Lord commanded thee."

Judgment from mere appearances fails, and the first lesson learned is: "Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord." (Psalm 27:14) The strengthening of the heart is what the Lord is waiting for. Patience is a virtue which is developed only through trial. Saul was impatient. Young people are impatient, for example, with the slow advance of reforms. To them any action seems better than no action. They must learn by

experience to wait as well as to work. Saul's whole strength was in the Lord's help. When he set his own judgment before the Lord's command through Samuel, his efforts were doomed to failure. So it is with us whenever we judge by appearances only and imagine that the Lord's providence is failing and that our own way will bring success. Whenever we act contrary to the Lord's commandments, even though we tell ourselves that we are doing it to hasten the accomplishment of a good purpose, we cut ourselves off from the only power that can bring about good. For our only real strength is the Lord's strength in us. The Lord knows best. "A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation: I the Lord will hasten it in his time." (Isaiah 60:22)

Saul's accomplishments were sufficient to accustom the people to the rule of a king, to arouse their loyalty, to establish their courage, to teach them to meet the demands made upon them; and Saul was able to overcome external enemies and partially to overcome more internal ones. But Saul was impatient and self-assertive, superficial in his judgments, and prone to place these judgments above the explicit commands of the Lord. In the same way, the external understanding of truth is sufficient to accustom us to accept the truth as our leader and to develop our ability to stand up for it bravely as occasion requires. But it is not sufficient to show us the necessity for delays or to get to the root of evils within ourselves and in the world. Verses 19 to 22 add an interesting thought. Tools of all kinds represent truths. Weapons of war are truths of use in fighting evils. Farm implements are truths necessary for developing and preparing uses, the "fruits and grains" to be made part of the life. The Philistines are those who like to know truths but have no desire to live them. In this passage they suggest the people who enjoy intellectual discussion — the sharpening of the mind — but are anxious to keep the "religious" people from doing the same thing except under their direction and control, and especially unwilling to have arguments developed which might expose their own weaknesses and selfish motives.

## 64:SAUL AND JONATHAN — 1 Samuel 14:1-46

### INTRO

Stress the fact that the people liked Saul because of his appearance, but that physical strength and prowess do not imply wisdom. Draw the distinction between Saul and Jonathan, which will form part of the background in a future lesson.

### Adult

Important thoughts for the Adults are the nature of Saul's rule and the meaning of Jonathan and his small victory. Another very helpful topic of discussion is the shortsightedness of seeing evil in the enjoyment of any of the good things of the world which have been provided for our use and refreshment. The Lord's example and not any assumptions and prejudices of men should be our guide here. The Lord Himself supplies us with a warning and direction in this matter in Matthew 11:17-19.

In 1 Samuel 7:13 we read: "So the Philistines were subdued, and they came no more into the coast of Israel: and the hand of the Lord was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel." Yet in our chapter for today, with Samuel still Judge and recognized as the Lord's spokesman, we find that the Philistines are again gathered in great strength to attack Israel and that many of the Israelites are in hiding for fear of them, and in chapter 13 we learn that the Philistines have so extensive a control

in the land that the Israelites have no smiths and their armies no weapons of war. In the letter this would seem to be contradictory, but it is not so in the internal sense. The "days of Samuel" are our states of childlike trust and obedience, as we saw in our last lesson. But by the time of today's lesson, although the people still in a measure acknowledge Samuel as their head, they have another leader whom they really prefer to Samuel.

You will recall that when Samuel was old and had made his unworthy sons judges, the people had asked for a king to lead them against their enemies. When, as adults, we have suffered the decline of our early religious zeal, as Israel declined in the time of the Judges, and then have come to the realization that we are in real spiritual danger and must return to the guidance and protection of the Lord, our first state is one of sincere humiliation and simple obedience, which Samuel represents. But very few adults can "hold" this state. The world looms very large and we become fearful of losing spiritual ground. We want something more specific than a general assurance to lead us — some system of truth furnished with arguments with which to meet our temptations. We want a warlike king instead of a peaceful prophet, although we still recognize the prophet as our judge.

The three kings represent successively higher concepts of the Lord's truth. Saul, we remember, was accepted by the people because of his appearance. The Lord chose him as the first king because he was the only kind of leader the people would have respected at that time. We know that the Lord always accommodates His revelation of Himself to our states. He permits us to see only so much of His truth as we are capable of applying to life. Saul was a brave and sincere man and in the beginning humble. When we first turn from childlike trust, we do not mean to become self-confident — we have had our bitter experience with trying to lead ourselves. But we have not yet become wise, and our self-will is stronger than we think. Saul won his first victory, a victory over the Ammonites, the same external enemy whom Jephthah had conquered. Then he felt that he was established and sure of victory, and he began to make his own decisions instead of waiting to be directed by Samuel — so the Philistines were in the saddle again. Thus the new attack by the Philistines is really in the days of Saul and not in the days of Samuel.

Our first concept of the truth is, like Saul, superficial and hasty. It is based on our natural reason which judges by appearances and is stubborn and headstrong. But it wins some victories and it also has other good results. It gives us fresh experience of the power of the Lord which confirms what we were taught in our earlier years. This development is represented by Saul's son Jonathan, who was not dismayed by the apparent power of the enemy because he knew that "there is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few."

The stories of Jonathan in the Word have great appeal. Among the Bible characters he is a general favorite, and to many Bible readers the question of why Jonathan had to be killed with his father is a real problem. Again the internal sense gives us a clear answer. Saul's line had to perish because a natural understanding of truth, however excellent, must give place to a spiritual understanding if we are to become spiritual men and women.

Yet Jonathan played a very important role in this transition. He was the only one really responsible for such victories as his father won over the Philistines, because it was his fearless trust in the Lord which showed the Israelites the actual weakness of their enemy. In chapter 13 we learn that when Jonathan was in command of a third of his father's small army, he boldly attacked and overcame one of the Philistine garrisons; and in our chapter today he attacks the main body of the Philistines with no one but his armor-bearer to help him. The setting of this story reminds us forcibly of the

words of Abraham in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus: "Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed." It is the same gulf which Jonathan and his armor-bearer crossed when they climbed down one rock and up another — down the rock of self-confidence and up the rock of reliance upon the Lord. The parable, however, treats of the condition in the other life when the gulf has become "fixed" by our refusal to cross it in this world.

The initial slaughter by Jonathan and his armor-bearer resulted immediately in a great trembling in the army of the Philistines. They were thrown into confusion and began to fall upon each other. A similar phenomenon occurred in the story of Gideon. It is an accurate picture of what happens to the Philistine attitude in us when we make even a small attack upon it in the Lord's name. The arguments which have supported our pride in our own intelligence are immediately discovered to be really weak and conflicting, and they melt away.

The incident of Jonathan's eating the honey is very interesting.

Honey represents enjoyment of a natural kind. Many of the literal commands of the Word would seem, like Saul, to forbid such enjoyment, and many Christian groups through the centuries have based their claim to salvation on the renunciation of all natural pleasures. While Saul, symbolizing the natural understanding of the meaning of the Word, is on the throne, we feel with Jonathan that any indulgence may have been a sin. But Jonathan was given to see that his father's command had been unwise and the people supported Jonathan because his victories had proved to them that the Lord was with him rather than with his father. The ascetic life is not the life the Lord wishes us to live. The good things of this world are created by Him for our enjoyment and are means by which we are enabled to serve Him and our neighbor.

Isaiah 7:14-15 tells us: "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good." Jonathan's eyes were enlightened when he had tasted the honey.

## 65:SAUL SPARES AGAG — 1 Samuel 15

### INTRO

The teachers should all be familiar with the events of the chapters between 8 and 15, but the events to be reviewed in class are the anointing of Saul, his later choice by lot, the people's satisfaction with him, his first victory, and his first defection as described in chapters 10:8 and 13:8-14.

### Adult

The best discussion material for this class will probably be based on the general correspondence of Saul and the enemies he could and could not overcome. In a church society we need constantly to help people of all ages to understand each other, to distinguish between good intentions and wisdom, to make allowances for each other, and to work together harmoniously in the Lord's service.

The three great kings who ruled over the whole land — Saul, David, and Solomon — all picture the

Lord's divine truth ruling in our life. The enemies they fought are symbolic of evils and falsities within ourselves which oppose the rule of divine truth. Yet Saul, David, and Solomon were not perfect men, nor were they always victorious. Divine truth is received by us individually in different ways and in each of us differently at different stages of our progress through life. In a general sense the period of the kings represents an adult state, a time when we are making our own choices and are responsible for them. And also this period represents a part of the regenerate life. The Holy Land has been entered and has become our home. And we have also passed through the temptation to imagine that no more effort is required of us — the period of the Judges — and are ready to resume the conquest of our inner and outer evils under the rule of divine truth. We accept the Word as our guide — Samuel is still the Lord's prophet. Why are we not always victorious?

It is because our understanding of the truth is imperfect and because our inherited tendency to self-love and self-assertion is ever present and active, whether we recognize it or not. Saul represents divine truth as we first see it at this stage of regeneration. He was acceptable to the people because he stood head and shoulders above them. The Lord had told Samuel to let the people have their king, and He had chosen Saul and commanded Samuel to anoint him. The Lord leads each of us as best He can according to our states, preserving our freedom.

A study of attitudes of "young adult" groups in churches will help us to understand the reign of Saul. Usually they mean well, and they start out with the recognition of their inexperience. When Samuel first told Saul that he was to be king, Saul said:

"Am not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin?" And later, when at Mizpah the lot fell upon Saul, Saul had "hid himself among the stuff." And Saul, like the young adults in the church, was brave and eager and very willing to go into battle; and he won his first battle. It was against the Ammonites, who were attacking Jabesh—Gilead in the cross—Jordan country. It represents resistance against an obvious external temptation. But this first victory was all that was needed to disclose Saul's inadequacy for the kingship. For it "turned his head." It gave him confidence in himself instead of in the Lord. When we are young, we are much like Saul in this respect. It takes only a very little success and praise to make us self-confident and impatient of advice or control.

In the story of Saul and Jonathan and the battle with the Philistines, you remember, Saul had been told to wait seven days until Samuel should come and offer the proper sacrifices before beginning the battle. But Saul saw the Philistine reinforcements coming in and his own men deserting, and he decided that he himself could offer the sacrifices as well as Samuel. Like Saul, our first understanding of divine truth is based on appearances. We are impatient with delay and in a hurry to "get things done." It was only after Jonathan, who trusted in the Lord instead of in himself, had by his simple exploit thrown the Philistine army into confusion that Saul was able to attack and defeat it. The Philistine temptation to think that knowing the truth will save us without obedience to it can obviously not be overcome by confidence in self.

This lesson gives us Saul's final failure, although he continued to be king in name for some time afterward. The Amalekites were the first enemy who attacked the Israelites after they left Egypt. We have had the story of this first battle at Rephidim, which the Israelites won only because Moses went up into the mountain and, with the help of Aaron and Hur, kept his hands lifted to the Lord until the sun went down. The Amalekites represent "falsity from interior evil." Swedenborg, in speaking of Amalek in @AC 8593, says: "Interior evil is that which lies inwardly concealed with man, hidden in his will, and thence in his thought, no trace of which appears in his externals, as in

his actions, speech, and face." He says that those in the other world who are in this kind of evil are not called evil spirits but "evil genii," and that in their effort to influence us they "do not attack the truths of faith, but the goods of faith; for they act by means of depraved affections, whereby they pervert good thoughts, and this in a manner almost incomprehensible," and that they "never attack a man openly, nor when he is capable of vigorous resistance; but when it appears that a man is falling so as to yield, they are suddenly at hand, and push him on to a complete fall."

We can see why Saul — picturing the natural understanding of divine truth, based on appearances — was seduced by this enemy into sparing the things which seemed to him good, and so also sparing the king — the ruling principle — of the Amalekites, Swedenborg (in the same number quoted above) refers to the evil genii again in connection with verse 32 of our chapter: "'To go delicately' signifies the outward blandishments of such spirits in the presence of others." It takes a good deal of experience for one to be able to see through the specious arguments of such spirits, and older people should be wise enough to help young people patiently through their period of "snap judgments."

Read carefully verses 22 and 23 of our lesson. Saul's yielding to this temptation in the face of the Lord's explicit commands finished his actual kingship, for we read in the very next chapter that Samuel was sent to anoint David and that as soon as David was anointed "the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul." The tearing of Samuel's robe by Saul was the sign of this change. @AE 395[5] tells us: "The words of Samuel make clear that 'the rending of the skirt of the cloak' signified the rending of the kingdom from Saul, for he said after it was done, 'Jehovah hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day,' 'a king' and 'his kingdom' signifying the Divine truth of the church, and 'the skirt of a cloak' signifying Divine truth in ultimates, that is, all Divine truth in general; for the kings that were over the sons of Israel represented the Lord in relation to Divine truth, and their kingdom signified the church in relation to Divine truth; therefore this historical fact signifies that king Saul was such that he could no longer represent the Lord, and that the representation of the church would perish if the kingdom were not rent from him."

## 66:THE ANOINTING OF DAVID — 1 Samuel 16

### INTRO

The teachers should reread 1 Samuel 13 and 15 to recall what was the weakness of Saul. With all but the youngest children, it would be well to review briefly the two incidents in which Saul disobeyed Samuel, and to point out how they indicate Saul's tendency to judge by appearances. This is the most important lesson for the young people in connection with the change from Saul to David.

### Adult

Discussion should center in the difference between Saul and David, in the meaning of the continuance of Saul's reign after David was anointed, and in the meaning of the fact that David was not of Saul's line.

Swedenborg tells us in several places that David represents "The Lord in respect to Divine truth." He has a good deal to say of David in this connection (@AE 205 and elsewhere). We know that

inmostly the whole of the Old Testament treats of the Lord's life and that all the leading figures in it represent the Lord in one or another aspect. We should, therefore, think of David and others as representative figures whose external lives were ruled over by divine providence in such a way that their record in the Scriptures might, through correspondence, express divine truth for all men in all times. There was a real David, a man like other men, compounded of good and evil, an individual soul just as important to the Lord as any other soul and no more. Of him we know little. But of David, the actor in the great drama of Scripture, we are told much. The many prophecies in which the Lord is connected with David all refer to David in this representative character; so we need not be confused by the statements that the Lord was "of David's line" and "the Son of David." The Lord Himself pointed this out to the Pharisees in Matthew 22:41-46.

In our study, however, we are trying consistently to relate the Scripture story to our own lives as well as to the Lord's life. So we must try to see what David means in us. The three great kings all represent the rule of divine truth, but on successively higher levels. Saul, as we have seen, represents divine truth apprehended in an external and necessarily superficial way. David pictures a more spiritual understanding of truth — "The Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart." "For the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." Everything about David places his meaning on the spiritual plane of the mind. He is a "mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters [or in speech]"; yet he is called while guarding sheep, signifying the protecting of innocent affections. He is a "cunning player on the harp," the symbol of "spiritual truth" (@AC 419). Later we shall find that he overcomes Israel's internal enemies, at last occupies Jerusalem, and brings the ark there.

Divine truth does not change, but our understanding of it changes. We must pass from our first natural and external understanding to a spiritual understanding of it which will enable us to see through appearances, to expose and correct deeper evils, and to set our internal house in order. When the results of our first efforts to apply truth to life are unsatisfactory, we must realize that the truth has not failed, but that our understanding of it is inadequate and that we must seek a deeper understanding. If our desire to do good remains steadfast, we shall be led, in our search for a new "king," to Bethlehem, the "house of bread," which Swedenborg tells us signifies "the spiritual of the celestial" (@AC 4594) or "the truth of good." This is the same place to which the Wise Men were led to find the Incarnate Word. That is, by patient effort and with the Lord's guidance, our good desire will lead us to an understanding of truth which will enable our desire to accomplish corresponding good results.

This change in our understanding of truth is not accomplished in a moment. In 1 Samuel 15:35 we read, "And the Lord repented that he had made Saul king over Israel." We know that this again is the language of appearance. The Lord does not change His mind, but our apprehension of His will with regard to our conduct does change. So in the letter of the story He tells Samuel to cease mourning for Saul, to fill his horn with oil, and go to Bethlehem to anoint the new king. When we realize that our understanding of truth has been too superficial and has led us to make mistakes, we recognize the necessity of a new understanding, and the Lord's love working in us discovers and anoints a new "king." But we cannot at once remove Saul. The habits of judgment which we have formed are still dear to us; in the ordinary affairs of life they still hold sway. Only in critical cases do we seek out and depend upon the new leader. Nor is our new understanding sufficiently developed to take immediate control. It must be tried out over a long period until we come to trust it fully. So Saul continues to reign, and David, although anointed king, becomes recognized only gradually. But the spirit of the Lord has departed from Saul and is with David. We are conscious of

the lack in our old understanding and of the fact that we have transferred the real authority to the new.

The first relationship between Saul and David is interesting in its suggestions. Swedenborg says, "Because the 'harp' signifies confession from spiritual truths, and spiritual truths are those by which angels of the Lord's spiritual kingdom are affected, and which disperse the falsities of evil, Saul's evil spirit was driven away by David's playing." (@AE 323[12]) Saul at first loved David greatly and made him his armor-bearer. It seems at first as if the old understanding and the new can go hand in hand, as if we can keep our familiar judgments as to right and wrong, only employing the new deeper insight to cleanse them of their obvious falsities and to bolster them up in their attacks upon evil. Sometimes, for example, one who has been brought up believing a strictly literal acceptance of the Scriptures and is used to drawing certain obvious lessons from the letter, may be led — through attacks on his faith which he cannot meet — to accept a spiritual interpretation of the Word. He sees that it is true, and uses it to cope with particular perplexities and doubts; yet he clings to his old ideas of the literal sense wherever it has proved satisfactory to him, and for a long time refuses to recognize that the whole must be interpreted according to its spiritual meaning. Or, a young person who has found himself mistaken in some of his judgments sees that a higher principle will help him to revise those particular judgments; yet he hesitates to apply it to other judgments in which he has not been forced to admit himself mistaken.

Habits once formed, whether mental or physical, are hard to break, and Saul lingers on the throne a long time, at first friendly to David and then actively antagonistic to him when he realizes that David must eventually wholly supplant him. Yet once David is anointed, his power gradually increases and Saul's power wanes. Saul's son, however friendly to David he may be, cannot occupy the throne. Even the best and truest offspring of our natural understanding can serve only as a temporary help to the establishment of the higher judgment. We are reminded of the Lord's words concerning John the Baptist: "Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." There is the same discrete degree between the natural and the spiritual understanding of truth that there is between reformation and regeneration.

## 67:DAVID AND GOLIATH — 1 Samuel 17

### INTRO

The Word gives us many events in the history of the three great kings, but in our course we have only four lessons on each of the three. We need therefore to keep in mind their relative significance rather than the various events of their reigns. They represent three stages in our regeneration as adults, the rule of truth on three different planes. Saul is the truth seen and applied according to external appearances. This is a hasty, superficial, and imperfect judgment. Saul's failure came from his desire to get things done in a hurry and his unwillingness to obey the Lord's commands when his own judgment did not coincide. David represents the same truth but seen in its deeper application to motives and thoughts, with the recognition of our own inherent weakness and need of the Lord's guidance and help. Solomon represents the same truth after it has been obeyed until it has come to be written on our hearts. Keeping this outline in mind will enable the teacher — even with little children — to put the emphasis in each story where it belongs. This is especially necessary in our story for today, in which there are so many interesting details for the children that

the point of the story is apt to be lost sight of.

## Adult

Perhaps the most important thing for this class is to realize the psychological and spiritual depths in this story which is so often thought of only as "one of the Bible stories children love." It is essentially a story of adult experience.

In the history of Israel the Philistines play an important part.

They represent "those in faith separate from charity," those who know the truth and are proud of their knowledge, but have no desire to live according to it. But we need always to remember that our concern is not with others whom we may think to be Philistines, but with the Philistines within ourselves, an ever-present enemy. Every time we excuse ourselves from doing what we know is right, every time we twist the truth in such a way as to support our desires, every time we are contemptuous of another who differs from us, the Philistines are upon us.

Saul is unable to wage a successful war against the Philistines.

He is afraid of them, and his men are constantly deserting him for fear of the Philistines. This is because a mere external understanding of truth, being superficial, is easily confused by clever arguments. It cannot see the real fallacy behind their plausibility. It relies upon its own strength in argument, as Saul relied upon his army and his armor, and when it meets an adversary more clever in the use of the same weapons, it has no further strength. We recall that the Philistines had prevented the Israelites from practicing the trade of smith, so that they had no means of making weapons themselves or of sharpening those they did have. The Philistine in us tries to keep control of the truth. When we are trying to justify ourselves in self-seeking and self-exaltation, we do our best to use truths for our purpose, sometimes almost convincing ourselves in the process that wrong is right. This is what Swedenborg means by the falsification of truth. When we are in this Philistine state, our own reasoning is very pleasant and convincing to us, and we will go to any length rather than be proved wrong. This "conceit of self-intelligence" is what is meant by Goliath. We have all had the experience of arguing endlessly, twisting the truth this way and that, rather than admitting ourselves mistaken. This is Goliath coming out morning and evening for forty days to deliver his challenge against Israel.

Throughout the Word weapons of various kinds in a good sense represent truths with which we defend ourselves against evil or attack our spiritual enemies. In the hands of the evil, weapons represent these truths falsified by being used in the defense and support of evil. This makes it easy for us to see the correspondence of the armor of the three chief figures in our lesson. Remember that brass represents external goodness. Have we ever, when trying to defend ourselves in a wrong course we have chosen, or when criticizing someone else whose views did not agree with ours, pointed complacently to certain good deeds of ours and to knowledge and abilities which we possess? Have we ever justified a questionable course on the ground that it was the only "practical" method of accomplishing results? Have we ever in argument said or implied, "If you knew as much as I do, you would agree with me"? This is the heavy brass armor and weapons of Goliath. It is terrifying to Saul and his soldiers.

Saul's weapons and armor are literal truths. The mere external understanding of truth, in the face of attack by apparently stronger reasoning, feels helpless because it has relied on a literal

acceptance of the truth and has not felt the Lord's love and power within it. We see this in the fact that often young people who have been strictly brought up at home but have not been made to feel the loving purpose behind their parents' rules fall easy victims to the persuasion of schoolmates who pose as more emancipated. It is hard to face ridicule for something which we have been taught is right but which we ourselves do not see to be right. David the young shepherd could not use Saul's armor because he had not "proved" it. But with his own weapons he had already delivered a lamb of his father's flock from a lion and a bear. He used the weapons he had proved.

David's weapons were his shepherd's staff, his sling, and five smooth stones from the brook. The staff was his reliance on the Lord; the smooth stones from the brook, particular truths of the Word readied by experience (five meaning a few but sufficient); and the sling, the understanding — also gained by experience — which enabled him to direct the truth against a particular evil and to communicate to it the force of his zeal. We all may have David's weapons. The Lord promises support to all who obey His commandments. We all have the Word, the clear stream of truth, and we all have the power to find in it truths which we may prove by experience. We make a sling for ourselves by meditating on the truths of the Word and their application to life and conduct. We should be constantly choosing "smooth stones from the brook" and putting them in our "shepherd's bag" ready for use when an enemy attacks any of our innocent affections.

Another point in David's method is suggestive. "And it came to pass, when the Philistine arose, and came and drew nigh to meet David, that David hasted, and ran toward the army to meet the Philistines." We should not sit down and wait until temptation has launched its weapons, but we should see it coming, go out to meet it, and strike the first blow ourselves. This is one of the things a knowledge of the internal sense of the Word prepares us to do by giving us an understanding of all sorts of temptations, their origin, and the truths with which they may be overcome. We should see to it that our children have as much as possible of this advance preparation for life; for the Christian life demands not mere passive resistance, but active attack upon evil. David's aim was true because his eye was clear. He saw his enemy distinctly and was able to strike him in the forehead. This teaches us the lesson that if we are to overcome a temptation, we must be able to recognize and destroy the governing and directing false principle which is its head. When this is done, the enemy falls, and it is easy enough to examine the arguments it used and to turn them against it, as David, standing upon the giant, cut off his head with the giant's own sword. "And David took the head of the Philistine, and brought it to Jerusalem; but he put his armor in his tent." The evil principle which has falsified truths must be rejected as contrary to the teachings of the church, but the truths it has used, when separated from it, become ours, part of the wisdom of experience.

It was by a succession of small victories, won through reliance on the Lord, that David gradually won the confidence of the people. At first, even when we are trying to fight the Lord's battles, we rely upon ourselves, form hasty judgments, and often take hasty action, as Saul did. But experience teaches us the folly of self-confidence, and there grows up gradually within us a deeper understanding of the Lord's truth, which is David. The Lord begins to give us power through a higher principle. Yet it is a long time before our self-confidence is altogether replaced by reliance on the Lord. Saul continued to reign as king for many years. Even after Saul's death David was first made king in Hebron, and it was another seven years before he was accepted by all the people and came to reign in Jerusalem. Full confidence in the power of the truth as the Lord gives it to us must become established in our hearts before it can become the ruling principle in our minds.

# **68:THE ARK BROUGHT TO JERUSALEM — 2**

## **Samuel 6**

### **INTRO**

The transition from Saul to David should be centered about Jonathan. The loyalty of both David and Jonathan to Saul, in spite of Saul's jealousy and hatred, should be stressed, and the fact that David could win victories because, like Jonathan, he trusted and obeyed the Lord. The sin of Uzzah and its punishment is the most dramatic part of the lesson for today, but it should not be allowed to dwarf the importance of the actual bringing of the ark to Jerusalem.

### **Adult**

The relation between Saul, Jonathan, and David is a good starting point. Then discuss the general meaning of the last journey of the ark and of Uzzah's act and its punishment. Finally, tie the lesson together with the relation between Saul, Jonathan, David, and Michal. Stress the fact that the natural never develops into the spiritual. There is a discrete degree between them.

Jonathan is in a sense the connecting link between Saul and David. His friendship for David has become the classic example in history. We all know the stories of the anointing of David by Samuel at Bethlehem, when the spirit of the Lord rested upon him, having departed from Saul, the story of David's soothing Saul by playing the harp, and of his victory over Goliath. Then follows the account of David's further victories and of Saul's growing jealousy when the people began to hail David instead of Saul as their hero, and the account of Saul's efforts to get rid of David and of Jonathan's success in saving him, of David's flight and long exile, and of his victories while in exile.

David, like Saul, represents the Lord's truth ruling, but it is the truth understood in a new and deeper way, an understanding based on internal instead of on external considerations. We recall that when Samuel first found Saul, Saul was looking for his father's lost donkeys; but David, when he was called, was tending his father's sheep. The donkey represents the affection for natural reasoning, the sheep the affection for innocence.

But David did not immediately supplant Saul, even after he had been anointed and the spirit of the Lord had passed from Saul to him. Long after we recognize the necessity of a deeper understanding of truth, the old natural habits of thought and feeling persist. Even after Saul was dead, his descendants still disputed the kingdom with David, and for a time the kingdom was actually divided. The division was essentially the same as the later division after the death of Solomon, the southern portion of the land accepting David as king — with Hebron as his capital — and the northern portion, together with the cross—Jordan country, adhering to Ishbosheth, a son of Saul. In this division, as later, the southern portion represents the inner affectional life, the northern portion the intellectual or thought realm, and the cross-Jordan country the external life. The meaning of this for us as individuals is not hard to see. David is anointed king when we realize that our first external understanding of the truth is not adequate to protect us against the attacks of evil and falsity, and that a deeper and more spiritual understanding is necessary. Saul dies and David becomes king in Hebron when, by trial and experience, our hearts have confirmed our allegiance to the new principle. But David does not become king over the whole land until we have rid

ourselves of the habits of thought and conduct which sprang from our early superficial understanding.

After Jerusalem was taken, David determined to bring the ark there. In @AE 700 we are told that the three last stages of the journey of the ark picture "the progress of the church with man from its ultimate to its inmost; and this because such progressions are effected by means of Divine truth, which was signified by the ark; for the man of the church progresses from the natural to the spiritual, and through that to the celestial, and this continually from the Lord by means of His Divine truth; the natural is the good of life, the spiritual is the good of charity towards the neighbor, and the celestial is the good of love to the Lord."

The death of Uzzah is a striking incident. People often feel that Uzzah's deed was a perfectly natural impulse and well—meant, and did not deserve the punishment it received. It can be pointed out, even as to the literal sense of the story, that Uzzah the son of Abinadab, in whose house the ark had been kept for many years, must have been perfectly familiar with the laws concerning the handling of the ark and with the consequences which had in the past overtaken those who broke these laws. No impulse could have been strong enough to induce him to break the law if his reverence for the ark and belief in its power had been deep and sincere. His act was the expression of an inherent confidence in himself and distrust of the Lord's power for which he was really punished. Our impulses spring from habits of thought and feeling, and our habits are formed by our own choice and consent.

But there is a deeper lesson to be learned from the story of Uzzah. The ark represents divine truth. We have this truth in the Word, and we have ample evidence of its power in the history of the church and in the lives of individuals. There is not one of us who does not know that we should reverence the Word, should approach it only with the desire to learn how to live rightly, and should trust its power to accomplish its purpose. Yet how easily, when we are bent upon having our own way in some matter, when our good affections falter, as the oxen stumbled, we fall victims to the temptation to think that we know better than the Lord, to rely upon our own power and intelligence to think that we are doing the Word service by seeking natural explanations for the strange and wonderful occurrences recorded in its letter and trying to discover in the ideas and customs of the Hebrew people something on which they may rest. The attempt to steady the ark of the Lord, to substitute our own power for the Lord's power, our own intelligence for the guidance of the Lord's truth, leads to spiritual death. For spiritual life can be received only as we look to the Lord and trust in Him. When we think of the Word as merely a human book and try to find meaning in it on that basis, rejecting what cannot be naturally explained, we commit the sin of Uzzah. When we think of the Lord's teachings as in any way limited by His "times," we commit the sin of Uzzah. When we give more weight to the judgment of our contemporaries than to the Word of the Lord, we commit the sin of Uzzah. And there we also die "by the ark of God."

Jerusalem represents the Lord's spiritual kingdom, and Mount Zion in Jerusalem represents the inmost of the church. It was upon Mount Zion that David placed the ark in a tabernacle which he had erected for it. David's finally taking the stronghold of Zion from the hands of the Jebusites pictures the final overthrow of the idolatries which hold possession of the inmost heart. This can be accomplished only through a spiritual understanding of truth. The placing of the ark on Mount Zion represents the final uncompromising establishment of the commandments as the only laws to be tolerated in the heart. When this is done, David's kingdom is fully established and he can go out from Jerusalem to the conquest of the Philistines, the Moabites, and the Ammonites.

The incident recorded at the end of our chapter has also its important lesson for us. Saul's daughter Michal had been given to David by Saul at the time when David was living in Saul's court. If we read the story in 1 Samuel 18, we find that Saul hoped that David would be killed in trying to provide the dowry he demanded for Michal. After David went into exile, Saul gave Michal to another husband. While David was reigning in Hebron, he demanded the return of Michal, and Ishboseth took her from her husband and sent her back to David (2 Samuel 3:13-16). Michal represents the natural affections which develop out of our first self-confident interpretations of the Lord's truth. They like to follow the easy path, attaching themselves to whatever opinion seems popular from time to time. It is significant that although Jonathan, the good element in the development from our first understanding, died with his father, Michal lives on and is still attractive to David. It is harder to overcome natural inclinations than natural reasonings. Michal's true character as the veritable daughter of Saul appears when she despises David and taunts him for his humility before the ark. Jonathan, although he had to die, served a good purpose. But no good ever comes of Michal: "Therefore Michal the daughter of Saul had no child unto the day of her death."

## **69:DAVID AND NATHAN THE PROPHET — 2**

### **Samuel 12:1-25**

#### **INTRO**

Introduce the lesson by reminding the classes that Saul's disobedience in the case of the Amalekites led to Samuel's saying that the kingdom "was departed" from him. The immediate anointing of David resulted. Then review David's life while Saul continued on the throne, and finally speak of the difference between the two men and of David's achievements as king, before taking up the incident of our lesson.

#### **Adult**

Again and again, as in this story of Nathan's parable, the lesson is brought home to us that as long as we are in this world we are liable to temptation and liable to yield to it. There are plenty of discussion topics here, but try to make this general lesson the outstanding one. It may be pointed up by reading to the class Ezekiel 18:20-24.

David, the second king of Israel, represents the rule of divine truth spiritually understood. This understanding of the truth is first recognized by us as a result of our realization of the inadequacy of our natural understanding of it — represented by Saul — but it is a long time before it comes into full control in our life. We all know the stories of David's early life — his being called from tending his father's sheep at Bethlehem to be anointed by Samuel, his being called to Saul's court because of his skill in playing the lyre, his victory over Goliath, and his friendship with Saul's son Jonathan, who helped him to escape when Saul's jealousy would have killed him. We can see these incidents as picturing the first relations between the spiritual and the natural understanding of divine truth in our minds. We have a similar picture in the story of the relations of Joseph with Potiphar and Potiphar's wife (Genesis 39), and the period when David was in exile may be compared with the time when Joseph was in prison, the David stories of course representing the cycle at a later period

in our life than the Joseph stories.

Even after Saul's death, David did not immediately come to the throne, for Abner, the captain of Saul's host, crowned Saul's son Ishbosheth. David was at the same time crowned in Hebron by the people of the southern part of the land, and reigned there for seven years. At the end of this time Ishbosheth was assassinated by two of his own captains and the northern tribes also accepted David. This temporary division of the land foreshadowed the final division which took place after Solomon's death. The southern part of the land represents the heart or will and the northern part the mind or understanding. Hebron had been Abraham's home. David's ruling there first pictures the fact that the heart — and especially the innocent states stored up in us as remains from our earliest infancy — accepts the rule of spiritual truth before the mind fully yields to its control. It was not until David had been anointed king by the northern tribes that he captured Jerusalem, which up to that time had been firmly held by the Jebusites. He made it his capital and brought the ark there, and from that center went on to full conquest of the enemies of Israel, extending the borders of the Holy Land farther than they had ever extended before.

As we read the long story of David, we cannot help being struck by the sudden change which takes place in his fortunes beginning with 2 Samuel 11, when he first sees Bathsheba, covets and takes her, and arranges to have her husband Uriah killed in battle. From that time on, although David continues as king and actually retains all the territory he has conquered, he is plagued by internal troubles, beginning with the conspiracy of his son Absalom and ending with that of his son Adonijah. In our chapter for today, Nathan the prophet foretells this: "Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house."

The turning point in David's life and career came at the moment when he, too, at last became confident in his own might and careless of the commandments. David knew the commandments and knew that his rise to power had been won for him by the Lord and not by his own strength or wisdom. Yet when he wanted Bathsheba, he did not hesitate to break the commandments to get her and even used his authority as king to establish his possession. The crimes of adultery and murder are in themselves deadly to spiritual life. Pure marriage love is the love from which all heavenly loves flow, and its opposite closes heaven; and we have seen in an earlier lesson that innocence is essential to heavenly states. Adultery and murder are characteristic of the hells (Matthew 5:21-28). David's yielding to the temptation to commit these two crimes shows us how even the spiritual understanding of the Lord's truth may be misused and led to justify our evil desires, if we allow ourselves to think that we have reached a state in which the commandments may be transgressed with impunity. It is possible for us at any time, no matter how far we have progressed in regeneration, to fall into hell if we cease to test our lives by the commandments. Indeed, the further we have progressed the deeper the hell into which we may fall, if we use the Lord's gifts for selfish purposes and turn the power which he has put in our hands to the injury of others (Ezekiel 18:24). One of the trends of modern thought is in the direction of the relegation of the commandments to the realm of outworn statutes. This is particularly evident in connection with the problem of marriage. Children should be taught from the very beginning by example as well as by precept that the marriage relation is beautiful and sacred and that anything which lessens our regard for it or makes us less fit to receive and enjoy its blessings should be avoided as a deadly plague. To know the beautiful teachings concerning marriage revealed through Swedenborg and then to yield to the temptation to treat the marriage vows lightly or to enter into other relations is like the sin of David.

If Nathan had come to David and charged him outright with his sin, David's immediate impulse would have been to justify himself in one way or another and perhaps to get rid of Nathan. But

Nathan put the matter before David's own judgment in an impersonal way which left David's judgment free to see the simple right and wrong involved. There was nothing in the parable to touch David's self-love and so blind his judgment. And his judgment was immediate and clear. Then, when Nathan said, "Thou art the man," David realized that he had freely judged himself, and that whatever punishment came to him was just. This is exactly the way in which the Lord points out to us our evils by means of the Word. The Word presents to us in parable form every possible spiritual situation into which we may come, leaving us free to judge the right and wrong involved and to see the inevitable results of evil. Then, if we are listening to the prophet's voice, it says to us in each of our weaknesses and sins, "Thou art the man." If we store our memories with the letter of the Word and try to see its application to our lives, we are prepared to face our problems objectively and to judge justly.

The child of David's unlawful union with Bathsheba died. No living spiritual principle can come from the attempt to evade our obligation to obey the letter of the commandments, even in the interest of something which appeals to us as beautiful and which, if properly acquired, is innocent and good. Good does not come out of evil. But David repented. His fasting before the child died pictures our natural hope that the consequences of our sin may be avoided. But once they have fallen and been accepted, we are shown that, like David, we must rise and begin anew, and that if we do, we may still use the bitter experience rightly and develop new strength.

## 70:THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON — 1 Kings 3

### INTRO

The things that should especially be remembered about David are that before Samuel anointed him he was a shepherd of Bethlehem, that he was a musician and also a great warrior, and that the book of Psalms was in part written through him.

### Adult

The meaning of the three kings should be reviewed and the process of the development of wisdom clearly explained. Then discussion should center on the fact that the Lord's request of Solomon in verse 5 is addressed to each one of us also, and on the importance of our choice.

Solomon's accession to the throne of Israel pictures the coming of a new state. There are a number of important general points to note in connection with it. (1) The new king is a son of the preceding one, whereas David was of a different line from Saul. (2) Solomon is anointed by the express command of David, and almost immediately assumes full power. (3) He does not have to conquer any of his kingdom nor to defend it, but instead is freely consulted and assisted by other kings. (4) He is free to build, to adorn his land, and to amass riches.

In @AE 654[29] Swedenborg says that Solomon represents "the Lord in relation to His celestial kingdom and His spiritual kingdom." That is, Solomon, whose name means "peaceful," enters into the fruits of David's reign. He does not have to undo any of David's work. We have seen that this was not true of David's accession, which was marked by difficulty and delay through conflict with Saul. The change from a natural understanding of truth to a spiritual understanding is slow and difficult. But when the spiritual understanding is established and has been exercised and

strengthened by years of successful conflict with the evils which oppose our regeneration, there comes a time when we pass from conflict to peace, the celestial state in which we do right because we love to do it. David dies, in the sense that we no longer have to obey truth against our will, for we no longer will anything which is contrary to the truth. This peaceful or "celestial" state is represented by Solomon. Love to the Lord and love to the neighbor are so firmly established in our hearts that the Lord can give us a perception of the truth. This is the highest goal of the Christian life, but it is a state to which few of us attain. "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God."

We may wonder why, if Solomon represents this highest state, he was permitted to marry so many wives and to worship other gods as well as Jehovah. We shall see that these very things led to the breaking up of Solomon's kingdom, and that they represent temptations which assail us even in this highest state and which must be resisted. But the stream of truth which ultimates itself in the letter of the Word, spoken and acted out so often by evil men, has always inmosty a pure meaning relating to the life of the Lord. When we think of Solomon as a representative of the Lord after His coming into the world, his many marriages and his tolerance of the worship of other gods picture the Lord's love reaching out and seeking to draw to Him the good of all religions and offering salvation to all who seek to live rightly from a religious principle whether they know His true name and character or not.

Solomon asked in his dream, "Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad." This desire involves the very state which Solomon represents, a heart so established in what is good that it has a perception of truth. We should make a distinction between knowledge, intelligence, and wisdom. Knowledge is the accumulation of facts in the memory, facts about spiritual as well as about natural things. Knowledge is the necessary basis for all our thought.

For example, we must know the commandments before we can use them in our lives. Intelligence belongs to the rational faculty and is the power of arranging our knowledges and applying them to the various situations in which Providence places us. Without intelligence we cannot judge our conduct in relation to the commandments. But wisdom is of the heart as well as the mind. When we have learned the commandments and consistently applied them to our conduct, we come to know them by experience as the laws of life. In connection with this development, verse 1 of our chapter is particularly interesting when we remember that Pharaoh's daughter would represent the affection for memory knowledges. Read also 1 Kings 7:8 and 9:24. Millo was one of the ramparts of Jerusalem (cf. 2 Samuel 5:9).

We are wise when, through experience, the commandments are written on our hearts. For what we truly are proceeds out of the heart (Matthew 12:34-35). No matter how much we know or how cleverly we can reason, if we do not love goodness we are not wise, and we cannot attain this wisdom without long practice in keeping the commandments. "Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man ... And everyone that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man ..." (Matthew 7:24-26) The same lesson is strikingly taught in Psalm 14:1: "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." If we have acquired an "understanding heart," we can indeed judge the "Israelites" within ourselves and discern between good and bad. The Lord's reply to Solomon makes us think of His words in Luke 12:31: "But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you."

In all languages there are fairy stories based upon the granting of wishes. All children are familiar

with this idea. Usually these stories are worked out on the basis of an unwise choice and its disastrous results. There is a general truth underlying all such stories — one wonders if all could perhaps be traced to something in the Ancient Word — and as a rule they lead children to think, however superficially, of what would be a really wise wish. Actually the Lord says to each one of us in our early youth, when we are looking forward to life, "Ask what I shall give thee." And He also says to us, "Ask, and it shall be given thee; seek, and ye shall find: knock, and it shall be opened unto you." We are free to choose our own goal and to work for it, free to mold our lives to the attainment of one objective or another. But the Lord does better for us than the fairies in the story: He tells us beforehand what the wise wish is, and warns us of the disastrous results of foolish wishes. He tells us that life in this world is very brief and that we have eternity before us, and also that we must make our choice here. He tells us that if we choose to wish and struggle for the things of this world, we may indeed attain them, but when our short life here is over, we shall face eternal poverty. But if we choose to wish and to work for eternal goods, we shall have them without fail, whatever our external lot in this world may be.

And the Lord also tells us that the eternal goods may be ours now as well as in the other life. To the man who planned to build ever-larger barns and to take his ease, eat, drink, and be merry, the Lord said: "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall these things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." But to His disciples He said: "There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting." The Lord's promises do not fail. If we make Solomon's choice when the Lord first puts the question to us, and are faithful to that choice ("if thou wilt walk in my ways, to keep my statutes and my commandments"), Solomon's peaceful and glorious kingdom will surely be ours.

## 71:BUILDING THE TEMPLE — 1 Kings 6

### INTRO

The connection is easily made through David's desire to build the temple and the Lord's answer. The reason for this answer, as given in 1 Kings 5:3, should be stressed because of its spiritual meaning. The succession of Solomon and the difference between his reign and David's should be mentioned again. Very little can be done in one lesson with the details of the temple. The fullest statement of these will be found in the Junior notes. Its general characteristics and materials and type of decoration may be covered, and mention should be made of Solomon's dealings with Hiram king of Tyre, as given in 1 Kings 5.

### Adult

In this class, after a brief survey of the lesson, consult the members to see which phase of the subject will make the most profitable discussion. The teacher will need to study not only the chapter for the day but also 1 Kings 5-9, and should look through Ezekiel 40-48 for additional background.

The three kings all represent the Lord's truth — or the Word — accepted as our ruling principle in our adult lives, but with varying degrees of understanding. Natural understanding, pictured by

Saul, cannot of itself produce any higher degree. Saul's line had to perish. But spiritual understanding does produce lasting spiritual results. David was promised that there should never be lacking one of his line to sit on his throne, and we remember that the Lord chose to be born into the house and lineage of David. So David's son followed him as king, and Solomon's gift from the Lord was an "understanding heart."

As Jonathan played an important role in the transition from Saul to David, so there was another man — a king — who played an important role in the transition from David to Solomon. Even after a spiritual understanding of truth has wholly succeeded natural understanding as ruler in the life, the natural plane of thought and activity continues as a necessary and serviceable basis of the character. In 1 Kings 5 this fact is brought out in the agreement between Solomon and Hiram king of Tyre. We are told in the writings that Tyre and Sidon represent knowledges of good and truth (@AC 2967) and that Hiram represents the nations that are outside of the church but with whom there are knowledges of good and truth (@AE 514[7]). Hiram was a friend of both David and Solomon, helping David in the building of his own house and Solomon in the building of the temple, as well as of his other structures. In the individual life Hiram pictures our good "Gentile" states, states in which we are absorbed in learning scientific and rational truths and training our minds in intelligent thinking, not seeing clearly perhaps the relation to the Lord and the church of what we are doing, but intending to make unselfish use of whatever we acquire of knowledge and ability. All that we gain in this way can be made serviceable to our regeneration, first in developing orderly spiritual thinking — David's house — and later in building true heavenly character, the church in us, for which the temple stands. When the knowledge and ability we have gained is thus used to build up the church in us, this very outer region of our minds is fed with truth and good from the Lord and lives from Him: "And Solomon gave Hiram twenty thousand measures of wheat for food to his household, and twenty measures of pure oil: thus gave Solomon to Hiram year by year." An example of this process might perhaps be found in our acquisition of the knowledge of ancient history and the habit of trying to trace historical causes. We find such study interesting and desire to make it useful in some way. Then, once we catch a glimpse of the correspondence of the ancient people and lands and begin to see their history as spiritual drama and, in the Word, relate it to the Lord's life and to our own spiritual states, our knowledge of ancient history "comes alive," and every detail that we have stored in our memory becomes useful in our spiritual development and is filled with higher and deeper meaning.

David wished to build the temple of the Lord but was told through Nathan the prophet that this privilege must be left for his son. Solomon gives us the reason for this in his reply to Hiram: "Thou knowest how that David my father could not build an house unto the name of the Lord his God for the wars which were about him on every side, until the Lord had put them under the soles of his feet." Heavenly character, the house of the Lord in us, is not built by our own knowledge or rationality, even when that is spiritually enlightened; nor is it built while we are passing through temptation. It is built in the states of peace which follow victories, built by the Lord's spirit flowing in silently where the enemy has been cast out.

Swedenborg tells us many times to guard against the thought that what goodness we have is our own, and tells us that it is always the Lord's goodness in us. We merely open the door by turning away from evils and toward the Lord. So the temple was built silently, every piece having been prepared elsewhere, as the various truths and goods which go to make up a heavenly character come to us as a result of experiences in every field of our activity, and our character grows silently through our full period of opportunity, which is our life in this world. "So was he seven years in

building it." Swedenborg gives us a further suggestion as to the reason why Solomon and not David was permitted to build the temple. In @DP 245, in discussing the relative meaning of David and Solomon, he says that the temple signifies both the Divine Human and the church: David could not build it because he represents the Lord before His coming into the world, whereas Solomon represents the Lord after His coming. Another interesting thought is suggested in @AE 654[33]: "As every man of the church has a spiritual, a rational, and a natural, therefore Solomon built three houses, the house of God or the temple to stand for the spiritual, the house of the forest of Lebanon for the rational (for 'cedar' and thence 'Lebanon' signifies the rational), and the house of the daughter of Pharaoh for the natural." That is, when the soul has really found rest in the Lord, it takes on an appropriate and beautiful form not only with reference to things of the church, but with reference to intellectual and even to external worldly things.

In studying the correspondence of the various details of the temple, we should recall our knowledge of the tabernacle and consider the similarities and the differences between the two. The tabernacle represents the celestial church and the temple the spiritual church (@AR 585), the tabernacle being the Lord's dwelling place in a more childlike, less intellectual stage of development. In @HH 223 we are told that the houses of worship in the celestial heavens are of wood, while those in the spiritual heavens are of stone, because wood corresponds to good and stone to truth. Thus the walls of the tabernacle were of wood, but those of the temple were of stone. The cedar with which they were covered pictures the good coming from the rational understanding of truth. This could be carved into beautiful forms of cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers, which suggest thoughts about the Lord's providence, His saving power, and the great variety of blessings which come to us from Him. The gold which overlaid it is the love which makes the truth beautiful. In 2 Chronicles 3:1 we learn that Solomon's temple was built on Mount Moriah in Jerusalem instead of on Mount Zion, where David's tabernacle had been. Swedenborg tells us in many places that Zion represents the celestial church. Therefore it was fitting that a tabernacle should have been erected there but that the temple, which represents the spiritual church, should in the letter have been built on Mount Moriah. Wherever Zion and Jerusalem are mentioned together in the Word, Zion refers to the celestial church and Jerusalem to the spiritual church.

The brief account of the structure of the temple which is given in our chapter is filled in and amplified in the description of it as it was showed to Ezekiel in vision some years after its destruction (Ezekiel 40-48). From a long study of the two accounts the Rev. T. O. Paine, a New Church minister, in the middle of the last [20th] century demonstrated the identity of the two by drawing a careful plan of the temple as given in our chapter and an equally careful one of the temple of Ezekiel's vision and finding that when the two plans were superimposed, they not only coincided, but each supplied details which the other lacked, indicating that they were intended to be complementary.

## 72:THE GLORY OF SOLOMON — 1 Kings 9, 10

### INTRO

The important lesson for all classes is that the glory of Solomon could not have been achieved without David's victories and that it could not have been enjoyed except in a state of peace. The teacher should be familiar with the main points in David's reign.

## Adult

The story is familiar to most adults. The class will probably be interested in the development of some of the details of the correspondence, as one is apt to read such chapters as these with little thought beyond the impressiveness of the story in the letter.

For the purpose of our present lesson only two review points need be especially mentioned. One is that David's reign was one of almost continuous fighting, resulting in the virtual conquest of all the enemies which had been troubling Israel. The other is that, although David brought the ark to Jerusalem, he was forbidden to build the temple there. We learn from 1 Kings 5:3 that the reason was that he was in the midst of wars, and 1 Chronicles 22:8 and 28:3 say that it was because he had been a man of war and had shed blood. The reign of David represents the period when we are engaged in temptation conflicts — forty signifies temptation — and, although these conflicts are the necessary preparation which we ourselves with the help of the Lord make for regeneration, they are not regeneration. Regeneration is the inflow of the Lord's unselfish love into the heart from which self-love has been cast out. The building of the temple is the building of regenerate or heavenly character, the house of the Lord in the individual, and this is the work of the inflowing divine love. We recall that when the temple was built, the stones were prepared before they were brought to the site "so that there was neither hammer nor ax nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building." (1 Kings 6:7) The temple rose silently, just as a regenerate character is built in us by the Lord quietly after we make the necessary preparation. David's conquests prepared the way, but David could not build the temple. "The kingdom of heaven cometh not with observation" (Luke 17:20).

The name Solomon means "peace." Solomon's reign was one of peace, and it pictures the fully regenerate state, the state of glorification in the Lord and its analogue, regeneration in man. It is the state in which self has been so brought under control that the commandments of the Lord are written on the heart, and the life is one of willing and joyous service to the Lord and the neighbor. Solomon, in his dream at Gibeon (1 Kings 3:5-15), had asked for "an understanding heart," and the Lord had granted his petition and promised him also riches and honor and long life.

Our two chapters for today in their inner meaning describe the spiritual riches and honors which a regenerate person enjoys. They begin, we should note, with a solemn charge to be faithful, and a warning against falling away from the high state attained. Then comes the curious incident of Solomon's gift of twenty cities in Galilee to Hiram, the king of Tyre, and Hiram's displeasure with the cities; in spite of which he sends Solomon "six score talents of gold." Hiram represents the external man. In all Solomon's building Hiram had furnished him with beautiful cedar from Lebanon and skilled workmen. This pictures the fact that our character is built only by making use of everything that is good and suitable and capable in our natural knowledges and faculties. We recall that the tabernacle was constructed of materials "borrowed" from the Egyptians. In return, the internal man, or rather the Lord through the internal man, gives the external "twenty cities in the land of Galilee," all the heavenly doctrines needed for use in external living. Hiram's distaste for these cities pictures the inherent inability of the external man to understand and appreciate heavenly things. Yet the external man, in the regenerate state, attributes all its goodness to the Lord: this is Hiram's giving of the six score talents of gold.

Solomon is a builder. The regenerate man is not a destroyer; he restores the cities others have destroyed. And some of the cities he builds are "cities of store" where truths and goods are stored

up for use in time of need. Solomon also erected other buildings, his own house, and a house for his wife, the daughter of Pharaoh. But we note that the house he built for her was not in Jerusalem. Pharaoh's daughter represents the affection for natural knowledges, an essential "helpmeet" but dwelling outside the Holy City.

Chapter 9 ends with the account of Solomon's navy, the first navy and the only successful one ancient Israel ever possessed. The regenerate man is able to communicate with those outside his own religious borders and to bring back treasures from these contacts.

Chapter 10 begins with the well-known visit of the queen of Sheba to Solomon. Swedenborg says (@AC 3048) that Sheba signifies "knowledges of things celestial and spiritual." The fact that this kingdom was outside the Holy Land indicates that it represents knowledges possessed by the Gentiles. And it is interesting to find that the Sheba who was the father of this nation is identified as the grandson of Eber, who is mentioned in Genesis 10:28. Eber, according to Swedenborg, is the first real person mentioned in the Scriptures, the ancestor from whom the Hebrews took their name, and the founder of the second Ancient Church. It is therefore quite natural that there should have been in that country remains of the knowledges of celestial and spiritual things. The queen of Sheba had treasures to bring to Solomon. What is said of the spices she brought is especially interesting, because spices correspond to "interior truths in the natural which are from the good there" (@AC 4748). Swedenborg often speaks of the Gentiles as being in good more than those of the church. But the queen of Sheba also had questions which only Solomon could answer.

Thinking of Solomon as the fully regenerate man, we understand why there is so much mention of gold in these chapters, since love in the heart is the impelling motive of such a man. We can also understand why silver "was nothing accounted of in the days of Solomon." It was not because truth was despised but because it was so plentiful and so easy of attainment. Verse 27 expresses this by saying that the king "made silver to be in Jerusalem as stones." "And cedars made he to be as the sycamore trees that are in the vale, for abundance," expresses the wealth of rational thought which is possible to the regenerate man. This is also clearly pictured in Solomon's throne. A throne always denotes judgment. It was made of ivory overlaid with pure gold, the rational truth of the natural man used as a foundation for the expression of celestial good — the wise and understanding heart. It was reached by an ascent of six steps, the successive victories which lead to such a state, and each step and the throne itself were guarded on either side by a lion, the power of mind and heart which the Lord alone can give. Have we not all recognized the power of clear-sighted judgment possessed by a truly good man? His judgment sits enthroned above the confused tangle of worldly ideas and reasonings. "So king Solomon exceeded all the kings of the earth for riches and for wisdom. And all the earth sought to Solomon, to hear his wisdom, which God had put in his heart."

## **73:SOLOMON'S LAST YEARS — 1 Kings 11:1-13, 26-43**

### **INTRO**

Solomon was the second son of David and Bathsheba and the third king of Israel. The meaning of his name should be told in all classes, as well as the difference between his reign and David's. His wisdom and glory and his building of the temple should be noted. In the lesson for today stress the

fact that his wives led him into the worship of idols, rather than the fact that he had a great number of wives. Connect the rending of Jeroboam's garment with the rending of Samuel's robe by Saul (1 Samuel 15:27-28).

## Adult

Probably the best discussion material for this class will be found in the difference between the celestial and the spiritual sense of this chapter and in the danger of refusing to recognize and condemn evil and falsity on the ground that we are taught to look for the good in everyone. Some useful examples may be found in the Intermediate and Senior notes.

We may think of the series of the three great kings — Saul, David, and Solomon — as picturing the increasingly full and satisfying rule of divine truth in our lives as we progress in regeneration and understand it more and more deeply. Consider this divine truth as it is summed up in the two great commandments, love to the Lord and love to the neighbor. From the beginning of our regeneration we recognize these as the essential foundation of a heavenly life.

When we are in the "Saul stage" of understanding, they mean that we should attend and support the church, obey the commandments in their literal sense, assist those about us when they are in trouble, and give to various charitable causes — perhaps take an active part in such work. This understanding enables us to overcome some of our more obvious selfish tendencies, but it inclines us toward self-satisfaction rather than toward humility, and we make mistakes and must eventually see that it is inadequate.

When we study the two great commandments more deeply, especially in the light of their internal meaning, we come into the David stage. We do not discard the good practices which we have developed, but we examine them with a view to finding out what has been genuinely good in the Lord's sight and what we have been doing merely to be seen of men. In our worship we try sincerely to humble ourselves, and in our good works we learn to discriminate between the good and the evil, seeing that it is the good in everyone which is the neighbor to be helped, and that thoughtless and indiscriminate giving may actually promote evil. In this David stage we find within ourselves many "enemies" hitherto unnoticed. The reign of David is a long series of wars and conquests. And here, too, there is the temptation which comes with victory. But if we are willing to accept the Lord's rebuke and repent of our evils, eventually Solomon is born.

In @AE 654[29] we read that Solomon represents "the Lord in relation to His celestial kingdom and His spiritual kingdom." Under Solomon the celestial principle, which is pure unselfish love, is in control of our understanding of divine truth. We now go to church and do good to the neighbor not to be seen of men and not from a sense of our duty to humble self and serve the Lord, but because we love the Lord and the neighbor. We are deeply thankful to the Lord and happy in the happiness of others. The long struggle against the enemies without and within is over and we are at peace. The name Solomon means "peace." The great wisdom and glory of Solomon are representative of the state of the soul at this time, and it is in this stage that the temple of heavenly character is built silently within us out of materials prepared beforehand.

Yet here again victory brings the inevitable temptation. Our chapter for today begins with the word But [KJV]. There is always a "but." The writings tell us that even in the heavens the angels sometimes have to be reminded that their own selfish nature is still with them and that it is only by

the Lord's mercy that it is kept quiescent there. We all probably know some old people who apparently have reached the Solomon stage. They live beautiful lives. Their advice is sought on many problems and they stand out as examples in the community. But sometimes we see in them also evidence of Solomon's sin. They are so kindly that they "love" everyone, bad and good alike. They see only good and close their eyes to evil. So they condone false ideas and by so doing lead others astray.

@AE 654[46] points out to us the law which Solomon broke. It is given in Deuteronomy 17:15-17 and includes these words: "Thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee whom the Lord thy God shall choose ... but he shall not multiply horses to himself ... Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away: neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold." And section 47 of the same number explains that horses in this case signify "false knowledges which are fanciful" and that "As wives signify affections of truth and good, which become the affections of evil and falsity when one man has several wives, it is said 'neither shall he multiply to himself wives that his heart turn not away.' And as 'silver and gold' signify the truths and goods of the church, but here falsities and evils, when they are regarded only from the natural man, it is said 'neither shall he multiply exceedingly to himself silver and gold.'" The section ends with these words: "Because Solomon not only procured for himself horses from Egypt, but also multiplied wives, and heaped up silver and gold, he became an idolater, and after his death the kingdom was divided."

Solomon's original and chief wife was the daughter of Pharaoh king of Egypt. The number of the Apocalypse Explained from which we have been quoting concerns Egypt and contains several references to Solomon. In section 3 of that number we read, "'Egypt' signifies in the Word the natural man in both senses, good and bad," and in section 33: "Because Solomon represented the Lord in relation to both the celestial and the spiritual kingdoms, and as all who are of both these kingdoms are in intelligence and wisdom through the knowledges of truth and good and knowledges that confirm these, therefore 'Solomon took the daughter of Pharaoh to wife, and brought her into the city of David' (1 Kings 3:1); "'And afterwards he built for the daughter of Pharaoh a house beside the porch' (1 Kings 7:8). By this also was represented that knowledge, upon which all intelligence and wisdom is based, is signified by 'Egypt' in a good sense. And as every man of the church has a spiritual, a rational, and a natural, therefore Solomon built three houses, the house of God or the temple to stand for the spiritual, the house of the forest of Lebanon for the rational (for a 'cedar' and thence 'Lebanon' signifies the rational), and the house of the daughter of Pharaoh for the natural."

This leads us to the consideration of the celestial sense of our chapter, and it is important that we understand something of this, for the question is often asked, "How could Solomon represent the Lord when he had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines?" The writings give us a very clear explanation of this. In @DP 245 we read: "Solomon was permitted to establish idolatrous worship. This was done that he might represent the Lord's kingdom or the church, with all the varieties of religion in the whole world ... And because the Lord after the glorification of His Human had power over heaven and earth ... so Solomon His representative appeared in glory and magnificence, and possessed wisdom above all the kings of the earth, and also built the temple." The Lord's love reaches out to people of all religions and to the evil as well as to the good, and the laws of permission are His way of leading us without interfering with our freedom.

But we must not take these laws of permission into our own hands and use them as justification for indulging our own selfish inclinations. Solomon — both as an individual and as king of Israel — broke a law which he knew, and he and his people suffered accordingly. Read here also @AC

3246[3-4] which tells us that concubinage, while permitted to the earlier church, is not allowable for Christians. We are all responsible for doing our best to live up to the highest truths which have been revealed to us.

## 74:ELIJAH AND AHAB — 1 Kings 17; 18

### INTRO

All the notes this time begin with the division of Solomon's kingdom. and this background material is very important to the understanding of the lesson. Read at the least 1 Kings 11:26-43 and 12 to have the facts concerning the division clearly in mind. The reasons for the breaking up of the kingdom should be discussed with all the classes above the Primary.

### Adult

This is a very important lesson for the Adults because it describes and analyzes a temptation which we are all subject to right up to the end of our lives, and perhaps more especially we of the New Church. We can make no compromise between belief in the Lord and the Word and acceptance of worldly reasonings, and we should teach ourselves to examine the ideas of modern churchmen and Bible students to see which of them are really valid and which are based on rejection of the Lord and the Word. Elijah's words in 1 Kings 18:21 are addressed to us.

We are coming to the closing chapters of the history of the ancient Hebrew church. Let us pause to review briefly the outline of this history: the beginning in the call of Abraham to leave his own country and his father's house and go to the land of Canaan; the gradual development and growth through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; the settlement in Egypt under Joseph; the bondage, the call of Moses, the deliverance, and the wilderness journey, during which the commandments were given, the tabernacle built, and the twelve tribes molded into a nation; the initial conquest of the Holy Land under Joshua; the confused period of the Judges, when "every man did that which was right in his own eyes" and they fell into one difficulty after another; the transition under Samuel when they were brought back to the worship of the Lord: and finally the period of the kings, when under Saul, David, and Solomon they were brought into order, conquered all their enemies, captured Jerusalem, built the temple, and became for a short time a powerful, peaceful nation to whom other nations paid tribute.

It is not hard to see in this outline the story of the spiritual development of a man or woman from the first childish consciousness of the necessity of doing right instead of merely having one's own way, through the experiences of early education and development, the temporary bondage to natural knowledges and pleasures, the long and often painful and protesting struggle to bring the external life into order according to the commandments, the long-sought establishment in the land of spiritual living, the temptation to be satisfied with half—conquest and to compromise with one's deeper evils instead of rooting them out, the gradual unifying of the life by means of the adoption of ruling principles of a more and more interior character, until one tastes the power and peace which come only to a life inmost devoted to the service of the Lord.

But this is not the end. Such states do come to regenerating men and women even in this life, but they pass. They are only foretastes of heavenly happiness. We need these states, but we cannot

remain in them because we are always finite and imperfect. Our ideal, the Divine Humanity, is eternally ahead of us; our test is in Him — not in ourselves. So with every victory are associated new temptations, exposing deeper evils in us and opening the way — if we are faithful — for new conquests. We are told (1 Kings 11:1) that King Solomon loved many foreign women and in verse 4 that "it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God." The realization and enjoyment of victory and peace have performed their use, and the Lord permits evil once more to appeal to our affections, exposing some weakness of which we have not been conscious and starting us on a new spiritual task.

Swedenborg tells us that Israel represents the spiritual or "thinking" side of the church and Judah the celestial or "loving" side of the church in general or in the individual (@AC 4292), the relation to the Lord of the understanding and of the will. Many interesting things are said of the reason for the division of the kingdom with reference to the Israelitish Church as a representative church (see especially @AC 8770), but we are trying rather to relate the stories of the Word to the individual life. The history of the divided kingdom is the history of adult life. We all know from experience that desire and understanding do not always go together. We have good desires which we do not have the knowledge to carry out in act, and we have bad desires which we know better than to carry out. We ourselves are often in a "divided" state, desire pulling one way and judgment another. When desire and reason go hand in hand there is satisfaction and accomplishment, but if we remain too long in that state we slip into self-satisfaction and self-indulgence. These lead to division again, for it is in the divided state that we acquire new truths which point out our selfish feelings. The Lord has provided for this sort of division in order to make it possible for us to change. Our natural desires are selfish. If our thoughts were always in complete subjection to them, we should always think only the things which suited our selfish purposes, and the Lord could not reach us. However, the separation of thought and affection should be temporary, always looking toward reunion on a higher plane. When we have good desires, we should seek the wisdom to carry them out. When we learn new truth, we should cultivate the desire to put it in practice. A good desire which does not seek its appropriate knowledge not only fails to accomplish anything good but also rapidly degenerates into self-love, while truth which we are satisfied merely to know still more quickly becomes lost in the realm of fruitless reasonings. It was because Israel and Judah remained stubbornly separate that both were eventually taken captive.

Ahab was the seventh ruler of the separate kingdom of Israel.

He was not a descendant of its first king, Jeroboam. In fact, the reigning house in Israel had already been changed by violence three times. When our thought life is separated from its true purpose of serving for the growth of spiritual character, it is easily upset by every new and revolutionary idea. The kings of Israel had been uniformly evil, but it is written of Ahab that he "did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him." He not only continued the worship of the golden calves, which Jeroboam had set up, but he married Jezebel, daughter of the king of the Zidonians, who worshiped Baal, and set up a temple and altar to Baal in Samaria itself, which his father had made capital of Israel. The worship of Baal pictures the perversion of worship of the Lord into worship of self. The writings tell us (@AE 159) that Jezebel represents the delight of the loves of self and the world or "the church completely perverted," and (@AE 324[21]) that the worship of Baal represents worship from the loves of self and the world. So under Ahab — in our correspondence — the thought life has degenerated further than the setting up of "external good works" - the golden calves — as the highest good, and has come to consider self-gratification the object of life. Then

drought and famine came. When once we make up our minds that the object of life is to serve self, our minds are shut against truth from the Lord and everything in us which can nourish spiritual life dies. "No Divine truth flowing in out of heaven could be received because of the falsities of evil, which were signified by 'other gods' and by 'Baal,' whom they worshiped." (@AE 644[8]) The falsities of evil are the perverted reasonings which always spring up in our minds when we want to defend our selfish desires. We all know how we close our minds against good advice when we are bent upon having our own way. Under these conditions there could be neither dew nor rain in the land. In this crisis the Lord sent Elijah. The mission of a prophet was always to denounce evil and prophesy its punishment and to encourage the good by promising reward. Consequently the prophets were always hated by the evil and cherished by the good. We know that there were many other prophets besides those whose sayings are recorded in the Word; in chapter 18 we read of a hundred prophets whom Obadiah saved from Jezebel. The Israelites doubtless received much direct instruction as to their external conduct from such prophets throughout their history. But those whose sayings found place in the Word transmitted a message of permanent and universal import. Of these Elijah is one of the most important, so important that he is used throughout the Word as a symbol of the prophetical parts of the Word. We recall that Moses and Elijah, symbolizing the Law and the Prophets, were seen talking with the Lord at His Transfiguration. Swedenborg tells us that in the Word as it is in the heavens, in place of the name Elijah appears "the prophetical Word" (@DSS 71). In our lives Elijah stands for the Word prophesying, denouncing evil, showing us what the results of our evils will be if we persist in them, and showing us also the rewards of a good life. In the New Testament John the Baptist performs the same office and is called "Elias [Elijah] which was for to come" (Matthew 11:14). Today we do not need prophets in the flesh because we have the Word. The Word tells us all we need to know. If we do not reach the heavenly life, it is not because the Lord has failed to warn us just as He did not fail to warn Ahab through Elijah.

Elijah was preserved by the Lord at first in the land itself beside the little stream Cherith. The ravens which fed him represent the most natural thoughts about right and wrong which, though not true, can be used by the Lord to maintain some spiritual life. We recall that a raven was first sent out by Noah after the ark came to rest on Mount Ararat. When the stream dried up, Elijah was sent outside the land until the time was ripe for his return. In the same way, the Lord always preserves in us something of the Word, keeping it alive as long as possible in our active consciousness and then in the external region - "the back of our minds" - whence it can be recalled when we become desperate over our condition. A widow represents one who wants to be good but lacks truth. In the state of our life pictured by Israel under Ahab, a widow outside the Holy Land represents perhaps some little remainder of kindly feeling of an external type, something which can be appealed to, and with which there is, like the widow's son, some seed which may grow into spiritual life. Elijah found the widow almost dead, gathering two sticks with which to prepare her last meal and oil. This represents a time when there is almost no nourishment left even for the the promptings of external kindness. Elijah gave her a strange command: "Make me thereof a little cake first," meaning: "Do something, however small, in recognition of the Lord, and the little remains of goodness will be tided over and maintained until the way is again opened for truth to enter the life." Many people who have no real knowledge of the Lord and who in general lead self-satisfied and self-centered lives still hold in their memories a verse here and there from the Word which may from time to time influence their actions. The Golden Rule is perhaps the commonest of these. Do we not see in such instances Elijah preserved by the widow of Zarephath and in turn preserving her? Not uncommonly we are allowed to see the working out of the rest of the story. The widow's son died, picturing a time when life suddenly becomes empty and useless, when a person sees no possible happiness in the future. Then the Word which has remained with him shows its

power and renews his spiritual life by lifting up what he had thought dead and restoring it. He recognizes the power and its Source and turns to the Lord. However worldly and selfish we become, however persistently we shut out the voice of the Lord speaking to us through His Word, divine providence preserves Elijah somewhere on the outskirts of our minds so that to the very end of our life in this world there may be some little opportunity left for us to hear and repent.

The time came when even Ahab was forced to look for water.

He took with him his servant, the God-fearing Obadiah, and it is significant that in their search Ahab went one way and Obadiah another, and it was Obadiah who found Elijah and brought Ahab to him. Ahab's greeting was, "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" Self-interest always finds the voice of the Word troubling. Then follows the test. The people were summoned to Mount Carmel — picturing the fact that the whole mind must be lifted up where it can see and judge clearly in spiritual light. Elijah stated the issue clearly: "How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him." This is the fundamental issue which the Word places before every one of us. Love to the Lord and love of self are diametrically opposed to each other. If we choose to serve the Lord, we must put self-interest out of our considerations; if we choose to serve self, we must not expect any of the blessings promised to those who serve the Lord. We cannot serve the Lord on Sunday and self the other six days. We cannot serve self until we have made a fortune and then make up for it by building a church or endowing a hospital. If we say we believe in the sole Deity of Jesus Christ, we must study His life and follow Him, instead of thinking we or other men know better than He what the wise life is. If we say we believe the @DSSs to be the veritable Word of God, we must accept them as providentially given and preserved and not try to change them to suit men's ideas of what the Lord ought to have said. In our story, when Elijah declared the alternative, the people did not know what to answer. If we listen for any length of time to the promptings and demands of worldly and selfish reasoning, we become confused and hesitate to make the choice boldly.

There were many prophets of Baal but only one prophet of the Lord — many false ways but only one true one. The voices of worldly reasoning are many and loud. The prophets called upon Baal all day. They jumped about and even cut themselves with knives and lancets. Of a prophet we suspect to be false we may at times hear someone say, "He must be right. Think how hard he has worked, how he has given his whole life to the study of this thing!" But the fire from heaven does not fall upon the sacrifices of those who do not worship the Lord. The fire from heaven is the Lord's unselfish love coming into the heart, which alone can give happiness. Those who look to self and to human intelligence for direction are never satisfied.

Elijah repaired the altar of the Lord which was broken down.

He built his altar of twelve stones. We must return to the worship of the Lord and accept all the truths of the Word as necessary to genuine goodness. We must prepare our sacrifice according to the Lord's order, doing whatever good we do in His name and not in our own. Then we may let men argue about it all they like, as Elijah allowed them to drench the sacrifice with water until the water ran all around the altar: it will make no difference. For when we call upon the Lord, He will hear and crown our efforts with happiness and peace, which are the evidence of His presence. The people who are happy are those who do not think of themselves but who look upon life as an opportunity to serve the Lord. We are happy when we have forgotten ourselves in love for the Lord's work. If we will go up to Carmel and observe the test, we shall have no doubt of the truth.

Then the people were ordered to take all the prophets of Baal and let not one of them escape, "and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there." When we have really seen that the Lord is the only one worthy of our service, we must search out all the false reasonings which have defended our self-love and destroy them in the light of truth from the Word. Then Elijah told Ahab to eat and drink. Our "individuality," which has led us so far astray, is allowed to recover strength so that when the rain begins — when truth again flows into the mind from the Word — we may go forward to a new spiritual state.

## 75:ELIJAH AT HOREB — 1 Kings 19

### INTRO

This lesson follows immediately after the last one, so there is no transition problem. However, for all but the two youngest classes an understanding of the reasons for the division of Solomon's kingdom and of the nature of the kingdom of Israel is as important as the specific story for today. Thus the teacher might begin by reviewing these points.

### Adult

The last point mentioned for the Seniors should be stressed in this class also. Perhaps the best discussion topics are Solomon's sin, the golden calves, the meaning of Jezebel, and the general significance of Elijah's return to Beersheba and to Horeb.

Solomon's death marks the passing of the state of joy in doing the Lord's will. The sense of duty remains — his son Rehoboam — in our hearts for a long time. The southern part of the land — Judah — remained faithful to Solomon's line and kept its capital at Jerusalem and its chief worship at the temple. A number of its kings were good. But there is a state of resistance to the rule of the Lord in our minds. The ten northern tribes refused to accept Rehoboam and set up a separate kingdom called Israel, with its capital at Shechem. Jeroboam, the leader of the revolt, was its first king.

Jeroboam naturally was not anxious that the two kingdoms should be reunited, and he recognized that his people would be likely to go back to their old allegiance if they were allowed to continue in their familiar manner and place of worship. So he set up new objects of worship in new places — the golden calves at Bethel and Dan — and inaugurated a new feast to hold the people's interest within the limits of his own territory. "By a calf is signified the good of the external or natural man." (@AC 9391[2]) We are familiar with the thought that the oxen and calves in the Old Testament sacrificial law picture our affections for useful work of an external kind, which should be made sacred to the Lord, that is, done from love to Him and with the recognition that all power to do good is from Him. When the calf is made an object of worship instead of a sacrifice, it means the setting up of external good works as the all of religion, enabling us to give ourselves credit for goodness.

Ahab was the seventh ruler of the separate kingdom of Israel.

The reigning house in Israel had already been changed by violence three times. When our thought life is separated from its true purpose of furthering the growth of the heavenly kingdom, it is easily upset by every new and revolutionary idea. The kings of Israel had been uniformly evil, but it is

written of Ahab that he "did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him." He not only continued the worship of the golden calves, but he married Jezebel, the daughter of the king of the Zidonians, who worshiped Baal and set up a temple and altar to Baal in Samaria itself, which Ahab's father had made capital of Israel. The worship of Baal pictures the perversion of worship of the Lord into worship of self. The writings tell us (@AE 159) that Jezebel represents the "delight of the loves of self and the world," or "the church completely perverted," the worship of Baal representing "worship from the loves of self and the world" (@AE 324[21]).

Jezebel was the cause of Elijah's flight to Horeb. Ahab and the people had been convinced by the great demonstration at Mount Carmel of the impotence of Baal and the power of Jehovah, had promised to serve Jehovah, and had willingly seized the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and brought them down to Elijah at the brook Kishon to be slain. The voice of Baal speaking to the mind had been silenced. But the delight of self-love was still very much alive and in the person of Jezebel rose up to slay Elijah.

Jezebel's threat completely discouraged Elijah and caused him to flee. In this flight he left Israel altogether and went far to the south, first to Beersheba, the southernmost city of the Holy Land, prominent in the story of Abraham, and then on to Horeb. When one lacks sufficient understanding of the Word to enable him to defend it against the attacks of the loves of self and the world, his only salvation is in a return to childhood states of trust and obedience. Elijah took another step in the right direction when from Beersheba he went a day's journey into the wilderness and sat down under a juniper (broom) tree and "requested for himself that he might die." This seems to be a picture of complete discouragement, but as is frequently the case the internal meaning is very different. It expresses the recognition of one's own helplessness and ignorance, willingness to rely on the protection of divine providence, and the desire to be completely emptied of self. This is carried further by his lying down to sleep, sleep being the state in which consciousness of self and the world is relinquished and the Lord can come in closer contact with us. The immediate influx of the Divine into this state is pictured by the appearance of the angel with food and drink. The cruse of water is the truth needed, and the cake baked on the coals suggests goodness which has been developed by experience.

This is enough to give us strength to endure temptations until we reach Horeb or Sinai, i.e., the assurance that the commandments are the eternal laws of God. On the mount sheltered in a cave — a state of relative obscurity — Elijah was given the experience of witnessing the wind, the earthquake, and the fire — a demonstration of the upheaval which takes place in the mind, heart, and conduct of the natural man when he tries to conform to the will of God. But he was told that these effects were not the voice of God. They are the necessary reformation which must take place before a person can really hear the still small voice. Then Elijah was ready to leave the cave, wrapping his face in his mantle — making use of the veiling protection of the letter of the Word. He was given the encouragement of knowing that he was not alone in his efforts to serve the Lord, since there were still seven thousand in Israel who had not bowed the knee to Baal. And he was given instructions for the reorganization of Israel: a new king in Syria, a new ruling principle in the external life; a new king in Israel, a new ruling principle in the mind; and a new prophet, a new and stronger voice of the Lord in the land. The occupation of Elisha when Elijah found him pictures the life of devotion to useful service and the desire for the truth needed for such service which are the necessary ground for the commission of a messenger of the Lord.

# 76:ELIJAH'S MANTLE — 2 Kings 2

## INTRO

The lesson should begin with a brief review of the story of the division of Solomon's kingdom and the reasons for it. The substitution in Israel of the worship of the golden calves at Bethel and Dan in place of worship in the temple at Jerusalem makes an excellent connection between the general lesson of the divided kingdom and the mission of Elijah and Elisha.

## Adult

The meaning of Solomon's sin and of the division of the kingdom and the setting up of the golden calves makes a good discussion topic to begin with. This should be followed by a discussion of the meaning of the wrapping together of the mantle, Elisha's vision, its result, and Elisha's first acts as prophet.

The transition from the peaceful, triumphant reign of Solomon to the divided kingdom is a sudden and striking one. Why did Solomon's kingdom not endure? The external reasons, as stated in the letter, seem inadequate. One would have expected the whole people to be too proud of their obvious glory and prosperity and of their great capital and beautiful temple to be tempted to rebel. The answer is to be found in the spiritual meaning of Solomon's own later acts. We recall that in the latter part of his reign he married many wives from other nations and set up altars so that they might worship their own gods, and finally began himself to worship those gods in addition to his own. There is a grave warning for us in this story. Solomon's reign at its best represents the highest state we can reach, when we have come to obey the truth from love. But this highest state carries with it a deep temptation, the temptation to imagine that now we can do no wrong and to be proud of our own all-embracing love. This leads to an unwillingness to see anything but good in ourselves and others, and to a state in which we excuse and finally embrace many attractive forms of evil. At heart we still intend to be good — as Judah remained faithful to Solomon's line and continued the temple worship — but our minds, having accepted the idea that everyone who does the outward kindly acts which the world recognizes as good is a good person, are led further and further astray. After Jeroboam set up the golden calves in Bethel and Dan to keep his people from going to Jerusalem to worship, the kings of Israel, who represent the governing principles in the mind, became more and more wicked.

The Word is full of warnings against this state. No matter how good our intentions may be, it is the mind (i.e., our thought life) to which the Word must address itself. So it was to Israel, the rebellious northern kingdom, that the great prophets Elijah and Elisha were sent. In @AC 5321[5] we learn that "by both Elijah and Elisha was represented the Lord as to the Word." In the writings they are frequently mentioned together and no clear distinction is drawn between the two. Yet we know there must be a distinction. The power of Elijah passes over to Elisha in double measure, indicating that Elisha must represent a more potent presence of the Lord through His Word than Elijah. The Word in our minds increases in power as we progress in understanding and experience. We are familiar with the thought that garments picture external truths, like the language with which we clothe our thoughts. The prophet's mantle pictures the letter of the Word, "the Word in ultimates" (@AE 395[4]), in which, we are told, the power of the Word is in its fullness. The same number gives us a detailed explanation of the parting of the Jordan by Elijah's mantle. As the Jordan represents

the first truths which initiate us into the church, the mantle wrapped together — that is, the sense of the letter of the Word taken as a whole — has power to part the waters for us. We must have a knowledge of the general teaching of the Scriptures before we can rightly understand the particular passages of the Word which are presented to us. Failing such general knowledge, we are often baffled by the waters of Jordan: particular passages do not yield their true meaning and are turned into falsity. So in @AC 4255[4] we are told that the dividing of the Jordan pictures the "removal of evils and falsities." The same miracle was accomplished by the ark in Joshua's time, because the ark represents the commandments and the commandments are a summary of the whole teaching of the Word. When Elijah first called Elisha (1 Kings 19:19), he cast his mantle upon him, and now Elisha assumes the mantle which Elijah drops, both these incidents representing the transfer of the representation of the Word from Elijah to Elisha.

Elisha asked for a double portion of Elijah's spirit. Those who grow up in the New Church and are introduced gradually to a knowledge of the spiritual sense of the Word are not conscious of the transition from Elijah to Elisha; but for one who has tried to understand the Word from a knowledge of the letter only and then finds the New Church teaching concerning correspondences, the experience of Elisha is a very real one. Elisha was told that if he saw Elijah when he was taken into heaven, his request would be granted. Elisha saw first a chariot of fire and horses of fire which parted Elijah from him. That is, Elisha's eyes were opened to see a representation of the Word in the heavens; the chariot of fire pictures "the doctrine of love and charity from the Word" and the horses of fire "the doctrine of faith therefrom" (@AC 2762). And then he saw Elijah lifted up by a whirlwind into heaven. When we are permitted to see that within the letter of the Word there is a heavenly meaning which teaches a consistent doctrine of love to the Lord and the neighbor, the Word is lifted up as by a whirlwind in our minds. The letter, Elijah's mantle, remains but now has a double power. This is a very real experience. When we study the Word in the light of correspondences, passages which have been obscure and even meaningless to us are lighted up and become effective helps for life; and not only that, but we find ourselves acquiring an ability to remember and to quote the Word in our conversation with others and to pass on something of our new understanding and especially something of the recognition of the power of the Word.

The meaning of the healing of the waters of Jericho is explained in detail in @AC 9325[9-10]. Jericho, as a city near the Jordan, pictures an external or natural teaching concerning the letter of the Word. If there is not the desire to apply these teachings to life, the waters are bitter and produce no fruit. The new cruse pictures new knowledge of good and truth and the salt "the longing of truth for good." The spring of the waters, into which Elisha cast the salt, is "the natural of man which receives the knowledges of truth and good, and which is amended by the longing of truth for good." When we see the Word only in its external meaning, many passages have no effect upon our lives because we cannot see their application. We often seem to read the Word without effect — our land is barren. This state can be healed by the added power which comes with our new understanding. If we have the desire to apply what we learn, every passage which we read with our new understanding can be made effective in our lives.

An example of this is found in the last verses of our chapter, where we are shown the office of the prophet in pointing out and condemning evil. As in the story of Uzzah, the punishment seems to us at first too severe for the offense, and here again a literal understanding of the passage has sometimes turned people away from the Word. But when we realize that Elisha represents the Word and his hair the letter of the Word, we see that to call Elisha "thou baldhead" is to ridicule the letter of the Word. Children always picture beginnings. Thus our story teaches us the danger of

beginning to take the letter of the Word lightly, even through mere thoughtlessness, to make jokes about it or to laugh at such jokes, to make light of any of its stories. The punishment of the children was that they were torn by bears from the wood. Bears picture "those who read the Word and do not understand it." If we allow ourselves to break down our reverence for the letter of the Word, we become a prey to all those arguments and influences which emanate from the study of the Word as a mere natural history product. This is spiritual destruction. "For all the power and sanctity of the Word are gathered up and have their seat in the sense of the letter; for without this sense the Word could not exist, since without it the Word would be like a house without a foundation, which would be shaken by the wind, and thus be overthrown and fall to pieces." (@AE 781[11]). See also @AC 3301[9], @AR 573, and @DSS 39.

## 77:ELISHA AND NAAMAN — 2 Kings 5

### INTRO

The teachers should review 1 Kings 12, in which the story of the division of the kingdom is told and also the setting up of the two golden calves which led Israel into idolatry and consequent steady decline. Mention Elijah and Elisha and their mission, and then introduce the story for today by speaking of Syria as one of the enemies harassing Israel.

### Adult

Naaman's leprosy and its cure are the best discussion topic. They picture a common state and need in our modern life. Elisha's first treatment of Naaman points up the fact that the Word remains closed until we choose to obey its simplest precepts.

The story of Naaman the Syrian is a striking one. It is explained in some detail in @AE 475[18] (see the quotation below). In Luke 4:27 the Lord Himself refers to this story, suggesting that it was easier for Naaman the Gentile to be healed than for the many lepers that were in Israel; this is a part of His condemnation of the people of Nazareth for not receiving Him. We know that the good Gentiles in the Word represent those who wish to be good but do not know how, from no fault of their own. When Syria is an enemy of Israel it pictures falsification of the knowledges of truth and good through dependence upon human instead of upon divine wisdom.

Naaman was a leper. In @AC 6963 we read that leprosy pictures "the profanation of truth" and that "to believe in truths and to live contrary to them is to profane them." According to that definition, we are all lepers, for not one of us lives up to all the truth he knows and believes in. Yet we may all be like Naaman, desiring to be clean and willing to go to the Word for the means. The "lepers of Israel" picture those who do not wish to amend their lives. Chapters 13 and 14 of Leviticus enumerate many forms of leprosy, some curable and some incurable, and give the laws relating to them in detail. So there are many kinds and degrees of profanation, forms which may be corrected, and deeper forms, even to the "unforgivable sin" (Luke 12:10). @DP 231 gives us a very interesting account of seven types of profanation.

Naaman's leprosy was presumably one of the milder forms, since it apparently did not interfere with his office as captain of the king's army or with his family life. The means of his being led to go to Elisha is interesting — the little maid who had been carried captive out of Israel. When, like the

Syrians, we are confident of our own knowledge of what is right and of our ability to direct our own lives, we often attack Israel — that is, we argue against the authority of the teachings of the church — and we feel that we are victorious. Sometimes in the process we acquire some little affection for some of the things of the church which we can make serve our own purposes. And we all have some remains of innocent affection left from our early childhood. The Lord uses these, when we wake to our spiritual need, to direct us to the Word.

Naaman went first to the king of Israel, offering to purchase healing from him. In the same way, people in need are likely to go first to the most obvious representative of religion in their community, with the idea of "getting into church work" without searching out "the prophet" — that is, without trying to find out what the Word really teaches. They are not only disappointed themselves, but they often make trouble for the organization to which they have turned, as Naaman frightened the king by demands which the king could not satisfy.

The Jordan pictures the simple precepts which introduce people into the Holy Land of spiritual living — especially the commandments. We cannot enter this land without obeying the commandments. Naaman expected Elisha to come out and show him some special manifestation of power, but Elisha merely sent him a message. The Word is no respecter of persons. It does not have one method for the rich and another for the poor. It offers no one instantaneous regeneration. It says to every person alike, "Go and wash in Jordan seven times" — that is, "Go, learn the commandments and keep them faithfully until they shall have had time to do their work in your life — until your life is clean in the sight of God." But Naaman was angry and said, "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them and be clean?" We do not like to submit simply to the commandments. We like to think that our own ideas of right and wrong are better. Men think the world has outgrown the commandments, that new conditions demand new standards. Abana and Pharpar picture man-made ideas of right and wrong. But Naaman's servants persuaded him to try the prophet's prescription. So, when we reach the point where we realize that we must have some new knowledge, some new way of life, that we need the help of the Lord, our common sense should tell us at least to try the simple method which has cured men and women for ages. "My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it?" How prone we are to demand some new, startling, heroic mode of life! But steady, persistent obedience to the Lord's laws is the only road to a clean life, the only road to any real life. We simply do not know better than the Lord. "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps."

When Naaman had been healed, he went back to thank the prophet and offered to reward him, but Elisha would accept nothing. This is one of the many passages in the Word which teach that we can never pay our debt to the Lord. Whatever righteousness we may attain is not ours, but the Lord's in us. The Lord gives us His gifts freely and our part is merely to keep ourselves in a state in which we are capable of receiving them and transmitting them to our neighbor. So Naaman went away promising to serve the Lord. But presently Elisha's servant, Gehazi, caught up with him and accepted a reward from him on the pretext that it was needed by someone else. Sometimes we go through a spiritual experience which leaves us in a state of humility and gratitude to the Lord, but when we have gone "a little way," our natural selfishness catches up with us, demanding that we give ourselves some credit for our good behavior and supporting its claim with various pretenses. Naaman "lighted down from the chariot" to meet Gehazi, as we too often are ready to abandon the teaching which is carrying us forward in a new resolution because of the prompting of a selfish thought. But Elisha was not deceived by Gehazi's lies. The Word penetrates the excuses with which

we seek to cover our selfishness. "The Lord looketh upon the heart." And then Gehazi was punished with Naaman's leprosy. In the light of the Word self-interest is seen for what it really is, a disease which, if not rooted out, will spread throughout the system until it deprives us of spiritual life.

## 78:THE REIGN OF ASA — 1 Kings 15:9-24

### INTRO

At the beginning of the lesson emphasis should be on the fact of the divided kingdom and the difference between Israel and Judah. Review briefly the story of Elijah and Elisha. Be sure the children know that Judah was the part of the country which remained faithful to the descendants of David and Solomon and continued to worship in the temple at Jerusalem.

### Adult

The correspondence of the high places and the meaning of Asa's mistake in looking to Syria for help instead of to the Lord are probably the most fruitful discussion topics for this class. Read aloud in class 2 Chronicles 16:7-10, and point out how the books of Chronicles round out the narrative of the books of Kings in spite of the fact that they do not have an inner sense. Suggest that the class study at home chapters 15, 16, and 17 of 2 Chronicles and compare them with our assignment from 1 Kings.

Judah pictures our will — our desires, affections, motives — in their relation to the Lord. When once we have experienced the state pictured by Solomon, the peaceful victorious state in which our wills and our reason unite in serving the Lord, it is not easy for our will to change and become evil. The mind goes astray more readily than the will, if once the will has become regenerate. This is pictured by the contrast between the history of Israel and the history of Judah. Israel degenerated rapidly after the separation, as we have seen; its sovereignty was not passed down in unbroken succession, and its kings were evil. Judah, on the other hand, remained loyal to the line of David throughout its history, and several of its kings were good, although some weakness and compromise was found in most of them. The people of the land were idolatrous and wicked, but the kings endeavored to serve Jehovah. This is a picture of the state of our affectional life when we still wish to be good but have allowed our minds to turn from reliance upon the Word to reliance upon worldly considerations and knowledges. Our ruling principle, the king, for a long time remains prevailingly faithful to the Lord, but our lesser desires and affections, the people of the land, are led to follow our wandering thoughts, and become more and more corrupt until the king can no longer bring them back to order.

A glance at a map of the divided kingdom will help us to see the situation. See how close Jerusalem actually was to the northern border of Judah. When Israel, which should have been a great protecting bulwark, had instead become an enemy, Jerusalem was very vulnerable. The Ramah which is mentioned in our chapter for today is not the Ramah of Samuel. Ramah merely means "a hill," and there were several Ramahs. This Ramah was very close to Jerusalem on the border of Israel. Geba, which Asa built with the materials from Ramah, was just to the east of it, also on the border.

The little incident in regard to Baasha and Asa, considered in the light of this glance at the map, can

readily be seen to picture the way in which our mind, once perverted, seeks control of the will by building up a stronghold of reasoning just on the border where our affections must express themselves in ideas. In the early stages of degeneration — Asa was only the third king of Judah — the good will in us is able to tear down this stronghold and to use the same materials, the same facts and arguments, to build another stronghold a little to the east of the former, a little closer to the Lord, which may serve as a defense to our religion instead of a threat. Geba also means "a hill". Every detail in the story of the relations between Israel and Judah throughout this period teaches us something about the interplay of thought and desire in us.

Asa, the great-grandson of Solomon, was a good king. Verse 11 tells us that he "did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, as did David his father," and verse 14 says that in spite of certain shortcomings "Asa's heart was perfect with the Lord all his days." He "took away the sodomites out of the land, and removed all the idols that his fathers had made." He even removed Maachah, his mother — actually his grandmother — from being queen because she made an idol, and he destroyed her idol. Before Asa came to the throne Judah had had two bad kings, Rehoboam and Abijam. When the intellect abandons its allegiance to the Lord, when the mind ceases to accept the Word of the Lord as revelation, the immediate effect on the heart is bad. But there soon comes a time when the well-meaning heart recognizes at least the obvious evil results and seeks reform. This is Asa. The sodomites, according to Swedenborg, represent an extreme degree of the "love of exercising command for the sake of self and not for use" (Spiritual Diary 5939[e], 6096[29]).

"But the high places were not removed." @AC 2722 tells us: "In the Ancient Church holy worship was performed on mountains and in groves; on mountains, because mountains signified the celestial things of worship; and in groves, because groves signified its spiritual things." Later, as with many other representative forms, the significance was lost sight of and the mountains and groves worshiped as holy in themselves. The Israelites even built themselves high places and made images of their groves, turning what was originally holy into idolatry. Read John 4:20-23. High places in a good sense represent exaltation of the Lord, but in a bad sense exaltation of self. Just as the high places in the time of the divided kingdom were set up throughout the land, so the sense of our own importance and intelligence may come to pervade our daily living. There is scarcely a field of our activity where we shall not find it if we examine ourselves honestly. These are our "high places," and as long as we allow them to remain, we shall soon find new "idols" to replace those we may recognize and reject.

In the spiritual sense this failure to remove the high places leads directly to the rest of Asa's story. For even though apparently he kept his good intentions to the end, Asa was led into the serious mistake of looking to men for aid instead of to the Lord. When Baasha, king of Israel, threatened to hem him in, he turned to Syria for help. In 2 Chronicles 16:7 ff. we learn that the prophet Hanani rebuked Asa for trusting in the Syrians instead of in the Lord and that Asa was angry at the rebuke. Asa had not purged himself of self-esteem. In a good sense Syria represents the right kind of reasoning from the knowledges of truth and good on the natural plane. That there were remains of the Ancient Church in Syria we learned in the story of Balaam and in the story of the Magi. But the character of Asa's reliance on Syria pictures reliance on these knowledges as belonging to the human intelligence, not as coming from the Lord. In return for the aid of the king of Syria, Asa gave him "all the silver and gold that were left in the treasures of the house of the Lord, and the treasures of the king's house." This is a picture of sacrificing interior good and truth for the sake of external immunity and advancement. Without the bulwark of spiritual intelligence, which Israel should have been to Judah, our wills are prone to give up one treasure after another through fear

of the strength of our enemies. Once our minds have become convinced that the only valid truth is what men discover for themselves, we begin to give up one by one the treasures which have come to us by revelation.

When Asa was old it is recorded that "he was diseased in his feet." Here again the story as given in 2 Chronicles adds interesting details. When we have allowed ourselves to turn from reliance on the Lord to trust in the fickle support of human intelligence, even our moral character declines. The feet, as we know, picture our daily conduct, the way in which we walk. We recall how many times the Lord was called upon to heal the halt and the lame. When we undertake to set up human intelligence as the test of truth, we soon become like those who "reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man." The Lord knows better than we do what is right. It is the Lord who can say to us, "This is the way, walk ye in it," and "I am the way, the truth, and the life." The quotation from Isaiah just above is from chapter 40, which ends: "But they that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."

## 79:HEZEKIAH AND ISAIAH — 2 Kings 20

### INTRO

This is a chapter characteristic of the history of Judah. Start by reminding the children of Elijah and Elisha, and telling them of the captivity of Israel to Assyria. Remind them that all the kings of Israel were wicked kings, and point out that Judah survived longer because several of its kings were good kings like Hezekiah. This is clearly pictured in the story of the prolonging of Hezekiah's life.

### Adult

The general line which seems indicated for development with the adults is the gradual encroachment of worldly reasoning and of self-satisfaction possible even after a regenerate state has been reached. The history of the divided kingdom is the picture of this most subtle and dangerous temptation of the adult life of the church member.

Hezekiah came to the throne in Judah in the third year of Hoshea, the last king of Israel. It was in the sixth year of Hezekiah's reign that Israel was carried away captive by Assyria, and the strangers from the eastern countries, whose descendants were to be the Samaritans of the New Testament, were brought in to resettle the land. This we recognize as a picture of the mind wholly given over to worldly ideas and reasonings. But when we have once experienced the state pictured by Solomon — the peaceful, victorious state in which our wills and our reason unite in serving the Lord — it is not so easy for our wills to change and become evil. The understanding changes more readily than the will, for better or worse, and this is pictured by the contrast between the history of Israel and that of Judah. Israel degenerated rapidly after the separation; its sovereignty was not passed down in unbroken succession; and its kings were consistently evil. Judah, on the other hand, remained loyal to a single line throughout its history, and many of its kings were good, although some weakness and compromise were found in most of them. The people of the land were idolatrous, but the kings endeavored to serve Jehovah. This is the state of our affectional life when we still wish to be good but have allowed our minds to turn from reliance upon the Word to reliance upon human reasonings. The ruling principle in our heart, the king, for a long time remains prevailingly faithful

to the Lord, but our lesser desires and affections, the people of the land, are led to follow our wandering thoughts and become more and more corrupt until the king can no longer bring them back into order.

Hezekiah was one of the most thoroughgoing reformers of all the kings of Judah. There may come a time in our lives when we have fallen so far from our best state that we shock ourselves, and we decide upon a complete about-face. Hezekiah "removed the high places, and broke the images, and cut down the groves." He also "brake in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made," "rebelled against the king of Assyria," and "smote the Philistines." This is a picture of a thoroughgoing self-examination. @AC 2722 tells us, "In the Ancient Church holy worship was performed on mountains and in groves; on mountains, because mountains signified the celestial things of worship; and in groves, because groves signified its spiritual things." Later, as with many other representative forms, the significance was lost sight of and the thing worshiped for itself. So they even built themselves high places and made images of their groves, turning what was originally holy into idolatry. We do this when we cling blindly to forms and phrases of worship which no longer have any meaning for us, when we make the traditional externals of worship the all of religion. The Lord said of the scribes and Pharisees, "Ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith" (Matthew 23:23). To understand the meaning of Hezekiah's destruction of the high places read also John 4:20-23. Read the story of the origin of the brazen serpent in Numbers 21:4-9 and the reference to it in John 3:14-15. The brazen serpent properly pictures the glorified sensuous of the Lord through which we can receive power from Him to overcome our sense temptations. But the people had come to worship the brazen serpent as an idol, with no desire to correct their evils but only to keep out of trouble. In much the same way, the Christian church came to look upon the Lord's physical suffering as efficacious in itself and to believe that He would save men from the eternal consequences of their evils without any amendment of life on their part. Hezekiah also rebelled against Assyria, but he was not able to maintain his independence. Judah was saved from Assyria by a miracle performed by the Lord for Hezekiah because Hezekiah obeyed His commandment given through the prophet Isaiah. As long as we obey the Lord and trust in Him, no mere argument of the worldly reason can rob us of goodness.

But Hezekiah had previously tried to pacify the king of Assyria by giving him the gold and silver of the temple, even stripping the gold from the gates and pillars. His compromises — which picture our compromises with worldly reasoning — had weakened him greatly. So "in these days was Hezekiah sick unto death." The sickness of the good king means that the desire to be good had almost perished. Isaiah the prophet tells Hezekiah that he is about to die. But our story shows that even at this point, if we turn to the Lord and pray humbly that our good desires may be strengthened and renewed, we have the promise of the Word — Isaiah's second message — that we can be restored. Read Isaiah 1:18, Jeremiah 18:8, and Ezekiel 18:21. The Lord does not change His mind; the change is in us. So long as we are in this world it is never too late for us to turn to the Lord and try to change our ways; and if we do, we are sure of His help.

Boils and ulcers are pictures of some evil which has been hidden in the character and now breaks out into open misconduct. At Isaiah's command a lump of figs was placed on Hezekiah's boil and it was healed. The fig tree is the symbol of the natural man, and its fruit is natural goodness (@AE 403[17]). When we have sunk so far that we are living in open evil, the first thing necessary is to correct the outward conduct, to do good deeds instead of bad. When we get into such a state, for example, that we find ourselves constantly saying and doing disagreeable things to others on the

slightest provocation, the first remedy to apply is to force ourselves to say something pleasant instead, and to find good that we can do instead of evil. But this is only the first step, the outward reform, and it will not last. Isaiah told Hezekiah that his life should be prolonged fifteen years, and fifteen is one of the symbols for "a little." In 2 Chronicles 32:25 we are told that Hezekiah did not profit by his lesson, for he "rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him; for his heart was lifted up." If we merely reform our outward conduct and continue to cherish pride and selfishness within, we receive no permanent benefit.

The sign given Hezekiah has always interested Bible readers.

Swedenborg tells us that the "steps of Ahaz" (translated "dial of Ahaz") picture the gradual decline of the Jewish Church. As Hezekiah was a good king, its time was prolonged. We may compare this miracle with that found in Joshua 10:12-13. In @AE 401[18] we are assured that the sun did not actually stand still — for that would have inverted the whole order of nature — but that the people were given a light from the Lord. Even in nature we know that the sun does not actually go down: it is the earth that turns away from the sun. So it is with the Lord, who is our Sun. The Lord never turns from us, but we turn from Him. When we turn to Him again, our daytime is renewed.

The rest of the chapter shows us the beginning of the end for Judah. Babylon pictures the worst form of self-love which makes one wish to dominate everyone and everything. The desire to impose our will upon others is the direct opposite of the Lord's love; yet this desire often comes into our hearts so gradually and in so pleasing a form that we do not recognize its evil nature until it has gained possession of us. Hezekiah's heart was "lifted up."

When we have done well and are enjoying the satisfactions of a good life, we are easily led to "show our treasures" to the enemy, and the love of dominion creeps in.

## 80:KING JOSIAH — 2 Kings 22

### INTRO

Israel did not heed the warnings of Elijah and Elisha and was finally taken captive by the Assyrians. All her people were carried away captive and never came back. But in Judah, although there had been a number of wicked kings, and worship of the Lord had declined and idolatry flourished, there had also been several good kings who instituted reforms and tried to restore true worship. Assyria was not allowed to overcome Judah. This brings us to our lesson. All teachers should read chapter 23 as well as 22.

### Adult

The effect on Judah of the fall of Israel and its meaning may be the most fruitful discussion topic. Follow this with the lesson to be drawn from the inability of Josiah to avert the consequences of the sins of his people. The teacher will find additional suggestions on this point in the Senior notes.

We have had the story of Hezekiah, of his good reign in Judah, his illness and recovery, his conversations with the prophet Isaiah, and his final weakness in showing all his treasures to the ambassadors of the king of Babylon. Manasseh and Amon, son and grandson of Hezekiah, were evil

kings, reestablishing the worship of idols and of Baal, and even setting up idolatrous worship in the temple itself. Amon reigned only two years and was slain by his servants in his own house, and his son Josiah was made king.

Josiah was only eight years old when he came to the throne. We learn from 2 Chronicles 34:3 that "in the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David, his father: and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places, and the groves, and the carved images, and the molten images." Our lesson tells us that in the eighteenth year of his reign he had the temple repaired. Others before him had cleansed and repaired the temple, but each time when idolatry arose again, the temple soon became polluted and fell into disrepair. The temple is a picture of what our lives should be, of a true heavenly character in which the Lord is worshiped in heart and mind and His laws carried out in every act of outward conduct. When "idols" are set up — that is, when other motives are allowed to rule our lives in place of service to the Lord — heavenly character begins to degenerate. The truths which have formed it - the walls of our "temple" — are broken down, and all sorts of unworthy ideas and practices creep in. When we awaken to the condition into which our character has fallen and begin to repair it, we find that we must use every bit of truth we have which can lead us into connection with the Lord again, like the silver which the keepers of the door of the temple gathered from the people who came to worship. But we note that there was no accounting made of this money. What we do for the Lord should be done willingly and faithfully with no desire for praise or reward.

While the temple was being cleaned out, a book of the law was found. This was undoubtedly the scroll containing one or more of the five books of Moses which had been laid up beside the ark from the time of its completion (Deuteronomy 31:24-26), but had been mislaid and forgotten and perhaps buried under rubbish during the misuse of the temple (@AC 9396). When we seek to cleanse and repair our characters, we inevitably "find this book of the law" — we come to realize that only the teachings of the Word can direct us in living a good life. And when, like Josiah, we read the book with humble minds, we realize how far we have fallen from the standards of truly heavenly living. Josiah tore his clothes, which we learn is a symbol of "grief on account of truth being lost" (@AC 4763), and we know that truth which has not been applied to life is lost. Then Josiah set out to make sweeping reforms, going even further than Hezekiah; for he not only destroyed the idols, the groves, and the high places in Judah, but went up into what had been Israel and destroyed the altar to the golden calf which Jeroboam had set up at Bethel, fulfilling the prophecy made concerning it in Jeroboam's time (1 Kings 13:1-2). We may recall the meaning of Jeroboam's altars. A study of the Word in genuine humility will break down the idea that merely natural goodness is enough.

Josiah was terrified by the curses pronounced against the nation in the book of the law in the event of their forsaking the Lord and pursuing the very course which they had actually been pursuing (Deuteronomy 28:15-68). He sent to Huldah the prophetess to inquire of the Lord whether these things would surely come to pass, and Huldah told him that the prophecies would be fulfilled but that, because of his own humility and righteousness, the doom would not fall in his day.

In the same way, we often wish to feel that the consequences of evil may after all be averted; but the Word assures us that they cannot be escaped, although whatever of humility and genuine goodness we have will also have its reward. This is a lesson which we all need to have clearly in mind; it is taught in the stories of both Hezekiah and Josiah. The effects of evil are inevitable. It is true that so long as we are in the world it is never too late to recognize our evils, repent, and begin to do well and lay the foundation at least of a heavenly character; but we are not the same persons

we might have been if we had not done evil. Some opportunities have been lost forever, some of our original possibilities cut off. We can never actually make up for our present wrong acts. Even a brave and conscientious king like Josiah could not save the people from the consequences of their evils. And we must remember that the effect of evil is cumulative. Every time we deliberately choose to do what we know is wrong we make it harder for ourselves to do right the next time. And our lives are to be judged by the very book of the law which Josiah read (see Revelation 20:12). We too should read that book humbly and be shocked to find how far we have departed from its commands, and set about cleansing our lives and repairing the breaches in our characters.

As the crowning act of all his work, Josiah celebrated the Passover. The Passover, we remember, symbolizes deliverance from bondage to evil and falsity through the Lord's victory over the hells. The people were ordered to observe the Passover annually at a certain time. We, if we lived orderly lives, would regularly experience this acknowledgment of the Lord's saving power and the peace and joy which follow it. But as the people had forsaken the Lord, the feast had been neglected and only occasionally, after some great reform like that of Josiah, is its celebration mentioned. So we experience this state all too seldom, for it never comes from self-satisfaction, but from the realization of our debt to the Lord. In the Christian Church the proper preparation for receiving the Holy Supper — the feast which takes the place of the Passover for us — is self-examination and repentance, the same work which Josiah's reforms symbolize.

Our lesson today brings us to the end of the ancient Hebrew nation as a representative of the true Church in the world and in us. In the letter we find that Josiah was killed when he tried to oppose the passage of the king of Egypt through his land (2 Kings 23:29). The evils fixed in the natural plane of the mind by long habit are our undoing. He was succeeded by his son Jehoahaz, who after a reign of only three months was removed from the throne by the king of Egypt and carried off to Egypt. The Pharaoh raised another son of Josiah, Eliakim or Jehoiakim, to the throne and exacted tribute. It was in Jehoiakim's reign that the invasion of Judah by Babylon began, but Jehoiakim died and was succeeded by his son, Jehoiachin, before the actual captivity took place. Jehoiachin surrendered and was carried away to Babylon, together with his mother, his wives, and all the princes, warriors, and wealthy men, and the best of the craftsmen. For a time the country was allowed to continue under the puppet rule of a third son of Josiah, whose original name was changed to Zedekiah. Finally Zedekiah rebelled and the army of Babylon destroyed Jerusalem and the temple and carried away all the rest of the people except some of the poorest, who were left to till the ground so that it might be useful to Babylon. After seventy years, however, when Cyrus, king of Persia, had absorbed Babylon, "the Lord put it in the heart of Cyrus" to allow all who would to return. Jerusalem and the temple were rebuilt, and so the Holy Land was tided over until the coming of the Lord.

## **81:ZEDEKIAH AND JEREMIAH — 2 Kings 24; 25:1-12; Jeremiah 21**

### **INTRO**

In all the classes try to impress the names of the two nations which conquered Israel and Judah and the fact that the people of Israel were replaced and never returned, whereas the people of Judah were not all carried away, and some returned. Call attention to the destruction of the temple and

Jerusalem and mention their rebuilding later.

## Adult

The major discussion topic is the nature of the love of dominion and the insidious way in which it can enter the heart and gain control of it — particularly its manifestation in people of the church.

Because the Scriptures everywhere apply to us, the story of the fall of Israel and Judah should bring us some very sobering thoughts. Israel was conquered by Assyria. Its people were carried away captive and never returned, foreigners being brought in to take their places. Assyria was not allowed to extend its conquest to Judah, although for a time in Hezekiah's reign the Assyrian army threatened Jerusalem. But a century or more later Babylon came into control of both Assyria and Egypt and was able to destroy Jerusalem and carry off all the royal household and the men of might and ability, leaving only the poor of the land to tend the fields and vineyards. Seventy years later some of the people of Judah — all who so desired — were allowed to return and rebuild Jerusalem and the temple, but the Jewish nation never again served as the representative of the Lord's church among men. We may note in passing that it was the descendants of the returned captives of Judah and the descendants of the "poor of the land" not carried away who were the Jews in the Holy Land when the Lord was born, and that the Samaritans of the Gospels were the descendants of the foreigners brought in to take the place of the people of Israel.

Israel and Judah represent, respectively, the intellect and the will of the person of the church. Assyria represents the rational mind or reasoning in general, and Egypt represents the natural mind or the plane of memory-knowledge. The proper relationship of Israel to Egypt and Assyria is described in Isaiah 19:23-24: "In that day shall there be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians. In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land." That is, in the properly ordered mind there should be free interplay of reasoning and memory-knowledge, but the spiritual should stand as "a blessing in the midst." Israel sacrificed her opportunity to be such a blessing when she separated herself from Judah and substituted the worship of the golden calves for the worship of the Lord. Once the person of the church begins to entertain the thought that outward good works constitute religion, he is separated from the divine source of all power to do good. His intellect and reasoning are used more and more to exalt worldly learning above revelation, and his mind is finally carried away captive by the world outside the church.

Judah — the heart — also worshiped idols; but it maintained at the same time the worship of the Lord in the temple at Jerusalem. Consequently its people were kept reminded of their true God, and some of them remained faithful. Even several of the kings, as we have learned in other lessons, were true followers of the Lord and made strenuous efforts to destroy the idols and reform the people. The heart which has once experienced the happiness and peace of regenerate life cannot be subverted by worldly reasoning alone. Assyria could not conquer Judah.

There existed, however, another enemy which had been gathering strength over the centuries and now rose to take over Assyria and all the land tributary to Assyria. This was Babylon, "the land of Shinar," the land of the Chaldees, from which Abraham had been called so long before. Babylon represents the love of dominion, the old natural selfish will which prompts us to feel that what we want is right and that everyone and everything should be made to serve us. Swedenborg applies the

meaning of Babylon specifically to the love of dominion through the misuse of religion, the setting up of the fiat of men above the Word of God as the authority for the church.

Shortly after the fall of Israel the king of Babylon sent messengers to Hezekiah king of Judah ostensibly to inquire for his health. Hezekiah was deceived, received the messengers as friends, and showed them all his treasures. Then Isaiah came to Hezekiah and told him that Babylon would one day carry off all the treasures of Judah and that Hezekiah's descendants would be servants in the court of Babylon. Our chapters for today describe the fulfillment of this prophecy. Once the insidious love of rule is admitted into the inner chambers of the heart of the person of the church, its control of his life follows. There is nothing which the Word and the writings more clearly and positively condemn than arrogance and the love of rule.

The great prophet of the last years of Judah was Jeremiah. The story of these last years is told very briefly in 2 Kings, but in much more fullness in the book of Jeremiah. For Jeremiah was recognized as the Lord's prophet by the last kings of Judah and was consulted by them even though they had no intention of obeying the Lord. Because of their wickedness they rejected Jeremiah's counsel again and again, and he himself was shamefully mistreated. People may and do go to the Word and study it in the hope of finding confirmation of their own will and opinion, but when they find that it obviously condemns them, they disparage and reject it.

When the Lord came into the world, He had to come in the Holy Land because of the correspondence of all its parts and places, long established by the letter of the Word. And He had to come where the Word was, since He was to fulfill it. Therefore some of the Jews, with the Word, had to be brought back to the Holy Land, and the temple had to be rebuilt. And there were a few good Jews left — the poor of the land, the humble — who would receive the Lord when He came. But, as we have pointed out, the Hebrew nation as a nation ceased to represent the Lord's church on earth when Judah was taken captive. The connection of the Lord with mankind was maintained for a time by the prophets of the captivity and restoration, and then for some four hundred years only by the few humble souls who still believed and obeyed the Law and the Prophets in simplicity. When this connection was threatened by the perverted teachings of the scribes and Pharisees, the Lord had to come into the world to restore it.

## **82:THE BOOK OF PSALMS — 2 Samuel 23:1-2; Psalm 1**

### **INTRO**

In connection with the study of Psalm 19 [next lesson], we shall deal in some detail with the history of the book of Psalms and with the use of the Psalms in the temple worship. There we shall emphasize rather the spiritual character of the book and the use of the Psalms in our personal life. In all classes the testimony of David in 2 Samuel 23:1-2 and of the Lord in Luke 24:44 should be read, and our use of the Psalms in our church service should also be pointed out.

### **Adult**

The Adults, who are more familiar with the Psalms than the children, will probably be most

interested in discussing the reason for their popularity and the implications of this reason. The fact that the first Psalm presents our fundamental choice and tells us clearly the consequences involved in each alternative should make a deep impression. Point out our constant temptation to compromise, and our need to read and use all the Psalms as the Lord has given them to us instead of just picking out a Psalm or a few verses here and there which especially please us.

In approaching the study of the book of Psalms we should also be familiar with Luke 24:44. Although the Jews did not consider the book of Psalms of equal inspiration with the Law and the Prophets, we are given in the letter of Scripture the assurance first of David and then of the Lord Himself that the Psalms were divinely inspired and that they thus inmost treat of the Lord's life. And we are familiar with the fact that some of them — notably the twenty-second — are literally prophetic of that life. We should all be familiar with our New Church "canon" of Scripture and the reasons behind it, because the inclusion of books with an inner sense and those without it side by side in both Old and New Testaments has been one of the fruitful sources of the confusion in men's minds concerning doctrinal authority.

The ancient Hebrews were much more careful in this matter than the Christian Church has been. They at least kept the books of whose divine inspiration they were not absolutely sure in a separate collection — the Kethubim or sacred writings. They did not mean these when they spoke of the Law and the Prophets. They should have known from David that the Psalms were inspired, but their familiar use in the temple services apparently made them doubtful. They perhaps seemed to them what our hymn books are to us.

It was natural to the Israelites to express their feelings in song, and we know from Psalm 137 that their songs were famous even outside their own nation. 1 Chronicles 15:16-22 tells us that certain families of the Levites were specially trained as singers and musicians for the tabernacle and temple worship, and Psalm 150 names several of the instruments used to accompany the Psalms. We find particular groups of instruments called for by their Hebrew names in the titles of certain Psalms. The word Selah, which we come upon here and there throughout the Psalms, is thought to have been a musical notation. We should all learn to sing the Psalms. The rules for chanting are really very simple, and the chant form is the only one in which they can be sung without changing the wording in such a way that the divine order and sequence would be destroyed.

We know that the Psalms are different from every other part of the Word and that they are the most universally read and loved of all its books. There are several reasons for this. One is that they are direct expressions of the feeling and thought of the ordinary man — perfect expressions put upon our lips by the Lord. Another is that they cover the whole range of our inner experience, if we are sincere and religious people. Another is that they help us to recognize the Lord's hand in nature and His providence in all the events of life. And still another — the most important of all — is that they give us the feeling of close, personal contact with the Lord. When we read or sing the Psalms, we are talking with the Lord. In this sense every Psalm may be thought of as a prayer.

Let us come now to our special assignment for today — the first Psalm. It should not be hard to see why it is the first, for it sets before us our fundamental choice: to believe in God and obey Him or to deny God and His Word. This choice is offered to each one of us and it is our own free choice. No one can make us either believe or disbelieve. We cannot say why we do one or the other although after we have made our choice, we can find countless reasons to support it, whichever it is. The godly and the ungodly man are simply two men who have freely chosen to face in opposite directions. But the Lord leaves us in no doubt as to the outcome. The godly man will be happy and

the ungodly man unhappy.

In this Psalm the "counsel of the ungodly" is set in direct contrast with the "law of the Lord." This is the phase of the problem which we perhaps need to see most clearly. In the Gospels the Lord tells us, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Our most subtle and persistent foe is the temptation to try to compromise between worldly reasoning and the law of the Lord. But our Psalm tells us plainly that if we let ourselves begin to walk in the counsel of the ungodly, we are all too liable to go the rest of the way — to find ourselves presently standing in the way of sinners and finally sitting in the seat of the scornful. @AE 687[6] defines these steps for us (see below).

The beautiful picture of the godly man as a fruitful tree growing beside the river reminds us of the tree of life in the garden of Eden — there also contrasted with that other tree whose fruit was death - and of the same tree of life on the banks of the river of water of life in the Holy City New Jerusalem. And verse 2 brings to mind the first of Swedenborg's "Rules of Life": "Diligently to read and meditate on the Word of God."

The last verse of the first Psalm sets the key for the whole book:

"For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish." Throughout the Psalms the results of our fundamental choice of God or self are kept steadily before us. This is because the Lord knows our weakness and that we need to see both sides of the picture not once but often. The attempt to close our eyes to the dark side, to read out of the Word all the harsh condemnations of the evil is not delighting in the law of the Lord, but is walking in the counsel of the ungodly. The Lord wrote the Word. He knows us better than we know ourselves. When we read the Psalms, therefore, let us read them in all humility as He gave them to us. And let us not pick out only the ones we especially like. Let us read and meditate upon them all.

## 83:THE BOOK OF PSALMS — Psalm 19

### INTRO

The teacher should read carefully the quotation from Our Heavenly Father's Book which forms the major part of the Adult notes. This gives a general background of information in regard to the book of Psalms as a whole, from which he may draw such facts as he thinks will interest his class. The point which should be stressed in all the classes is that the Psalms are songs inspired by the Lord to direct the expression of our feeling and thought about Him and our relation to Him. It will also be helpful to our church services if the older children, young people, and adults can be impressed with the rightness and power of singing the Psalms and the value of learning the chant form, which is the only way in which they can be sung without doing violence to the letter.

### Adult

The background, history, and nature of the book of Psalms are the important subject for this class, touching briefly on the analysis of Psalm 19 by way of example. If there is time, it may be helpful at the end to ask each member of the class to tell what is his favorite Psalm and why.

In Luke 24:44 the Lord, after His resurrection, says to the assembled disciples, "These are the words

which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me." Thus the Lord Himself assigned to the Psalms the same degree of inspiration which the Law and the Prophets possessed. And we read in 2 Samuel 23:1-2: "Now these be the last words of David. David the son of Jesse said, and the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel, said, The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue." The ancient Hebrews, probably because the Psalms were their temple songs and were not specifically concerned with their history, did not class them with the Law and the Prophets, but with the Kethubim or sacred writings, and that is where they are placed in the Hebrew Bible of today. We might note that the books of Lamentations and Daniel were also so classed, and that with the exception of these three books the New Church canon of (Old Testament) Scripture and the Jewish canon are identical.

In the 1880s the New Church Board of Publication issued in several small volumes a Manual of Religious Instruction prepared under the direction of a committee of the American New Church Sabbath School Association. Two volumes of this series, a brief outline of the history and general content of all the books of the Bible called Our Heavenly Father's Book, were written by the Rev. William B. Hayden. They are among the fine work of the past which we are in danger of losing through neglect. It would be hard to produce a more interesting brief statement concerning the book of Psalms than Mr. Hayden's; so it has seemed well to include in our present Sunday school material the bulk of his brief chapters on this book and on the "Music and Choirs of the Temple." Mr. Hayden says:

This collection of inspired sacred poems is placed in the Bible as one book, and has been so regarded since the days of Nehemiah, probably, or four hundred and twenty-five years before Christ. The Hebrew title, Tehillim, means Praises, or Songs of Praise. Our word Psalms is derived from Psalmoi (Psalmos, originally, the twang of a stringed instrument), the Greek of the Septuagint version. The term Psalter comes also from the Greek, Psalterion, through the Latin, Psalterium. (Psaltery was primarily the name of a species of harp.) It may be looked upon as an inspired Hymn Book. There are one hundred and fifty of these hymns, of different styles and length. They include a wonderful diversity of subjects, expressing every phase of religious feeling and experience; and are adapted to all the wants of private devotion, as well as to the public worship of the Lord in the sanctuary. They were originally intended and arranged for musical performance, with instrumental accompaniment.

The principal author is David, the King, "the sweet Psalmist of Israel"; and the whole book, as referred to in the New Testament, bears his name. Seventy-three psalms are ascribed to him in their titles; Asaph is named as the author of twelve; eleven are ascribed to the sons of Korah; to Solomon two (72 and 127); one to Ethan (89); and one to Moses (90). This last therefore is the oldest one in the collection, and in the original language bears every mark of being very ancient. The remaining fifty are anonymous; though it is highly probable that many of these also were written by David. They were all composed in close connection with the national sanctuary, and in the line of holy prophets and seers.

In the Hebrew Bible the collection is divided into five books, each one closing with a doxology except the last, to which, as well as to the whole collection, the final Psalm serves as a doxology.

The first book contains the first forty-one Psalms (1-41) and closes with the doxology, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting and to everlasting. Amen and Amen." Thirty-seven of these

psalms bear the name of David; while the other four are usually ascribed to him, and no doubt correctly. The psalms in this book are remarkable for the predominance of the Divine name Jehovah (Lord) over that of Elohim (God). As before explained, this shows that in these psalms the operations of the Lord's love, mercy, goodness, compassion, tenderness, and forgiveness are principally treated of; and thus that their appeal is primarily to the human heart.

In this no doubt we have the original Hebrew Hymn Book, the first collection made for the service of the Jewish Church. It was most probably arranged by David himself, after he became King at Jerusalem, or under his supervision and authority, about one thousand years before Christ. ... Psalm 23 is presumed to have been composed by David, when, as a young man, he tended his father's flock at Bethlehem, as also 19. (It is believed by many that Psalm 2 was originally numbered 1, and that the psalm at present standing first, was prefixed as an introduction to the whole collection, at a much later date.)

The second book contains thirty-one psalms (42-72), ending with the doxology, "Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be his glorious name forever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen and Amen. The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended." The first eight of these are ascribed to the sons of Korah; eighteen bear the name of David; one (50) that of Asaph. The last one (72) is sometimes attributed to Solomon, but seems rather to have been written for Solomon, perhaps a prayer and invocation at the time of his being anointed and proclaimed king by the command of David.

This book is believed to have been collected and added to the first in the reign of the good King Hezekiah, or about seven hundred years before the Christian era. In it the Divine name Elohim (God), greatly predominates over the name Jehovah: showing that in these psalms the operations of the Divine Wisdom and Truth are principally treated of, with His attributes of sovereignty, majesty, and power; while they appeal most directly to man's understanding and conscience.

The third book includes the next seventeen psalms (73-89). The first eleven are ascribed to Asaph; four to the sons of Korah; one to David (86); and one to Ethan the Ezrahite (89). In the psalms of Asaph the Divine name Elohim predominates, in the remainder of the book the name Jehovah. It closes with the doxology, "Blessed be Jehovah forevermore. Amen and Amen"; and is supposed to have been collected and added to the others in the reign of Josiah, about six hundred and twenty-five years before Christ.

The fourth book, opening with the prayer of Moses, Psalm 90, includes seventeen in all, to 106. Of these only three bear titles, 101 and 103 being ascribed to David. This book, therefore, is one emphatically of anonymous psalms, for the most part of a very general character, evidently arranged with reference to the service of song in the sanctuary, abounding in praise and thanksgiving. Throughout, the name Jehovah prevails; the name Elohim (God) being rarely used except in connection with a pronoun or some epithet, as my God, God of Jacob, etc. It is believed to have been compiled and added soon after the return from the Babylonish captivity, probably in the time of Ezra, and either by him or under the supervision of the great synagogue, a little more than four hundred and fifty years before Christ. It closes with the doxology, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting; and let all the people say, Amen. Praise ye the Lord."

The fifth book contains the remaining forty-four psalms, 107 to 150.

Psalm 107, the opening psalm of the return is supposed to have been sung at the first feast of

tabernacles (Ezra 3). In this book are found the fifteen "Songs of Degrees," 120-134, presumed to belong to the period when the Jews under Nehemiah were repairing the walls of Jerusalem in the face of their enemies, and to have been sung by the workmen and guards while engaged in their duties. As Zerubbabel, and the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, were members of the great synagogue established by Ezra, the authorship of this book is mainly attributed to them. In the Septuagint, Vulgate, and Peshito versions, many of these psalms are ascribed to those prophets in their running titles. In this last collection the name Jehovah prevails almost exclusively. It is largely devoted to thanksgiving and praise, and closes with the ascription which has passed so widely into Christian usage, Hallelujah, "Praise ye the Lord. ... "

In the original language several of the psalms are arranged in alphabetical order. Each verse usually begins with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet, till all are gone over. This may be seen exemplified in Psalm 25, which has twenty-two verses, the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet. There are seven of these psalms (Psalms 25, 34, 37, 111, 112, 119, 145). But they do not all carry out the plan regularly or fully. In Psalms 111 and 112 every half verse begins with a different letter. In Psalm 37 every alternate verse has such a beginning; while Psalm 119 has twenty-two divisions or cantos, each one of which begins thus, and in our Bibles has the names of the respective Hebrew letters written over them. Every couplet also of this psalm contains some reference to the Word of the Lord, under the several appellations of Word, Law, Precepts, Testimonies, Commandments, Judgments, and Statutes. ...

Several of the Hebrew words in the titles of some of the psalms refer to the musical performance. Neginoth means stringed instruments; Nehiloth, some wind instrument, like flutes. Alamoth, meaning virgins, probably denoted the treble voices. Selah, so frequent in the midst of psalms, is supposed by many to denote a pause or rest in the music; by others, however, with more probability, it is believed to have indicated the point at which the instruments were to lift up, joining in with the voices, which up to that place had been singing alone.

We read in Exodus of the song of triumph that was sung at the deliverance at the Red Sea, with the accompaniment of music and dancing. After this we find frequent allusions to it [music]. As described in the Bible, it is in connection with its true and most proper use, of praise and thanksgiving to the Lord, and the public worship of the sanctuary. The cultivation of it by the Levites was a part of their official training; while in the schools of the prophets founded by Samuel, it received marked attention and reached a high degree of development. In the days of David and Solomon, when the psalms had come to be written, and especially after the temple service began, the arrangements in connection with it were very elaborate and complete.

Of the thirty-eight thousand men who composed the tribe of Levi in the reign of David, four thousand were set apart for this service. The three great divisions of the tribe had each a representative family in the choir, or band; Heman and his sons represented the Kohathites, Asaph the Gershonites, and Ethan (or Jeduthun) the Merarites. As the functions were hereditary, and the members had ample leisure for the pursuit and practice of the art, great proficiency and genius were developed in certain families.

Over this great body of musicians presided the sons of Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun, twenty-four in number, as heads of the twenty-four courses of twelve each into which the skilled minstrels were divided. These skilled or "cunning" performers were two hundred and eighty-eight in number, each having a number of pupils, or sub—choir under his immediate supervision. Each "course," or full band would thus consist of one hundred and sixty-six musicians presided over by a body of twelve

skilled players or leaders, with one of the sons of Asaph, Heman, or Jeduthun as chief conductor of the whole.

The instruments employed covered a wide range. What they all were is not now in every instance known. Great ingenuity however was summoned to devise every possible form; and we know that each of the three most general kinds was represented in great variety:

1. wind instruments, like the trumpet, cornet, and flute;
2. stringed instruments, like the harp and psaltery;
3. the instruments that are beaten, like the tambourine, cymbals, and triangle.

The Hebrew names of many of these we still find written in the titles of our psalms.

The singers were a separate body from the instrumental performers, and seem to have included female voices, and to have been distributed into parts ... It is believed that children also were sometimes included. [See Psalm 68:25, Ezra 2:65, and 1 Chronicles 25:5-6, and also 1 Chronicles 16.]

When we think of the lifetime effort of these choirs, it should at least make us willing to put a little time ourselves into learning to sing the Psalms in the only way in which they can be sung, the chant form. Realizing that music is the expression of the heart, we should wish to sing as well as to read the Psalms.

One further point should be noted in regard to the Psalms in general, which Mr. Hayden does not mention. Our attention is called to it by the editor of Swedenborg's summary of the internal sense of the Psalms. He says: "The titles which appear in the common English Bibles at the head of many Psalms, in Roman type, are part of the sacred text, and contain an internal sense like every other portion of the Word of God, as is evident from their being referred to in these Summaries of the Internal Sense." This fact is seldom called to our attention.

The Psalm we read for our specific assignment today, Psalm 19, is, as Mr. Hayden has noted, one thought to have been composed by David in his youth when he was tending his father's flocks. The long night watches under the skies would set the current of divine inspiration in such a direction. Swedenborg's interpretation of it is as follows: "Verses 1-4 [the original Latin, following the Hebrew, says 1-5, counting the title as verse 1], The Divine truth will go forth in every direction. 5-6, This truth will go forth from the Lord from the first things to the last things of heaven and the church. 7-11, This Divine truth perfects man, because it is wisdom. 12-13, There will be no pride. 14, Thus there will be what is pure and acceptable." We notice that, although the subject of the Psalm is truth and its effects, only in the first verse is the name God (Elohim) used. Everywhere else it is Lord (Jehovah). This suggests that it is truth proceeding from love or good which has these effects in the human life. If we study this Psalm in the light of Swedenborg's brief interpretation of it, the familiar words will take on new and deeper significance for us. The last verse is a prayer we might all well say in the quiet moments before the opening of our church services.

## 84:TRUST IN THE LORD — Psalm 91

## INTRO

The lesson may be introduced by showing the position of the book of Psalms in the Bible — between the historical books and the Prophets — and this is a good opportunity to remind the younger children that all the books in our Bible are not part of the Word. Then point out that the Psalms were written not to portray any historical sequence but to express ever-recurring states of feeling and thought. All classes above the Primary should be told the belief of the Jews about the Psalms and why we know that they are a part of the Word.

## Adult

Serious thought should be given in this class not only to the spiritual meaning of the dangers mentioned in the Psalm but to the fact that the promises are also spiritual and that they are made under the definite condition that we acquire and use the truth which the Lord gives us. Mental laziness gives the lie to good intention.

Let us begin by asking ourselves why the Psalms play so prominent a part in our public and private devotions. In the first place, the Psalms are songs, and music because it expresses the emotions has a very deep appeal. In the second place, the Psalms put into words — words inspired by the Lord — our inner states, those states of thought and feeling which we of ourselves find it so difficult to express. Finally, the Psalms throughout describe our relationship with the Lord, that highest privilege of man which distinguishes him from the animals. In their inmost sense the Psalms show us the inner states through which the Lord Himself passed while He was on earth, and because we are created in His image and after His likeness they show us in their spiritual sense states of every regenerating person.

The book begins with the clearly drawn contrast between the righteous person and the ungodly person, in the first Psalm, and throughout the book the need of the righteous for the help of the Lord in meeting the assaults of evil and falsity is a constant theme. The triumphant praise of the Lord with which the book closes is the result of experience of the Lord's saving power. The Introduction to the book of Psalms in the International Bible Commentary says: "No book in the Bible so completely unites the world's divided Christendom. Roman Catholic and Protestant, Anglican and Non-Anglican, use it in public and private devotion. No book so completely expresses the varied needs of the human heart."

Psalm 91 is one which many people know by heart and in which many have found support and comfort. Even without a knowledge of the spiritual meaning one gets from it the feeling of the nearness of the Lord and the angels, the sense that one is not struggling alone and that in the end, as Paul says, "all things work together for good to them that love God." But there is and always has been a tendency to think that the promises of this Psalm concern salvation from external dangers, and to feel that when sickness and bereavement come to us, it must be because we do not have sufficient faith in the Lord. In fact, this is always the excuse offered by the faith healers when they fail to cure. Even from the literal sense of the Word we should know better than this, for it is in this obvious external sense that the devil quotes this Psalm in tempting the Lord in the wilderness (Matthew 4:5-7), and the Lord's reply indicates that the promise is not to be taken literally. In the New Church we know that in all the Word the Lord is speaking to our souls, and that the dangers from which He wishes to save us are spiritual dangers. In the interest of our spiritual growth the Lord permits many afflictions to come to our bodies.

In his summary of the internal sense of the Prophets and Psalms Swedenborg interprets Psalm 91 entirely in its relation to the Lord's states during His glorification. The summary is as follows:

Psalm 91:1. Song in praise of the Father by the Lord, who is to be made one with Him.

Psalm 91:2-6. Thus there will be protection from enemy attack.

Psalm 91:7-9. Thus there will be no uprising of the hells,

Psalm 91:10. not even against the church.

Psalm 91:11-12. Thus heaven will serve Him.

Psalm 91:13-16. There will be no fear from the hells, when the Divine has been made one with the Human.

And Swedenborg does not leave us without help in the understanding of this Psalm's meaning in our own lives. Scattered through the writings there are some twenty-two instances in which he quotes and often explains one or more verses from it. He says, for example: "'To trust under his wings' signifies under truth known" (@AE 283[6]); "The 'dread of night' denotes falsities of evil which are from hell; the 'arrow that flieth by day,' falsity which is openly taught, whereby good is destroyed; the 'death that wasteth at noonday,' evil which is lived in openly, whereby truth is destroyed" (@AC 6000[9]); "'The pestilence that creepeth in thick darkness' denotes the evil which vastates in secret; 'the death that wasteth at noonday' denotes the evil that vastates openly" (@AC 7505); "To destroy the interior and exterior falsities that vastate the truths of the church is signified by 'treading upon the lion and adder'; and to destroy the interior and exterior falsities that vastate the goods of the church is signified by 'trampling on the lion and dragon'" (@AE 714[24]).

We all know that we are constantly assailed by temptations, and we know from our doctrines that these temptations come from the hells. Some of the evils and falsities we see immediately in their true character. These are the dangers which are said to come "by day" and "at noonday." There are others which we do not immediately recognize because our thinking is obscure. These are the dangers that come "by night" and "in darkness." We know that although in general we mean to be good, we often yield even to the temptations which come "by day." We need help from above to reinforce our weak wills. And certainly we need the Lord's help to recognize and reject those evils and falsities which disguise themselves.

Our Psalm teaches us that this help is always available. But it also teaches us that if we would obtain it, there are conditions which we must fulfill. To imagine that we can go our own way and then when trouble comes call upon the Lord and be saved is merely wishful thinking. The Psalm is addressed to the person who "dwelleth in the secret place of the most High." That is not where we are dwelling when we live according to our natural thoughts and inclinations. The wings which we are to trust are spiritual truths, and it is faithfulness to truth which is to be our shield and buckler.

We cannot expect to have this security and protection if we neglect the daily reading of the Word and the study of its spiritual meaning as the Lord has opened it for us in His Second Coming. We read in @AC 4096: "The good which is of love and charity flows in from the Lord, and does so through angels who are with man; but not into anything else in him than his knowledges." We like to think that good intentions are all we need, but the writings tell us that good receives its quality from truth and exercises its power through truth. They tell us also that "the good love truth"; so we

should keep in mind that the quality of our intentions is actually measured by the effort we are willing to make to learn the truth.

In @AE 471[2] we read: "The expression 'to answer' frequently occurs in the Word, and it signifies, in reference to the Lord, influx, inspiration, perception, and information, likewise mercy and aid." The answers to our prayers for salvation from our troubles will not necessarily be preservation from any outward calamity, but will be an understanding of the reason why it is permitted to come to us and the strength to meet it and use it for our spiritual development.

## 85:A PSALM ABOUT THE WORD — Psalm 119

### INTRO

The teachers of the older classes should look through all the notes from the Junior up to get a fuller background and be able to answer possible questions about the Psalms in general. The two major points in regard to Psalm 119 - which are given in their simplest form in the Primary notes — are the center of the lesson.

### Adult

The reason why the Psalms should be sung in church is important for this class, as well as the facts noted concerning the New Church canon of Scripture. The two main points concerning the letter of Psalm 119 should be stated, and then the Psalm may be discussed in more detail than with the other classes, drawing on the knowledge of it which the members of the class have. Favorite verses will perhaps be suggested and compared.

Psalm 119, the longest of the Psalms, is one of the most interesting in the letter. In the first place it is the most completely worked out of the seven "alphabetical" Psalms, the other six being numbers 25, 34, 37, 111, 112, and 145. None of them, of course, is alphabetical in the translation, but Psalm 119 is printed in KJV Bibles with the names of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet in their order at the head of the sections, and we should know that in the original Hebrew every one of the eight verses in any given section begins with the letter which heads the section.

Another interesting fact — which is evident in the translation — is that each verse of the Psalm contains some word or words referring to the law of the Lord: statutes, commandments, way, etc. This makes it clear that the whole Psalm treats of the Word and its importance in our lives.

In Revelation 1:11 the Lord says to John at the beginning of his vision: "I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last." We know that Alpha and Omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. It is in connection with the explanation of this verse that Swedenborg tells us in @AR 38: "Since every letter signifies a thing in the spiritual world, and thence in the angelic language; therefore David wrote the 119th Psalm, in order, according to the letters of the alphabet." When we stop to think that the letters of our own alphabet are the symbols by means of which all our thoughts and feelings are expressed, communicated to others, and preserved for posterity, we can better understand why "every letter signifies a thing in the spiritual world," and how a Psalm composed in the complete alphabetical form is intended to impress upon us the whole range of its subject.

The Psalms are meant to be sung, and we know that music is the expression of the affections. We should remember this whenever we sing the selections in church. Sometimes people complain of the difficulty of singing the selections, and because of this some of our churches have even been reduced to the practice of reading instead of singing them, and often the singing of them is left to the choir. But this is a serious loss to all in the church. The Psalms cannot be sung to ordinary "tunes" without distorting the words of Scripture, and we should all be willing to make the effort to learn the few simple rules which govern the necessary chanting, and to practice until we can follow the chants easily. When we read the Psalms, they make a deep impression on our minds — as any part of the Word does — but when we sing them, our hearts are engaged. In the temple worship the Psalms were sung by families of the Levites set apart and trained from childhood for that particular service, and they were sung to the accompaniment of various instruments, both wind and strings. The women of the families also took part.

We are all familiar with many of the verses of Psalm 119. The opening section is a recognition of the fact that happiness can come only as we learn and obey the law of the Lord, and a prayer to be enabled to obey it. The next section begins with the often quoted verse, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word," and suggests various ways in which this instruction may be carried out. Then follow sections which acknowledge our own weakness and need of the Lord's guidance and help. The temptations through which we must pass and our gratitude for strength received from the Word are followed by recognition of its supreme and impregnable position and expressions of our love for it, including verses which express our grief that everyone does not learn and keep the law and that our sincere efforts to convert them often fail. Perhaps the best-known sections are verses 97 to 112. From this point on the Psalm increases in intensity and devotion, and near the end is the beautiful verse (165): "Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them." Offend is here used in its original meaning of "turn aside" or "cause to stumble." But it is significant that after all this rejoicing in the knowledge and keeping of the law, the Psalm ends on a thoroughly humble note: "I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant; for I do not forget thy commandments." So we find in this Psalm a complete pattern of life in which we are governed from childhood to old age by dependence upon the Lord as we find Him revealed in His Word.

The Lord Himself placed the book of Psalms with the Law and the Prophets as fully inspired Scripture (Luke 24:44), contrary to the tradition of the ancient Hebrews, who considered it as belonging among the "Writings," not of equal inspiration with the Law and the Prophets. The book of Psalms and the book of Daniel were excluded from the Jewish canon of Scripture, the former probably because it was in common use as a hymn—book, and the latter because they felt no prophet would be inspired outside the Holy Land. Ezekiel, it is true, prophesied in captivity, but he had been a priest and perhaps a prophet before he was taken captive, and also he recorded more than once that he was carried in the spirit to Jerusalem for his visions. For the same reason Judaism separated the Lamentations of Jeremiah, which were written in Egypt, from the body of his book and placed them also among the "Writings." The Lord refers to Daniel as a prophet in Matthew 24:15. The New Church canon of Old Testament Scripture is the Hebrew canon plus the Psalms, Daniel, and Lamentations.

The Lord said that the Psalms treated of Him. Psalm 119 has its internal senses throughout, and in Prophets and Psalms Swedenborg gives us the following very brief summary of its celestial sense:

"The Lord fulfilled the Law, or the Word, from its firsts to its lasts, and therefore He was hated, and suffered temptations, and thus made the Human one with His Divine."

# 86:THE MAJOR PROPHETS — Isaiah 6

## INTRO

What follows is some factual information concerning the four Major Prophets taken from an earlier New Church publication, Our Heavenly Father's Book by William B. Hayden.

Isaiah was the son of Amoz, and lived at Jerusalem, where he had his visions and wrote his prophecies, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. He is supposed to have been born about the thirtieth year of King Uzziah's reign, or about seven hundred and eighty years B.C., and to have survived until the early part of the reign of Manasseh, or to about B.C. six hundred and ninety-five ... His ministry as a prophet extends over a period of about sixty years. At different portions of his career he was contemporary with the prophets (minor) Amos, Hosea, Joel, and Micah ... The book is usually regarded in three grand divisions. 1, The prophecies contained in the first thirty-five chapters. 2, The historical account of King Hezekiah, in chapters xxxvi to xxxix. 3, The series of prophecies beginning with chapter xl and occupying the remainder of the book ... On account of certain allusions in it [this third part] to historical events which happened later than the lifetime of Isaiah, some critics conjecture that this part must have been written and added afterwards by some other author, called by them the "unknown prophet." This however is contrary to the uniform testimony of ancient tradition. It is alleged that these allusions to events then future, were by prophetic prediction. All the references also to it in the New Testament speak of Isaiah as the author of this portion. But to know who the human writer was, is not very important for us.

Jeremiah was the son of Hilkiah, a priest, and was born at Anathoth, in the land of Benjamin, about four miles north of Jerusalem, where his family had landed possessions ... Unlike most of the other prophets, he gives us many particulars of his personal history. His youth was passed in his native town, where, while still quite a young man, he was called to the prophetic office, and where, apparently on account of his Divine call, he was subjected to bitter persecutions ... His first appearance was about one hundred and thirty years after that of Isaiah, and some seventy or more after the latest of Isaiah's prophecies. He exercised his office for a period of about forty-one years in his native land, under five successive kings of Judah — Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah - and after that, late in life, he prophesied in Egypt.

Ezekiel was carried into captivity with Jehoiachin and the chief of the people, in the eleventh year before the destruction of Jerusalem, B.C. 599, into Mesopotamia, where the captives formed a colony by the River Chaboras (Chebar), a branch of the Euphrates. He had a house at Tel—abib, and was married. In the fifth year of his exile he began to prophesy, B.C. 593, and continued in that office till at least the sixteenth year after the destruction of Jerusalem, or upwards of twenty-two years. He was highly esteemed by his companions in exile, and the elders of the people applied to him for counsel. How long he survived, is uncertain. There is reason to believe that he did not continue all his life at the original place of exile, but removed, towards the close of it, to his fellow countrymen in the Province of Babylon, where he probably died a natural death. In the middle ages his tomb was still shown at Kefel, some distance from Baghdad, and visited by numbers of Jews and Christians ... He was in part contemporary with Daniel.

Daniel belonged to the royal family of Judah, being one "of the king's seed and of the princes" whom Nebuchadnezzar carried captive to Babylon the third year of King Jehoiachim, 604 B.C. ... He

was the only Hebrew prophet who attained great worldly prosperity. His great powers, spotless life, and peculiar gifts, won him the royal favor, which he retained under successive monarchs.

## Adult

The mission of the prophets to us is the outstanding lesson for the Adults, and the class should be inspired to wish to study them seriously with the help of the writings.

The prophets were those who spoke for the Lord. Their words, although taken from the content of their own minds, were not their own, but were chosen and arranged by the Lord to express what He wanted to say not only to the ancient Hebrews but to all men for all time. To the people of the Old Testament the words of the prophets had an immediate meaning which related to their national life, rather than to the life of their individual souls. To us also the words written by the prophets have an immediate meaning, but it is a meaning which relates not to our national life but to our spiritual life. The Lord is speaking to us today through the recorded words of the prophets, and He has given us the key to unlock the meaning which these words are meant to have for us. The prophets all had a common mission, to point out and denounce evil and show what it led to, and to promise the rewards of righteousness. Yet we know that the Lord does not repeat Himself — even apparent repetitions in the letter take on varied meaning from their contexts — and so each of the prophets has a special message to meet special conditions and needs. The general historical background of each, so far as it may be drawn from the letter of the Word, will help us to read this special message.

The four Major Prophets were all from the kingdom of Judah.

Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel lived near the end of that kingdom, all three witnessing the captivity. Ezekiel and Daniel were both carried away among the early captives and prophesied from exile. Jeremiah wrote just before the captivity, and because he prophesied it and urged the people to submit, he was allowed by the king of Babylon to remain in his home; but later some of those who were left in the land forced him against his will to flee with them to Egypt, and it was there that he wrote the book of Lamentations. The book of Daniel was written in Babylon. The Jews did not include either Lamentations or Daniel in their Scripture canon because they were written outside of the Holy Land. Ezekiel wrote in Mesopotamia, but the Jews accepted him as inspired, possibly because he so often speaks of being carried in the spirit to Jerusalem for his visions.

Isaiah, as our chapter tells us, received his call "in the year that king Uzziah died," and prophesied in Judah during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. Recalling the meaning of Judah we see that Isaiah gives us the Lord's message to our affectional life at a time when we have departed very far from following the Lord in our minds and in our conduct, and when our ruling love is wavering between self and the Lord. King Uzziah, though a good king, was a leper, and leprosy in a good man pictures the inability to live rightly because of lack of the knowledge of what is genuinely good. When we have experienced the fullness of such a state, pictured by Uzziah's death, the voice of the Lord comes to us in some powerful way; it was a fitting time for Isaiah's call. Jotham, the next king, was good, but he was followed by the wicked Ahaz. So our wavering will responds to the voice of the Lord and then falls back. But when we once more resolve to reform and to make a thorough job of it, we seek the Lord's counsel voluntarily, as Hezekiah sought the advice of Isaiah whenever he was in need of it. We recall that Hezekiah carried out the most thoroughgoing reforms of any of the kings of Judah.\*

[\*Josiah is often ranked with Hezekiah in this respect. -Editor]

We are perhaps more or less familiar with the major characteristics of the four long prophetic books. Jeremiah is the prophet of doom. Ezekiel stands out in our minds for his visions of Jerusalem and the temple, in some respects very much like the visions of John in Revelation. Daniel is the voice of the faithful few among the captives in Babylon, whose steadfastness eventually made sufficient impression on their captors to bring about the return. In the book of Isaiah we are perhaps most familiar with the beautiful prophecies of the Advent, and we know Isaiah as a person from his dealings with Hezekiah. But Isaiah's call, with which our chapter for today deals, presents some of the basic principles which apply to all prophecy and indeed to all genuine service of the Lord.

Isaiah had a vision of the Lord as to His omnipotence, king and judge, sitting upon His throne, addressed as Jehovah Zebaoth, the Lord of hosts (@AC 2921). The seraphim above the throne picture the protecting power of the Lord. Wings picture spiritual truth (@AC 8765), and the three pair of wings show the power of spiritual truth to protect the interiors (the face) and the exteriors (the feet) and to lift one up above the level of merely natural things. Isaiah was afraid because he recognized his unworthiness. The mouth pictures thought from affection (@AE 580) and the lips the interior things of man (@AC 1286). In @AE 580 (see below) Swedenborg explains quite simply the purification in Isaiah's vision. Following this, Isaiah was ready to be the Lord's messenger.

We remember the Lord's teaching in Matthew 15:11, 17-19 that it is what proceeds out of the mouth which defiles a man, for "those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart." The first part of the message given to Isaiah, which is quoted in all the Gospels (Matthew 13:14, Mark 4:12, Luke 8:10, John 12:40), like the statements about the Lord's hardening Pharaoh's heart, have been puzzling to many. We are often told by Swedenborg that the people of that day were of such a nature that they cared only for material things and that if they had perceived spiritual things, they would have profaned them. It is part of the Lord's mercy that we are permitted to see and acknowledge only so much of the truth as we are capable of living up to. The more selfish we become the more our minds are closed against the truth. Isaiah was to tell people that this state would continue until the land was utterly desolate, and that only then could a new beginning be made. The "tenth" which should return pictures the remains of good which are always preserved by the Lord as a possible new beginning. Each new church is founded on such a "tenth," and likewise each new beginning in us. These remains are likened to the terebinth or oak on account of their strength and persistence.

The call to be a messenger of the Lord comes to each one of us, and it begins with a vision of the Lord as king and judge. We are told, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." (Matthew 5:48) If we are to imitate the Lord, it is not enough to believe vaguely that there is a God: we must have a clear and definite idea of His character and power. The next step is to realize and acknowledge our own unworthiness, to see how far we are by nature from the pure love and wisdom which are the Lord. Then the cleansing fire of the Lord's unselfish love can come in and purify our motives, and inspire us to say, "Here am I; send me." Finally our message becomes clear: all worldliness and selfishness must be put away and the heavenly character must be built on the remains which the Lord has preserved in us for this purpose.

# 87:THE MAJOR PROPHETS — Jeremiah 1

## INTRO

This is another background lesson and the important thing, except for Primaries, is to see that the classes know who are meant by the Major Prophets, where their books come in the Bible, what their position was with reference to the history concerned, and what the function of a prophet was. Also essential are the meaning of the word prophet, the fact that the prophets spoke by inspiration, and something of the various types of inspiration.

## Adult

The general place and message of the Major Prophets and of Jeremiah in particular will offer many points for discussion, as well as the meaning of his original call and visions and his prophecies concerning the nations other than Judah. This is a good lesson in which to remind the Adults of Swedenborg's characterization of the Word as like a man clothed but with his hands and face bare [@DSS 55, @AE 778[6]].

The people of the Most Ancient Church before the fall had open communication with the heavens and were led by a dictate in the will, but that after the will became evil, man had to receive instruction in his understanding and by obedience develop a new will there. Through the prophets, therefore, the Lord spoke to the understanding of men. All of the Ancient Word and of our Word was given through prophets. We sing in the Benedictus: "As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began."

Only a very small portion of what was spoken by the prophets is recorded in the Word. The message given to most of the prophets was for the people of their time and was not preserved. Its general character, however, must have been the same, because it came from the Lord and had one fundamental purpose: to point out the evils into which men had fallen and to give them the truth they needed to lead them out of evil into good. In the first chapter of Jeremiah, which we have chosen as the example on which to base our study today, this purpose is expressed in verse 10: "See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant."

All of the Word is prophecy, a divinely given message from the Lord. In the letter a distinction is made between the Law and the Prophets, but the "Law," the five books of Moses, is full of direct assertions of revelation, visions, angel appearances, the voice of the Lord speaking, and even appearances of the Lord, as well as various signs and wonders. The Hebrew canon classes the books from Joshua through 2 Kings (excepting the book of Ruth) as the "former" prophets, recognizing that these books also were given through divinely inspired prophets, though their names were not known. The Pentateuch and these books of the former prophets fell into the form of a narrative of ancient Jewish history. They had a literal meaning as well as a universal and eternal inner or spiritual meaning. But the books of the "latter" prophets, the books which we customarily think of as the prophets, have only very limited reference to the Hebrew nation. Even the book of Jeremiah, written just before the end of the kingdom of Judah, contains many cryptic statements which are hard to relate to the events of his time. The people of that day interpreted the Messianic prophecies as promises of their restoration as the leading nation of the world, but these

promises in this sense have never been fulfilled and never will be. Under the figure of the Judaic people and nation Jeremiah and the others were given to speak of a spiritual kingdom of truth and righteousness, the Church which the Lord's coming was to reestablish.

The latter Prophets are divided into four "Major" and twelve "Minor" Prophets. The four Major Prophets are Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel. Their historical position is clear, as it is stated in the letter. They all prophesied to the people of Judah. Isaiah was prophet in the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. It was by heeding his warnings and advice that Judah was saved from the destruction which befell Israel at the hands of Assyria. Jeremiah, as our chapter tells us, was first called to be prophet in the thirteenth year of the reign of Josiah, the last good king of Judah. He prophesied the end of Judah and the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, and he lived to see his prophecies literally fulfilled. Through the favor of Nebuchadnezzar, he was not himself carried to Babylon, but he was taken against his will by some of his own people to Egypt, where he is believed to have died. Some of his later prophecies (Jeremiah 43:8) and possibly the book of Lamentations were written in Egypt. Ezekiel and Daniel were both among the captives taken to Babylon and were called to prophesy to the people of Judah in captivity. To these people, upon whom the calamities had fallen which Jeremiah had prophesied, the "bad news" for which they had so hated him, the promises of restoration given through Ezekiel and Daniel were welcome comfort. So Ezekiel and Daniel, almost alone among the prophets, were popular and rose to positions of eminence.

Jeremiah was beaten, put in stocks, cast into prison, let down into a pit where he sank in the mire, left without food, and threatened with death. All these things picture what men do to the truth when it crosses their worldly and selfish desires. But the truth prevails in the end and vindicates itself. The command and promise to Jeremiah in verses 17-19 of our chapter express the Lord's unfailing provision that the truth shall be made available and His protection over it.

The two brief visions given to Jeremiah at the beginning of his work are interesting in their correspondence. We recall that the rod of Aaron (Numbers 17:1-8), the only one of the rods of the twelve tribes which blossomed and bore fruit, was an almond rod. See the passages from @AC 5622[2] and 8408[3] below. The texts referred to in both these instances are among those places in the Word where the Lord in the letter clearly indicates the internal meaning. Verse 12 gives you the meaning of the almond rod, and verse 16 that of the seething pot.

The greater part of the book of Jeremiah is taken up with the condition of Judah — symbol of the Church as to good — and prophecies of its end. But a few chapters (Jeremiah 46 to 51:58) prophesy the doom which will eventually overtake the enemies of Judah: Egypt, the Philistines, Moab and Ammon, Edom, Damascus, Kedar, Hazor, Elam, and finally the arch-enemy Babylon. We can see in these a series of enemies to our spiritual progress: Egypt, the reliance on natural memory-knowledges; the Philistines, knowing the truth without doing it; Moab and Ammon, "adulterated good and falsified truth"; Edom, turning aside from good by despising truth; Damascus, perversion of knowledges of truth; Kedar, not being in truth because not in good; Hazor, the falsity of evil; Elam, the spiritual church desolated; Babylon, the love of dominion from the love of self. This is a searching catalogue of the temptations which must be met and overcome by us as individuals and by the Church and the world. At first glance they may seem repetitious, but if we consider each one carefully, looking for examples of it in our own thought and in the thought and life of the world about us, we shall see not only differences among them but a natural progression from one to the other, leading us away from trust in the Lord and His Word to a final setting up of our own will and intelligence as the center of the universe, which everything and everybody else should serve.

# 88:EZEKIEL'S VISION — Ezekiel 1

## INTRO

Review the background material concerning the four Major Prophets. Be sure that the pupils know what a prophet is, why these four were called "Major," and that they can name the four. Even with the Primaries it is useful to say the names and have the children repeat them after you. Young children like to say new words, and most children will find the Bible names easy to speak and to remember if they become familiar with their sound early.

## Adult

Center the discussion on the general meaning of the cherubim, illustrating it from other parts of the Word. Swedenborg's statement of the various methods of revelation (@AC 6000) is another good subject. Still another is the distinction between the prophet's message to the people of his time and its universal meaning.

The kingdom of Judah lasted only a little over a century after the death of Hezekiah. All the later kings were evil except one, Josiah. They were in constant difficulty, for Egypt was at war with Assyria and Judah lay between. But Babylon was their final conqueror. In Daniel 1:3-6 we learn that in the third year of Jehoiakim, when Nebuchadnezzar gained control of Judah, he carried to Babylon part of the treasures of the temple and also some of the most promising of the young princes, of whom Daniel was one. This is not mentioned in the books of Kings, but 2 Kings 24:10-16 does tell us that several years before the final destruction of Jerusalem the king of Babylon carried away captive Jehoiakim's son and successor Jehoiachin, together with his family and his officers and the mighty of the land, "and all the men of might, even seven thousand, and craftsmen and smiths a thousand, all that were strong and apt for war." Ezekiel was probably one of those removed at this time, and our chapter shows us that he was settled with a group of captives in Chaldea by the river Chebar.

He was a priest, the son of Buzi. He tells us himself that his first vision came to him in the fifth year of Jehoiachin's captivity. This was several years before the destruction of Jerusalem, and chapters 1 to 24 of Ezekiel are concerned with prophecies of this event. The king of Judah during this period was Zedekiah, an uncle of Jehoiachin, who had been set up as a puppet ruler by Nebuchadnezzar, but rebelled and brought about the final catastrophe. After the destruction of Jerusalem, when all the rest of the people except the "poorest" were also carried away, Ezekiel continued to prophesy for at least fourteen more years, about twenty years in all. He is called "the prophet of the captivity."

The book of Ezekiel is full of strange visions which have puzzled Bible commentators throughout the history of the Church. They have a striking similarity to the visions of John in the book of Revelation, and like those visions have been subject to all sorts of interpretations and applications. The law of correspondences revealed through Swedenborg is the only key which can unlock the mysteries of these two books and lead to a consistent and reasonable interpretation. In the first twenty-four chapters Ezekiel is told to do strange things and is told that these are symbolic of the character of Judah and of what will happen to Jerusalem and its people; the complete destruction and desolation of Jerusalem is foretold. Then follow eight chapters of judgment upon various

foreign nations, similar to chapters 46 to 50 of Jeremiah. Chapters 43 to 48 foretell the restoration, ending with a long, detailed vision of the Holy City and the temple. So again in Ezekiel the prophet's mission is exemplified — judgment, warning for the evil, and promise of salvation for the good.

Swedenborg tells us (@AE 619[3]) that the reason why Ezekiel and John were given such searching visions of the inner conditions of men and of the Lord's dealings with them through the medium of the spiritual world was that "the prophets Ezekiel and John represent the doctrine of truth and the Word, therefore the exploration was made by them." The visions of Isaiah and Jeremiah at the time of their call to the Lord's mission (Isaiah 6 and Jeremiah 1) are simple and comprehensible in the letter as compared to this first vision of Ezekiel.

The key to the understanding of our chapter lies in recognizing that the living creatures were what elsewhere in the Word are called "cherubim." Indeed Ezekiel himself (chapter 10:20) tells us so. Cherubim generally picture divine providence protecting holy things against profanation. We recall the cherubim which were placed at the gate of the Garden of Eden "to keep the way of the tree of life," and the cherubim on the mercy seat above the ark. Cherubim are not a race of created heavenly beings, as the Church in the past has imagined. They are always symbolic figures. So our first impulse to try to picture for ourselves just what Ezekiel saw is not very productive, and instead we should give our attention to the symbolic details which he records. Swedenborg explains all these details in connection with John's vision of the four beasts (Revelation 4:6-8) in @AE 276-286. It is necessary to note that the Greek word translated "beasts" [KJV] means simply "living creatures" and would be better so translated on account of our modern connotation of the word "beast."

As Ezekiel was called to examine into and record the perverted state of the Church, it was altogether fitting that his call should be accompanied by a vision of the Lord's providence protecting holy things from such profanation. A brief outline of the vision and its meaning is all we can provide in these notes, but it may form a basis for thought.

First there is the general impression of the Lord's power and love, the whirlwind and fire. These assume to the evil a terrifying aspect since their object is to destroy evil. Then follow the specific representations of the operation of this power and love through divine providence, the four living creatures. The protecting power of divine providence has four aspects — the four faces. On the right side, the side of clear perception, are the face of a man, picturing divine wisdom, and the face of a lion, "the good of love and truth thence derived in their power" (@AC 6367). On the left side, the side of relative obscurity, are the face of an ox, "natural good," and the face of an eagle, "the rational" (@AC 3901[5]). Except by means of these things men cannot approach the holy things of the Lord's kingdom. The wings picture spiritual truths, which both lift and protect. The hands of a man under the wings picture the Lord's power to carry out the truth, and the feet are the ultimate expression of that truth in conduct. "For 'feet' in general signify the natural; a 'straight foot' the natural in respect to good; 'the sole of the foot,' the ultimate of the natural; 'burnished brass,' also signifies good in the natural. From this it is clear that good in the natural is signified by a 'calf,' and that in this is the ultimate good that guards and protects lest the heavens be approached except through the good of love and charity" (@AE 279[2]). A wheel signifies the power of advancing, and thus the understanding, by means of which we progress in the truth and in right living. The wheels appearing beside the living creatures, which went when the living creatures went and stayed when they stayed because the spirit of life was in them, picture the "Divine intelligence, or foresight." Hence they were full of eyes (@AC 8215). And above all appeared the Lord upon His throne.

It is significant that Ezekiel was given this vision before he was allowed to view the depths to which

the human race had fallen. John was given a similar vision before he was permitted to see the devastation of the earth. These general truths apply to our regeneration. We are never tempted beyond our power to resist [1 Corinthians 10:13]. Our eyes are not opened to see the deep evils within us before we have had a vision of the Lord's protecting and saving power. We cannot fight against our temptations if we doubt the omniscience and omnipotence of divine providence. We may not be able to see why things happen to us and to others, but we are sure that they do not happen without the Lord's knowledge and permission, and that behind the permission are perfect love and perfect wisdom.

## **89:EZEKIEL'S VISION OF THE WATERS —**

### **Ezekiel 47:1-12**

#### **INTRO**

Information concerning the Major Prophets in general should be reviewed before anything is done with the chapter from Ezekiel.

#### **Adult**

Perhaps the best lesson for the Adults is a discussion of our personal responsibility for our progress in spiritual intelligence. The Lord gave the Word and in His Second Coming opened its inner meaning, but His truth can do us no good unless we are willing to study and use it.

In a Sunday school course it is not possible to do much with the Prophets. The greater part of these books requires advanced study. And yet we all receive a powerful impression from hearing the Prophets read. In the Psalms and Prophets more than in the historical books — probably because there is often no story to hold our attention in the natural sense — we seem to feel the Lord speaking, even though we may not always understand the message. One cannot help pitying the person who has allowed himself to be misled into the belief that the Bible is the product of men and who studies the Prophets only to discover what Isaiah or Jeremiah or Ezekiel meant by the words he wrote. Certainly the prophets themselves had no thought that their words were their own. Nowhere else in the Word do we so constantly read "Thus saith the Lord," "The Lord said unto me," "The Lord showed me," and "The word of the Lord came unto me, saying."

We should have no doubt that it is the Lord who is speaking to us as we read the Prophets. Here and there the message comes through clearly even in the letter, as for example in Micah 6:8, but for the most part we must study the spiritual sense if we are to be instructed as well as emotionally affected.

Swedenborg explained verse by verse only the books of Genesis, Exodus, and Revelation. But in the incomplete manuscript Prophets and Psalms, published posthumously, he gives us a summary explanation of each of the Psalms and of each chapter in the Prophets. Beside this the writings are full of quotations from the Prophets, often with quite detailed explanation. So if one is willing to make the effort, it is possible to get at the spiritual meaning of the Prophets without guesswork or the use of one's own imagination. In the past, without the knowledge given us by the Lord in His Second Coming, men sometimes went very far astray in trying to interpret passages in the Prophets

according to their imaginations. In this course we are able only to give the children some general idea of the Prophets and to give the adults one or two examples of what we can learn when we "dig in" to the study of any particular chapter or passage.

The passage chosen as our example today is a striking and beautiful picture in the letter. It is part of Ezekiel's last vision, given him in the twenty-fifth year of the captivity. For Ezekiel the priest was one of those carried away captive to Babylon with king Jehoiachin in the first great deportation from Judah. In this last vision Ezekiel was taken back to the Holy Land, where upon a high mountain he saw "as the frame of a city on the south." Here he was met by a man "whose appearance was like the appearance of brass" with a line of flax and a measuring reed in his hand, who conducted him through the temple, measuring each part as he went. This (chapters 40-46) is the description of the temple to which we referred in an earlier lesson, the description which the Rev. T. O. Paine found to be the complement of the description of Solomon's temple in 2 Kings.

Knowing as we do that the temple represents the dwelling place of the Lord in each of us, or a true spiritual character centered around worship of the Lord and obedience to the commandments, and that water is the symbol of truth, we recognize immediately that the waters issuing from the temple on the right side or the south side of the altar are a picture of divine truth given us by the Lord in love to bring us into a state of spiritual intelligence. We know, too, that divine truth can be given us only as we read the letter of the Word with the acknowledgment that it is from the Lord and with a desire to obey its teachings. That is, truth comes from the Lord alone and flows by influx into the knowledges of the Word in the mind of a good person.

Swedenborg's summary of the meaning of these twelve verses in Prophets and Psalms reads as follows: "Influx of Divine good and Divine truth from the Lord; from this influx the angels of the three heavens, and men, have spiritual life, and from the Divine good and Divine truth they have intelligence and charity."

Our "river" of divine truth is the Word. As we progress in regeneration we are enabled by the Lord to find deeper and deeper truths in it. In @AE 629 we are told that the ankles signify what is sensual and natural, the knees what is spiritual and natural, and the loins the marriage of truth and good. It is the same progression seen in the interpretation of Saul, David, and Solomon, culminating in the peaceful and wise state of loving the truth for the sake of use. When we reach that state, depths of truth in the Word can be revealed to us which we were not prepared to see before. See below for a description of the final state.

The trees along the banks stand for true principles understood by means of the Word. Their fruit represents good works done from unselfish love and therefore genuine and lasting. Their leaves picture spiritually rational ideas, which are able to show us our evils and weaknesses and so lead to the healing of the soul. The fish in the river are all our natural knowledges which are given vitality and made serviceable when they are seen in relation to the divine plan and purpose.

So through Ezekiel we are given a concrete view of our spiritual possibilities. If we see that the Word comes from the Lord and continue to study it with the help of the means given us by the Lord in His Second Coming, it will bring life and blessing to every part of our experience. The only limitations to our spiritual development are of our own making. The swamps and marshes will continue to be without life and will be "given to salt." The selfish feelings and thoughts to which we cling, knowing them to be wrong yet unwilling to apply to them the healing "medicine" of truth, cannot be reclaimed.

The Psalmist writes, "There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved." This is the same river of Ezekiel's vision, the same river which flowed out of Eden, and the same "pure river of water of life, clear as crystal" which John saw "proceeding out of the throne of god and of the Lamb." And the Lord through John says to each one of us: "Let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

## 90:NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S DREAM — Daniel 2

### INTRO

Remind the older classes that the book of Daniel, like the book of Psalms, is not in the Hebrew canon of Scripture but was given a proper place in the Word for Christians by the Lord Himself. For the younger children a reminder of the fall of Judah and the carrying away of the people to Babylon will lead into the story of Daniel.

### Adult

Although the meaning of Babylon and the application of the lesson to Babylon should be brought to the attention of the Adults, the meaning developed in the quotation from @AE 411[4] should probably be given the greater part of the class time. Call attention to the fact that Babylon first appears in the Scriptures in the form of Babel and that it is not finally disposed of until chapter 18 of Revelation. It is our arch—enemy from the cradle to the grave.

The prophet Daniel, the fourth of the Major Prophets, was a member of the royal family of Judah and was carried to Babylon as a boy or very young man during the reign of Jehoiakim in Judah, when Babylon first invaded Judah and put it to tribute, thus before either of the two general deportations. We should read the first chapter of Daniel as a basis for understanding our lesson for today.

We remember that the ancient Jewish nation was only representative of a true church, and that it became more and more false to its original commission until it could no longer serve in that function. We remember, too, that Babylon represents "the love of dominion from the love of self," the spiritual enemy which finally captivates the heart of the man who ceases to look to the Lord for guidance and to obey Him. So we may understand the meaning of Swedenborg's summary interpretation of chapter 1 in Prophets and Psalms: "When the church among the Jewish nation had been destroyed, 'Babylon' appropriated to herself all things pertaining to it. She wished to know all things of the church, and to acquire an understanding of them, and this was the beginning of 'Babylon'." Here Swedenborg is using Babylon to designate a particular type of church in the world, and this application of the meaning in Prophets and Psalms is continued through chapter 6. Then in chapter 7, which marks a transition, the application to the general history of the churches from the beginning is introduced, and the rest of the summary continues this larger application. In the light of this change it is interesting to read part of the Rev. William Hayden's account of the book of Daniel in Our Heavenly Father's Book:

The introduction to the book (Chap. i) is written in Hebrew, Daniel's native tongue. But when, as in the next chapter, he came to speak of and with the Chaldeans, who 'spake to the king in Syriac'

(verse 4), he changed his language, and spake and wrote in their tongue, the Syriac or Chaldean, sometimes called also Aramaic. So from Daniel 2:4 to end of Daniel 7 it is in Chaldee, a language having the same characters and varying very little from the Hebrew. At the beginning of chapter 8, where Daniel resumes his own experiences as a prophet of the Lord, he returns to the Hebrew, and continues that to the end of the book.

The book thus is partly historical and partly prophetic. The prophecies may be divided into two parts; the first, those written in Chaldee, Chap. 2-7, giving an account of Belshazzar's feast, the den of lions, and the vision of the four beasts ascending out of the sea.

The second part, written in Hebrew, contains the vision of the ram and he-goat, Chap. viii.; Daniel's prayer and the unfolding of the prophecy of the seventy years by the Angel Gabriel, Chap. ix.; the fourth prophetic vision, which Daniel had in the third year of Cyrus, fills the last three chapters. The wonderful appearance of the Lord to him, in Chap. x., should receive careful study.

The close analogy between Daniel's prophecies and the Book of Revelation, has been recognized by nearly all commentators. Not only the first coming of the Lord, but His second coming also is foretold; and events connected with the Lord's spiritual kingdom on earth are foreshadowed, from the beginning of Christianity to the very last ages, yet to come.

In the writings both the particular and the general application of the spiritual meaning of the image are given in some detail. The one application shows us in a striking way the danger of allowing the love of dominion to gain power in our hearts. This love is often unrecognized at first. We recall that Hezekiah received the ambassadors of the king of Babylon as friends and showed them all his treasures, and that Isaiah was sent to him with the message: "Behold, the days come, that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store unto this day, shall be carried into Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the Lord."

But there are many more passages in the writings which cite Nebuchadnezzar's image as picturing the whole history of the church from the beginning. Such a passage is the following from @AE 411[4]: "'The head of the image' which was gold, signifies the Most Ancient Church, which was a celestial church, or a church in which the good of love to the Lord reigned; this good is signified in the Word by 'gold,' and also by 'the head'; 'the breast' and 'the arms' which were silver, signify the Ancient Church, which succeeded the Most Ancient, and this church was a spiritual church, or a church in which the good of charity towards the neighbor, and truth from that good, reigned; this truth and good are signified by 'silver,' and also by 'the breast' and 'the arms'; 'the belly and the thighs which were brass' signify the church which succeeded the ancient spiritual church and which may be called spiritual—natural; in this church the good of faith and the truth from that good reigned; this good is signified in the Word by 'brass,' and also by 'the belly' and 'the thighs'; but 'the legs and the feet, which were part iron and part clay,' signify the Israelitish and Jewish Church, which was an external church without any internal, and which therefore had no truth and good, but truth falsified which in itself is falsity, and good adulterated which in itself is evil; therefore it is said respecting it in this chapter: 'Whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of man; but they shall not cohere one with the other, even as iron doth not mingle with clay (verse 43).' 'Iron' signifies natural truth, and 'miry clay' natural good; 'the feet and legs' have a like meaning; but here 'clay' signifies good adulterated, and 'iron' such truth as there is in the external sense of the Word; for 'the seed of man' means the Word where there are goods and truths, the adulterations and falsifications of which are described by 'iron mixed with clay, which do not cohere one with the other.' ... 'The stone' that smote the image means Divine

truth from the Lord; that 'it became a great rock and filled the whole earth' signifies that the Lord by Divine truth is to rule over heaven and the church."

The love of dominion is in all of us by inheritance. Babylon appears in the Word first as the Tower of Babel, the consummation of the Ancient Church. We need to recognize this evil in ourselves whenever and in whatever guise it crops up, and to fight it as the most subtle and deadly enemy of our spiritual life.

That it can be successfully resisted we learn from the story of Daniel. The character of Daniel stands out in sharp contrast to the state pictured by Babylon. Although he was one of those youths selected for his ability and education, he never took credit to himself for his wisdom. In the face of one danger after another he remained boldly faithful to the principles of his religion. In every emergency he looked to the Lord for guidance. He was true to his friends and also never bitter or resentful toward those who sought to injure him. And success and power had no bad effect on him. He retained both to the end of his life under several rulers and national sovereignties. Daniel, like Joseph, shows how divine power can express itself through the life of a person who is consistently humble before the Lord and obedient to His precepts. Daniel and Joseph are both examples of the man to whom, as we saw in our lesson on Psalm 91, the promises of protection by the Lord and the angels are addressed.

## **91:THE FIERY FURNACE — Daniel 3**

### **INTRO**

The teacher should study the sections in the various graded notes on the decline of Israel and Judah and the captivities. This is the background against which today's lesson must be taught because of Daniel's origin and his position in Babylon. It is also important that all the children above the Primaries should know at least the simple facts concerning the captivities. A few minutes should be spent in reviewing the names and periods of the four great prophets so as to place Daniel among them, but most of the lesson time should be occupied with the story for the day.

### **Adult**

The meaning of Babylon and of Nebuchadnezzar and the image in their application to modern religious thought is an important lesson for this class. Attention should be called to 2 Kings 20:12-17, in which is described the insidious beginning of the captivity to Babylon. Psalm 1:1-2 may also be recalled in connection with the complete faithfulness of the three young men in the story.

We come now to the last chapters of the long history which we have been following through the Old Testament. Most of the nation - Israel — has been conquered and carried away into the eastern countries by Assyria, never to return. The surviving division - Judah — has been overcome by Babylon, and although we know that a part of this group is destined to return and rebuild Jerusalem and the temple, it will be merely a return by permission of a foreign master.

In the decline of Judah we see the gradual degeneration of the will to serve the Lord, the desire to "be good," which comes about through admitting other motives into our hearts — the worship of idols. Although worldly reasoning cannot actually destroy this good desire — Assyria (symbolizing

worldly reasoning) was not permitted to conquer Judah — still the degeneration of the good will is much more rapid after the understanding is taken captive by worldly reasoning. Spiritual truth and the ability to reason from spiritual grounds are an essential bulwark of the good heart. Without them we do not recognize evil for what it is, as Asa invited the aid of Syria and paid for it with the treasures of the temple, and as Hezekiah later treated the envoys of Babylon as friends and showed them all his treasures. Often self-love enters into our hearts without our recognizing it. This is particularly true in our worship. Most of us, when we join the church, do so because we feel the desire to serve the Lord; but how easy it is, once we become used to our new position, to think of ourselves as better than those who have not taken the same step, to take our own goodness as a matter of course, making no effort to learn more of the teachings of the church than we already know, going through the forms of worship mechanically, and thinking of our church membership not as an opportunity to serve but as a fact which puts the church organization under a particular obligation to serve us! If we do not recognize and reject this evil in ourselves, we are likely to come into a state where we try to run everything in the church and care more about having our own way than we do about the service of the Lord or the welfare of the church. Whenever this happens, "Judah" has been carried away captive to "Babylon." In @AE 1010[2] we read:

"The love of honor, of rule, and of supereminence is the last state of the church ... for that love more than all other loves extinguishes the light of heaven and induces the darkness of hell."

Daniel was a prophet of the captivity. He belonged to the royal family of Judah and was carried away into Babylon among the earliest of the captives. He was one of several young men — among them the three of our chapter for today — chosen for their mental ability to be brought up in the court of Nebuchadnezzar and trained in all the learning of the Chaldeans. He was noted for his complete faithfulness to the worship of Jehovah, and because of it he was gifted by the Lord with great wisdom and with the power to interpret dreams. He remained in royal favor under Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Darius, and Cyrus, and is thought to have lived to be about ninety years old. The book of Daniel was written partly in Hebrew and partly in Chaldee or Aramaic, a closely allied language, the section from chapter 2, verse 4 through chapter 7 being in Aramaic. There is more narrative in the book of Daniel than in most of the Prophets, the stories of Nebuchadnezzar's image, of the fiery furnace, of the lions' den, and of Belshazzar's feast being incorporated in many books of Bible stories for children. Yet it also contains visions as strange as those in Ezekiel and Revelation, and visions of the future of the church under the form of the fate of Israel and the nations. The book was not included by the ancient Hebrews among the Prophets, but the Lord Himself restored it to its proper place by speaking of "Daniel the prophet" (Matthew 24:15, Mark 13:14).

The personal history of Daniel and his companions, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, illustrates a very important lesson — the reward of faithfulness and obedience to the Lord in the face of apparently overwhelming difficulties. First they refused to defile themselves with the king's rich food. The food and wine of the king of Babylon picture the evils and falsities which nourish our self-esteem, such ideas as "If you don't put yourself forward, no one else will," and "God helps those who help themselves," in its commonly accepted meaning. The four young men instead ate only "pulse" and drank only water, which picture the simple principles derived from goodness of heart and the truths of the Word. As a result, instead of suffering they became "fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat." It is a fact that those who have the courage to live according to the teachings of the Lord, putting the Lord and the neighbor before self steadily in their daily life attain a standing and reputation in their communities which no self-

seeking person can possibly attain. If we today faithfully obey the Lord's teachings and have the courage to put them to the test, we shall find that His protection and enlightenment are with us throughout our lives.

As Babylon represents the "love of dominion from the love of self," its king represents the principle of self-intelligence which perverts all truth to the service of self. Swedenborg says that Nebuchadnezzar represents "the profanation of truth and its consequent destruction." This is typified in his setting up the golden image to be worshiped. When we begin to exalt human intelligence above revelation, we set up our own judgment as a golden god to be worshiped, and all truth must be bent to agree with the theories which our judgment has adopted.

There is something very striking in the repetitions in our chapter for today. The musical instruments, the various orders of rank of the kingdom, the burning fiery furnace, and even the repetition of the three Chaldean names, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, have a sort of hypnotic influence which makes one think of the reiteration of some current humanistic slogans. The words of the three young men in verses 16 to 18 stand out in sharp contrast. They say in effect: "What is all this mummery to us? We serve the Lord." So with us, if we accept the Word as divine revelation and recognize its simple commands as binding, its great plain affirmations cut through the maze of theory and rationalizing and elaborate terminology which some modern Bible scholars and theologians have woven to the enslavement of the unthinking. Nebuchadnezzar says to us today: "I have set up a god for you, the human intelligence glossed over with the gold of 'service to humanity.' Whenever you feel the impulse to worship — the sound of the musical instruments — recognize human achievement as your god. This is the only thing really praiseworthy. It shows you how to be comfortable, how to get what you want. If you will not march with the crowd, you will have no satisfaction for your natural desires. They will burn you up." And to this Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answer: "There is none good but one, that is, God."

And when they were cast into the furnace, we read: "Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and said unto his counsellors, Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king. He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God." Temptations not only have no power to harm the faithful, but the Lord is always close to us in times of temptation. In His life on earth He met and overcame all possible temptations, and it is His power which overcomes in and for us.

## **92:BELSHAZZAR'S FEAST — Daniel 5**

### **INTRO**

### **Adult**

It might be well to call for questions on the chapter immediately after your brief introduction on the Major Prophets in general. The questions will show the particular phase of the lesson which will be of most interest and value to the class. The teacher should be thoroughly prepared.

As we all know, the four Major Prophets are called "Major" only because of the length of their books as compared with those of the twelve Minor Prophets. The length of the books also gives us more

knowledge about the men themselves than we should otherwise have. We know when and where and approximately how long each one prophesied. The first one, Isaiah, appears also in the second book of Kings in connection with the account of the reign of Hezekiah in Judah. In our lesson on the fall of Judah we had occasion to speak of Jeremiah, who was the Lord's prophet in Judah at that time. Jeremiah was spared by the king of Babylon because he had advised the people to submit and pay tribute and remain in their homes, but afterward some of those who were left in the land fled to Egypt, taking Jeremiah with them against his will. The Lamentations of Jeremiah were written in Egypt and were for this reason classed by the ancient Jews among the Tehillim or Writings instead of with the Prophets — where they belong.

Ezekiel and Daniel were among the captives carried away to Babylon. Ezekiel was a priest and Daniel one of those of royal blood who were selected at Nebuchadnezzar's command at the time of his first victory in Judah and brought to Babylon along with part of the treasure of the temple. In Daniel 1:4 we have a description of Daniel and his companions: "Children in whom was no blemish, but well favored, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans." The book of Daniel contains several chapters of consecutive narrative which afford striking stories to teach to children, and in the letter the book is easier to follow and to understand than most of the strictly prophetical books of the Word.

Earlier we have compared Joseph's character and his rise to power in Egypt with the story of Daniel in Babylon. They are strikingly similar. Like Joseph, Daniel became a captive as a very young man but, because he was absolutely faithful to his own God, he was protected by the Lord and given the power to interpret dreams which eventually brought him to the notice of the king and led to his becoming a ruler in the land of his captivity. Daniel's contemporary fame is attested by two references to him in Ezekiel 14:14, 28:3. The last few chapters of the book of Daniel are accounts of his own visions, which in the spiritual sense are prophetic of the whole history of the church from his own time to the Second Coming and the Last Judgment, and in the last chapter he is ordered to "seal the book, even to the time of the end." This connects with the opening of the seals in the fifth chapter of Revelation.

We recall that Babylon represents the love of dominion and that Swedenborg usually interprets it as applying to a particular church in which from love of dominion holy things have been made to serve the ambitions of men and so have been profaned. Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the great image, the subject of our lesson from Daniel last year, pictured the gradual vastation of that church. The history of the spiritual Babylon is very clearly described in @AE 1029. In paragraph 10 of this number a part of our chapter for today is quoted, and we are told that "the church of the Lord (in which the love of dominion rules) successively becomes Babylon; and that as it becomes Babylon so it is devastated as to all the good of love and all the truth of faith; and that this is its end, that is, it is no longer a church; and when it is no longer a church it is reckoned among the idolatrous nations, except those in it who worship the Lord, regard the Word as holy, and admit instruction from it."

Daniel had said, in interpreting the dream of the image, that Nebuchadnezzar was the head of gold. Nebuchadnezzar's dealings with Judah and in particular with Daniel show him to have been in general a wise king, but he had the pride and love of dominion which characterized his nation. They led him astray more than once, as in the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in chapter 3 and again more seriously in the events of chapter 4, to which verses 18 to 21 of our chapter for today refer. Nevertheless each time Nebuchadnezzar accepted his lesson, recognized his fault, and humbled himself before the God of Daniel. He was the head of gold of the image.

Belshazzar, the son of Nebuchadnezzar, had all his father's pride and love of dominion but none of his wisdom. Nebuchadnezzar had kept the treasures of the temple which he had brought from Jerusalem laid up with his own treasures in the house of his god. Belshazzar brought them out and profaned them. His act is referred to in @DP 231 (see below), which is a study of various kinds of profanation. There Swedenborg lists seven kinds of profanation of varying degrees of seriousness. Belshazzar's is the fifth kind, which is committed by those "who attribute to themselves what is Divine." It is one of the depths to which the love of dominion in a person may lead, one which brings about the destruction of the church of everything spiritual — in him. Belshazzar could be frightened by the appearance of the strange hand and by the writing which he could not understand, but they did not change him. We are told in the writings that no one is regenerated in a state of fear.\* It is by our daily free choices that we gradually form the character which will be ours to eternity. Our most subtle and deadly foe is arrogance and the love of rule.

[\*See, e.g., @DP 139, 282, @AE 1155[3]. But cf. @AC 8925. -Editor]

The most striking part of our chapter is, of course, the writing on the wall. In @AR 313 we read: "By 'drinking from the gold and silver vessels of the temple of Jerusalem,' and at the same time worshiping other gods, signifies the profanation of good and truth; as also by 'Babylon.' By 'Mene,' or to number, is signified to know his quality as to truth; by 'Thekel,' or to weigh, is signified to disperse." The words in verse 25 are in Chaldee, the language of Babylon, which is a language very similar to the Hebrew. The word Peres, which Daniel appears to substitute for the word Upharsin, is merely the simple form of the same word. The U in Upharsin means "and," and the other changes in the word are phonetic and grammatical. The International Bible Dictionary suggests that the change to Peres may have been made "to suggest the empire of the 'Persians,' whose empire was to supersede that of Babylon." The king who followed Darius on the throne was Cyrus the Persian.

Daniel the prophet of course represents the Word of God; and we may think of the whole story of Daniel as a picture of how the Word of God is protected, manifests its power, and actually dominates the affairs of the world even among those who profess to be independent of it or to reject it altogether.

## 93:DANIEL IN THE LIONS' DEN — Daniel 6

### INTRO

For the younger classes the introduction to today's lesson should go back to the lesson on the conquest of Judah. Then review the previous lessons on Daniel.

### Adult

The application of this familiar story to the predicament of many Christians in our modern times will perhaps be the best discussion topic, although some of the lessons suggested in the notes for the younger classes may also be useful. Try to call attention to the points brought out in the last paragraph of the Adult notes. Many people have not noticed the important statements in chapter 12.

The story of Daniel exemplifies the power of obedience to the Word to give wisdom, security, and

strength to the individual life. Because of Daniel's absolute faithfulness to the Lord, the Lord could be with him and could speak through him, and for the same reason Daniel came to be recognized as the wisest and most upright man in the kingdom and retained his high place throughout his life, in spite of many efforts by his enemies to overthrow him. In all this his story parallels that of Joseph.

The story of Daniel in the lions' den is one of the most familiar of the Bible stories. It has a strong appeal for children and young people because of its dramatic quality, and it is well that this is so. For children and young people need to be inspired to stand on their own feet morally and spiritually from the start and not to let themselves be led into wrongdoing by their companions. Children need to learn to recognize and resist temptation on their own level all through their period of physical growth or they develop no independent strength of principle. And the effect of their faithfulness to their principles on other children and young people less fortunate in their training is a point to be taken into account. This, too, the story of Daniel illustrates.

But our chapter has a deeper meaning which is important for us all in these modern times. The love of dominion, which Babylon represents, had actually, under Nebuchadnezzar's son Belshazzar, reached the point at which the holy things of worship were completely profaned by being used to minister to Belshazzar's glory (chapter 5) and Darius the Mede had taken over the kingdom. "Babylon" — whether we think of it as a particular church or as an evil love in general or in the man of any church — seeks to attain its goals by using the things of religion. But as it progresses, there comes a point at which all actual belief in religion is destroyed. Swedenborg tells us that the Medes represent those who are against the truths and goods of the church.

Darius put Daniel at the head of his counsellors because Daniel had predicted that Babylon would fall into his hands. He recognized that Daniel was wiser than his other counsellors and wanted to keep his services, but he had no understanding of the source of Daniel's wisdom. Daniel, like all the prophets, represents the Word. There are many in the world today who recognize that there is great wisdom in the Word but attribute that wisdom to men and think they can use it to further their own ambitions. They are the "humanists" who think of God as the sum total of men's virtues and achievements. This position is directly "against the truths and goods of the church."

The Word, however, refuses to be fitted into this humanistic scheme of things. Sooner or later these people find themselves faced with the necessity of giving up their pride in their own superior intelligence or giving up the use of the Word for their service, and the Word is rejected altogether. Daniel is sealed up in the den of lions.

Lions in a good sense represent the power of truth, in a bad sense the power of falsity. Daniel remains shut up in their den all night. Because of the treatment the Word has received at the hands of those who wish to exalt human intelligence, many good people today are in darkness and doubt as to its source and credibility. But sooner or later the morning dawns. Very early in the morning, when the king went to the den to learn Daniel's fate, Daniel said, "My God hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me." With whatever falsities men seek to destroy the Word, it stands perennially secure. In our morning state we see this. "Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them," as the 119th Psalm tells us. And the peace we have through our trust in the Word has its effect even upon those who have not regarded the Word as holy. Read verses 25 to 28 of our chapter.

In Matthew 24:15 the Lord Himself tells us that Daniel's prophecies even treated of the time of the Last Judgment and the Second Coming. The five chapters which follow chapter 6 contain prophetic

visions which the Lord gave to Daniel to record. These visions treat of the whole history of the first Christian Church. And we should read chapter 12, the final chapter of the book, especially for its connection with chapter 5 of the book of Revelation, which is probably familiar to all of us in the New Church. Even in the letter it gives us a clear statement of the relation of a prophet to his prophecy which is very helpful in our thought about the nature of the Word.

## 94:THE MINOR PROPHETS — Joel 3:9-21

### INTRO

This is a survey lesson primarily for background. All the classes should know the difference between the major and the minor prophets, how many of each there were, and where their books are found in the Bible. Even the youngest children should be able to say that a prophet is one who speaks for the Lord, and all above the Primaries should know the general tenor of a prophet's message.

### Adult

Since most of us are inclined to ignore the Minor Prophets, except perhaps for the story of Jonah and certain clear and well-known verses in the others, the point to be stressed is that there is no part of the Word which does not have a message for us if we are willing to study it, using the means which the Lord has provided in His Second Coming. The book of Joel can be used to show how much practical help is in these books for us.

The last twelve books in the Old Testament are known as the Minor Prophets. Of these books William Hayden in *Our Heavenly Father's Book* says:

[They] are placed in the Hebrew canon as one volume, or book, being written on a single roll or manuscript. This was done for convenience, on account of their brevity; the whole amounting to little more than the contents of a single book of some of the larger prophets, as Isaiah or Ezekiel. Neither the nature of their contents nor the date of the writings furnish a reason for their being classed together. The earliest one probably belongs to the time of Uzziah, eight hundred years B.C.; while the last one may be placed as late as Nehemiah, or 433 B.C. Nor are we certain that the order in which they are placed in our Bible is the exact chronological order in which those prophets lived and wrote, although it is very nearly the same.

Scholars have spent much time and effort on the study of these books, but for the most part their object is to place the books historically, trying to relate the literal statements to specific events in the history of Judah and Israel. Yet simple, devout Bible readers have always found some passages at least directly and clearly meaningful, and we find many verses from these twelve books quoted with effect in our older literature.

In the New Church we know that there is no part of the Word of God which does not have a universal and timeless application. Many prophets, true prophets, have spoken for the Lord to the people of their time "since the world began," and their names passed out of remembrance when their particular mission was over. But it was not so with the prophets through whom the Word was given. Their message was not to their times alone. If we read any one of the Minor Prophets with a

general knowledge of correspondence and a sincere desire for instruction, we shall be rewarded beyond our expectation. We are taking the book of Joel as an example in our lesson today. His book is short — only three chapters — and is one of those which contains no definite statement which places it historically. Hayden says of Joel:

Joel, a name formed by contraction from the two Divine names, Jehovah and Elohim, has been by some interpreted to mean the worshipper of God. He was a prophet of the Lord. His birthplace is unknown. He was the son of Pethuel, and lived in Judah, and delivered his prophecy in or near Jerusalem. From all that can be learned, most commentators agree in placing him in the reign of Uzziah, King of Judah, about 800 B.C., thus making him in part a contemporary of the three prophets, Isaiah, Hosea, and Amos. His book is a single continuous prophecy. Under the figure of an army of locusts, and other destructive insects soon to invade the land, devouring every green thing and leaving the country desolate, he describes the moral desolation of the times, picturing the evil and false things which, creeping into the hearts and minds of men, consume all their good dispositions and true thoughts, leaving only a spiritual waste in the nominal Church. There is an exhortation to repentance, and an assurance that the Lord will come and execute a judgment on all wicked men who thus desolate and destroy the Church, and that He will some day restore genuine fertility by establishing a new Church. It is declared to be a "Word of the Lord" spoken to the prophet from the unseen world. As such, it is quoted in the New Testament. See Acts 2:16, Romans 10:13. Its place in the canon has never been called in question.

Even this brief summary of the superficial meaning of the book immediately suggests its application to our own lives, if we remember that the condition of the church in the world is such as is its condition in the individuals who compose it. Each one of us is a church in least form. How far is each one of us allowing the palmerworm, the locust, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar to work within him, eating up the good in his heart as fast as it develops and closing his mind against the rain of truth from heaven? We all know, for instance, how a sense of injury — often based on misunderstanding and quite unwarranted — can build up in the mind a barrier between former friends and, feeding on trifles, can, like the swarms of locusts, shut out the sun from the life. How impossible it is to argue with one in such a state! His mind is closed to any truth which would show him his own folly. We know how a bit of idle gossip or a malicious remark, if allowed to go unchallenged, can work in the mind of the bearer as well as of its author and destroy kindness and clear judgment. We do not have to look outside of our own minds and hearts to find this army of destroying insects.

Joel points out the desolation which results and also points out that we may at any time, if we will, check such an unhappy trend in ourselves by turning to the Lord for correction and help, because the Lord is always at hand. The beautiful promise in Joel 2:23-27 is spoken to each one who will examine himself, recognize his own faults, and fight against them in the Lord's strength.

The particular assignment which is our reading for today is the culmination of Joel's whole message. It is an urgent and immediate call to arms against the evils which are at work in us. The "day of the Lord" in the letter refers to the coming of the Messiah and its result for the ancient Jewish Church. We should note that the Apostle Peter considered this prophecy of Joel fulfilled on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:16-21). But all the Messianic prophecies have a personal as well as a general meaning. Just as there is a time in the life of every regenerating individual when the Lord was born in his life, so there is a time when a final judgment takes place. It is the day when the seed which we have been developing in this earthly life is fully formed and falls to the ground, the day of our passing out of this world into the spiritual world. In @AC 10596 Swedenborg says: "The life of

man after death is the life of his love, and the life of his faith; consequently such as has been his love, and such as has been his faith, during his life in the world, such his life remains forever. The life of hell is for those who have loved themselves and the world above all things; and the life of heaven for those who have loved God above all things and the neighbor as themselves. These are they who have faith; but the former are they who have not faith. The life of heaven is what is called eternal life; and the life of hell is what is called spiritual death." This is a very straightforward and plain putting of the case as it is, and it should make us think very soberly. This world is the place where we make our choice. Our life here is given us for that purpose. And what Joel is pointing out to us is that we cannot keep putting off our choice. It is made from day to day and from moment to moment. "Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision." What we choose today is of vital importance to us. The moment of decision is always now.

The Lord says the same thing many times in the Scriptures in one way or another, notably in Matthew 24:42-51, in all the parables of the Judgment in Matthew 25, and in Mark 13:32-37, in which we find the words, "Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch."

## **95:THE PROPHET AMOS — Amos 8**

### **INTRO**

In this lesson the prophet Amos is studied as an example, but it is really another lesson on the Minor Prophets in general. In all except the youngest class, therefore, the teacher will try to see that the pupils receive the general information first.

### **Adult**

After a brief statement concerning the Minor Prophets as a whole and Amos in particular, the class time may well be spent in discussing the means the Lord has given us for understanding all parts of the Word and the importance to us of learning to use those means. The chapter from Amos may be discussed as an example, and the teacher may find it helpful at some point to read the passage from @AE 386[11] printed with this lesson. Too many New Church people today take their Scripture and their doctrines secondhand. Consequently much of the truth which is taken into their minds never becomes their own or does them any lasting good.

The twelve books from Hosea through Malachi, with which the Old Testament ends, are called the Minor Prophets. Most of us are not very familiar with them, although we all know a few verses from them by heart and we know at least part of the story of Jonah. Perhaps because the books are so short we do not easily identify them individually as we do the four Major Prophets. The study of scholars has been principally devoted to the effort to place the twelve historically, and one rather widely held conclusion is that with the possible exception of Obadiah the order in our Bible, which is the order established by the Israelites, is chronologically substantially correct. Some of the books place themselves. Others are judged on the basis of their references to known historical or natural events. For the New Churchman, however, it is the inner message which is of interest and importance, and this message is timeless. The chapter we have chosen from Amos offers a good

example of the problems connected with the study of the meaning of the Minor Prophets, as well as of the general tenor of their prophecies and the practical lessons they contain for us.

Amos is one of those who gives us in the letter some information about himself. In the first verse of the book he says that he was among the herdsmen of Tekoa and received his call to prophesy during the reign of Uzziah of Judah and Jeroboam 2 of Israel. This places him as an early contemporary of Isaiah as well as of Hosea, and as an inhabitant of Judah, since Tekoa was a village about six miles south of Bethlehem, although the greater part of his message was directed against Israel. In verses 14 and 15 of the seventh chapter he tells us: "I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was an herdsman, and a gatherer of sycomore fruit: and the Lord took me as I followed the flock." In the same chapter there is also a brief passage telling how Amaziah the priest of Bethel tried to discredit him with king Jeroboam. On the basis of these few statements a commercial film for the use of Sunday schools has been developed. While such films are no doubt prepared with the sincere intention of interesting children in the Bible, we should realize that, in common with most Bible story books as well as with the more pretentious religious movies which are shown in theaters, such films introduce so much purely imaginary material that the mind is completely confused as to what is actually in the Bible. We are sometimes so glad to see anything of a religious nature offered in the entertainment field that we may not stop to estimate whether its effect is actually good or bad. The Lord Himself in His divine love and wisdom gave the Word. It does not need bolstering by our very limited understanding and imagination. The personal data given us in the letter are not there for the purpose of helping us construct a picture of the individual through whom the prophetic message was given, but, like all the rest of the book, for their spiritual meaning.

In His Second Coming the Lord gave us sufficient means for the study of the Word, so that with sincere effort we can receive some spiritual enlightenment even from the most obscure passages in the Prophets. An example of this is the vision recorded in the first verse of our chapter. The effort to find a meaning in this vision without the help of Swedenborg has been made. For example, a note on this verse in the International Bible Commentary reads: "summer fruit, i.e. fruit fully ripe, which soon rots; representing Israel as ripe for judgment", cf. Revelation 14:15, 18. This is perhaps as good and faithful an inference as the finite imagination could make from the verse in its letter. But in Prophets and Psalms Swedenborg summarizes the verse for us as follows: "A new thing of the church comes into existence," and relates the verse to the general topic, "A new church in place of the former." So we see that the vision has a good correspondence instead of a bad one, and although Swedenborg does not make any comment on the verse anywhere else, we can follow through with the help of the Arcana. From the story of Joseph and the dream of the chief baker we learn that a basket, as a container for food, represents the will or voluntary part. From the interpretation of the Lord's promise to Noah in Genesis 8:22 we learn that summer represents a state of charity. So we see the basket of summer fruit as picturing a new church in which the will would produce good works done in charity. The contrast between this true church and the state of the Israelitish Church as described in verses 4 to 6 makes clear why the end of that church was inevitable.

Throughout the Prophets, denunciations of evil are always accompanied sooner or later by promises of salvation for the good. These promises are not actually expressed by Amos until the latter part of the ninth chapter, but the condition which necessitates the coming of a new church with salvation is described in verses 11 to 13 of chapter 8. We should compare these verses with some of the Lord's statements when He came into the world, notably Matthew 23:13, 16. Verse 11 of

our chapter is one of those passages in which the spiritual sense appears clearly in the letter and so helps to enlighten the sincere Bible reader as to the meaning of many other passages, such as the Lord's statement to the woman of Samaria in John 4:14. We recall Swedenborg's statement that the Word is like a man clothed but with his face and hands bare.

There are many quotations from Amos 8 in the writings. For example, we learn from @AC 3693 that in verse 9 "'to cause the sun to go down at noon' denotes obscurity as to truth with those who are in the knowledges of good and truth," and from @AC 4779 that in verse 10 "to bring up sackcloth upon all loins" signifies "mourning over destroyed goods." In several places, notably @AE 386[11], verses 11 to 13 are interpreted, and @AC 3923[6] gives the meaning of verse 14.

The Prophets are not beyond our understanding if we are willing to study and avail ourselves of the means the Lord has provided. And we know that the states of heart and mind to which the Lord addresses His message in the Prophets are not only states of churches and of nations but of individuals — of any one of us at one time or another. We need to read and understand the Prophets as we do all other parts of the Word. Remembering that the neck is the link between the head and the body, through which all the nerves pass which connect the two, let us take to ourselves the Lord's rebuke (Jeremiah 7:25-26): "Unto this day I have even sent unto you all my servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them: Yet they hearkened not unto me, nor inclined their ear, but hardened their neck: they did worse than their fathers."

## 96:JONAH AND THE GREAT FISH — Jonah 1; 2

### INTRO

Begin by giving the classes a brief outline of the background of the Minor Prophets. This can be done simply even with the Primaries. Then go to the particular position of Jonah, mentioning the difficulties which the unnecessary doubts of the miracle have caused. Do not dwell on this unless the class seems especially interested.

### Adult

The various levels of inner meaning in this story should interest the Adults. You will be able to tell by their first comments whether or not you need to spend time on the matter of mistranslation. If you do, put the emphasis on the importance of accurate translation of the Scripture. It is what the original text actually says that we should want to know, rather than what some person or group thinks it ought to say.

The book of Jonah is the fifth in the series of the twelve Minor Prophets, but historically Jonah is probably the first of them, for we are told in 2 Kings 14:25 that he lived in the time of Jeroboam 2 of Israel. Even so he was partly contemporary with Hosea, Amos, and Joel. He was from Gath-hepher, a town of Zebulun, and was a recognized prophet of Israel, but the particular story recorded in the book of Jonah is the only part of his message chosen by the Lord to make part of the Word.

In Matthew 12:38-41 the story of Jonah is cited by the Lord as a prophecy of His death and resurrection on the third day, and Swedenborg in @AE 538[11] interprets the prayer of Jonah from the belly of the fish as a description of the Lord's combats with the hells and victory over them. So

Jonah can be classed definitely with the Messianic prophecies.

The book has its historical application, and it is this which Swedenborg principally gives in his summary of it in the Prophets and Psalms. There he tells us that Jonah's call and his reception of it (Jonah 1:1-3) picture the fact that "those who were of the Jewish nation were commanded to teach the Word to the nations round about, but they would not, and thus they kept the Word among themselves alone." Some Bible students outside of the New Church have recognized national pride and antipathy as the primary cause of Jonah's original refusal to go to Nineveh and also of his later disappointment when Nineveh was spared. Unfortunately these students are inclined to laud Jonah's patriotism rather than to deplore his disobedience. Swedenborg says, however, that chapter 2 is a "prophecy concerning the Lord's combats with the hells, and concerning His most grievous temptations at that time, and concerning His state at that time; the 'three days and nights during which Jonah was in the bowels of the fish,' signify the entire duration of the combat with the hells."

Both of these interpretations of the book of Jonah — in the celestial sense and in the internal historical sense — help us to get some insight into the spiritual sense, the sense which describes our individual experience. From its meaning in the Lord's life we see that it concerns deep temptations, and in its meaning with reference to the Hebrew nation we see that it has to do with our constant tendency to imagine that external piety excuses inner uncharitableness.

Jonah was obviously a prophet held in honor by his own people, since even Jeroboam 2, who was an evil king, heeded his words. Jonah was in the habit of receiving the word of the Lord and speaking it boldly. But the Lord unerringly picked his weak spot and brought him down from his high place for his own good, at the same time using him for the salvation of the Ninevites and even of you and me, if we follow the example of the Ninevites (Luke 11:29-32). How often we are willing to do everything but the one thing the Lord requires of us, which is to recognize that we have no goodness of our own and to accept His guidance in love to Him and to the neighbor!

Jonah took ship in the opposite direction from Nineveh. He "bought" a philosophy of life — a ship represents doctrine — which he thought would save him from the necessity of doing what he did not want to do. Then he immediately went down into the hold and went to sleep. This reminds us of Isaiah's description of the fast acceptable to the Lord (Isaiah 58:3-7) which ends: "... and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh." How often we hide in excuses instead of facing ourselves squarely! Then the storm rises. We are not at ease. Everything goes wrong. What is the trouble? Casting lots always pictures submitting our lives to the judgment of the Lord's truth. The lot falls on Jonah, on the hidden fault. It must be brought out and examined and put out of our hearts before we can be at peace.

Jonah goes down into the depths in an effort to see and accept truth about himself — a state pictured by the great fish — for three days and three nights, a full state of spiritual combat. And by this process he is brought to a realization of his own weakness and of the Lord's goodness to him, of the divine providence which has directed his whole experience, to thanksgiving to the Lord for the lesson learned, and to the determination to be wholly obedient. Then he is cast out upon the dry ground. This is our experience whenever we are brought to see, acknowledge and repent of some deep fault in ourselves.

In the Spiritual Diary, Swedenborg says that Jonah's experience "actually happened" (see below). There is no more reason to question the miracle performed in Jonah's case than there is to question any of the miracles of the Word. Doubt of the miracles rests on a fundamental unwillingness to

believe that there is anything superior to nature, that God is not a mere name but is the ever-present and ever-active creator, an unwillingness to believe that He creates new forms and controls the events of our lives. Such an unwillingness seizes upon every excuse to doubt and discredit the supernatural phenomena presented in the Word. The story of Jonah has been an especial target.

This is in part due to the use of the word "whale" in the King James translation of Matthew 12:40, a mistranslation which was carried over unchanged in the Revised Standard Version.\* The Greek word, like the Hebrew word in Jonah 1:17, means any large fish or sea creature. It was used, for example, in the Odyssey to mean a seal or sea-calf. It did not take on the meaning of whale in the Greek, but later, after it had passed over into the Latin, it was adopted by science as the generic term for the whale family. Accurate translation is always essential to the study of the spiritual sense of the Word, and the history of the world's reception of the book of Jonah shows that it may also be very important for those who know nothing of the spiritual sense. Men are still trying to decide the question of whether a whale could or could not have swallowed Jonah, and in the process the message of the book is completely lost sight of. It is a modern case of making the Word of God "of none effect" by our tradition. We need to study the real meaning and application of the Book of Jonah not only for our own help, but that we may present it to others in such a way as to lift it to its proper level again, above the possibility of discredit by careless critics.

[\* The New English and the Jerusalem Bibles translate it "sea—monster." Phillips has "great fish"; and Today's English Version, "big fish." -Editor]

## 97:JONAH AND THE GOURD — Jonah 3; 4

### INTRO

The lesson for today cannot be taught without first being sure that the class knows and understands the first part of the story, that of Jonah and the great fish. The teachers should therefore review the first two chapters of Jonah and also read the summary given in the Junior notes, which answers questions commonly raised concerning the story of Jonah. New Church people should have a clear understanding of this story because it is so often questioned and even ridiculed.

### Adult

With this class the passages quoted from the writings as well as those quoted from the Word might be taken up and discussed one at a time. The powerful lesson presented by the story of Jonah should make us realize the importance of trying to correct the world's false estimate of it.

The prophet Jonah lived in the kingdom of Israel in the time of the second Jeroboam, not long after the death of Elisha. We learn this from 2 Kings 14:25. It is evident that he was recognized by the king as the Lord's prophet, for the prophecy mentioned in that verse is not a part of the book of Jonah. We see from this that it was not Jonah's prophecies to his own people which the Lord chose to have recorded. The book of Jonah differs from those of the other Minor Prophets in that it is a story about Jonah rather than an obvious prophecy or series of prophecies. Yet the whole story is prophetic and its importance is evidenced by the Lord's own references to it in Matthew 12:38-41 and Luke 11:20-32.

It is strange that in view of the Lord's own witness to the truth of the story, so many Christians who do not question other miracles have been induced to discard it as impossible. In our lesson on the first two chapters, we called attention to the fact that the word whale in Matthew 12:40 is a mistranslation — one which was not corrected in the Revised Standard Version. [It has, however, been corrected in several more recent versions. -Editor] The Greek word in Matthew as well as the Hebrew word in Jonah meant, at the time when it was used, any great fish or sea creature. It was at a much later date that its Latinized form came to be restricted to apply to the whale family only. Swedenborg says in the Diary that the story of Jonah is factual. We should all have this information in mind and not be silent when we meet with disbelief in the story and especially with ridicule of it.

For the story of Jonah contains very important lessons. In @AC 8481 Swedenborg says: "The falsity of evil which is in the good that is from our own, is compared to 'a worm' ... for falsity also gnaws and thus torments. There are two things which make hell, as there are two which make heaven ... the two which make hell are evil and falsity ... The torment in hell from the falsity is compared to 'a worm'; and the torment from evil there is compared to 'fire.'" See Isaiah 66:24 and Mark 9:43-44. We recall that Assyria, of which Nineveh was the capital, represents the reasoning plane of the mind, and we are told in @AC 1188: "That 'Nineveh' signifies falsities from the fallacies of the senses in the obscurity of an unenlightened understanding, and from ignorance, is evident in Jonah, who was sent to Nineveh, which city was pardoned because they were such." We might note that by this definition many of the people who disbelieve the story of Jonah today are "Ninevites," who would really change their opinion if the truth were told them.

This outline from the writings points to a very common temptation which few of us escape — the temptation to set ourselves up as the pattern which everyone should follow and to condemn and disparage anyone who does not conform to our pattern. That this is a very serious evil is impressed upon us by Swedenborg in many places, as for example in @AC 4949 where he speaks of some in the spiritual world "who have abodes under the soles of the feet" and who are constantly in the endeavor to ascend but always falling back. He says of these: "I was told that such are they who have despised others in comparison with themselves ... They are in a kind of stupidity; for such arrogance extinguishes and suffocates the light of heaven, and consequently intelligence." Jonah delivered the Lord's message to Nineveh, threatening it with destruction, but in his heart he was glorying in his own superiority to the Ninevites and looking forward to their discomfiture. He was thinking of his own importance as the Lord's prophet. When we are in this state of mind, we cannot be happy for any length of time, because we are always looking for things to criticize in those we despise and constantly being offended through our own false estimate of what they say and do. We miss all the true joy which comes from seeing and appreciating their good qualities. Our "worm dieth not." The tendency to think of ourselves as superior to others is one of our most subtle and deadly foes.

The Lord set us the example of humility and perfect love. We should take to heart His words in Matthew 20:25-28. He Himself, who was greatest of all, was the servant of all. On the cross He prayed for those who had crucified Him: "Father, forgive them: for they know not what they do." He has no pleasure in anyone's discomfiture, but only in leading each one, by whatever means is most likely to succeed, into the way of happiness and peace. He bade the disciples be "wise as serpents, and harmless as doves." This same lesson is brought out clearly in Ezekiel 18:20-24. As we learned in the case of David and Solomon, none of us ever reaches the point at which he is so wise and so great that he can think nothing false or do no wrong. In self-satisfaction lies concealed the "worm" of destruction.

# 98:THE PROPHET MICAH — Micah 6

## INTRO

This again is one of the survey lessons. Be sure all the children learn what is meant by the "Minor Prophets," and why they were called "Minor." Read Micah 6:8 and comment on its meaning with all classes.

## Adult

There are two important lessons here for Adults. One is that we need to read regularly all the Word — not just the parts which particularly appeal to us. The other is the simple outline of the good life found in Micah 6:8 in contrast to the many conflicting superficial ideas in the world around us. This verse provides endless food for thought and discussion.

We should all be familiar with the names of the twelve Minor Prophets, and for practical purposes it is best to know them in the order in which the books are found in our Bible, although this is not their exact chronological order. Little is known of their lives except from occasional statements in the books themselves, but they all claim direct divine inspiration and were included in the Judaic canon. Most of them state specifically the period in which they prophesied, but the periods of Joel, Obadiah, and Nahum are uncertain. Jonah is considered the earliest, the first great prophet after Elisha, and his book, unlike the others, contains considerable personal narrative. Hosea and Amos follow next after Jonah in time and were contemporaries. Micah was a contemporary of Isaiah. Zephaniah prophesied in the time of Josiah of Judah and Habakkuk in the time of Jehoiakim. Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi were all prophets who lived during the restoration. Hosea, Amos, and Jonah prophesied in Israel and the others in Judah. These books are all so short that the ancient Hebrews wrote all twelve of them on one manuscript or scroll.

Even in the letter the books of the Prophets are often obscure and difficult. It is impossible to make a study of each of the twelve Minor Prophets within the limits of a Sunday school course. In their letter they deal with the corrupt state of the Church, with the ruin which will inevitably follow upon such perversion of the divine gifts, and with the preservation of the good remnant and the coming of the Messiah. Many of them contain strange visions and commands which can be interpreted only by the law of correspondence. Only the book of Jonah contains narrative of the type which children can readily grasp. Yet all twelve, like the four Major Prophets, had a message which was essential to the people of their day and which, in its inner meaning, is essential to people of all time, to point out and condemn particular evil states and to give hope to those who are in despair. Even if much of the contents of the Minor Prophets seems incomprehensible to us, these books should be read reverently and attentively, in order that the letter may make its impression on the mind and be there for the Lord to use. We know that the reading of every part of the inspired Word connects us with particular societies in the heavens and serves them as well as helping us by new conjunctions. We shall also find many familiar prophecies in them which will help us to connect the Old and the New Testaments, and scattered through all twelve books there will be passages such as the one chosen for our reading today which are so direct and clear that they will come to serve us as constant guides to thought and conduct.

As we read any part of the Word, we should realize that it speaks to us. In our lesson the Lord,

through the prophet Micah, calls upon the mountains to witness His dealings with His people. The mountains, picturing our states of nearness to the Lord when we look down upon our lives as from a height, do bear witness to the Lord's constant mercy and protection and to the blessings which He gives us freely. They also bear witness to our ingratitude and forgetfulness, and to our proneness to follow self-interest and worldly ways — to walk according to the statutes of Omri and the works of the house of Ahab. Yet the Lord's way is not hard or burdensome. He does not require us to give up anything that is really good or that will really make us happy. And He does not leave us in the dark as to what the good life is: "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

This is a verse which everyone of us should know by heart and repeat often. The three requirements of a good life belong to the three planes, beginning with the outmost. "To do justly" is to be honest and upright and faithful in our outward conduct. This is the first step toward heaven, literal obedience to the commandments, reformation, the baptism with water. Many think it is enough, as the rich young man did. But the Lord tells us that we must also "love mercy." This is to love the neighbor. Abstract justice would permit us to punish those who injure us, to love only those who love us, but mercy requires that we love our enemies, bless those who curse us, and do good to those who despitefully use us and persecute us. This is the baptism with the Holy Spirit. Many stop here. They say, "If we are honest and faithful in our conduct and kind to our neighbors, what more can anyone ask?" The Lord does ask more. There is still the inmost plane, the most important of all since it determines the quality of all our thoughts and acts. On this inmost plane we are told to "walk humbly with thy God." The Lord said to the rich young man, "Sell whatsoever thou hast ... and come, take up the cross, and follow me." Put most simply, this means that we must give up our own way whenever it is contrary to the Lord's. This is the essence of walking humbly with God, to recognize that all goodness, wisdom, and power are the Lord's, to study His Word, and to submit ourselves humbly to its guidance. This is to love the Lord, the baptism with fire. People can live outwardly correct lives and be kind to their neighbors and still within cherish pride and self-satisfaction and shut the Lord out of their hearts altogether. Heaven is where the Lord is. We cannot be in heaven either here or hereafter if the Lord is not in our hearts. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment."

## **99:REBUILDING THE TEMPLE — Haggai 1**

### **INTRO**

The story of the rebuilding of the temple is an opportunity to review briefly the original plan and furnishings of the tabernacle. Point out that the ark disappeared from the Bible story at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem. In all classes stress the fact that the people were allowed to return because the Lord was to be born among them in the Holy Land. This will make a good point for the transition to the New Testament.

### **Adult**

In this lesson the Adults will probably be most interested in the historical facts concerning the return and rebuilding, as these facts are so scattered through the Bible that most people do not

have a clear picture from their own reading. The reason for the return is also an essential lesson, and the meaning of the lesson for our own lives should, of course, be pointed out.

In the last verse of the second book of Kings we read that in the thirty-seventh year of the captivity of Judah the king of Babylon began to show favor to Jehoiachin, the captive king. This was the beginning of the Lord's mercy in the fulfillment of the prophecy of Jeremiah (Jeremiah 29:10)\* that after seventy years the people should be permitted to return to the Holy Land. In Ezra 1:1 we read that "the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia" to have the temple rebuilt. We recall that Daniel converted Nebuchadnezzar to belief in Jehovah as the God of heaven. The later conquerors of Babylon, Darius the Mede and Cyrus the Persian, accepted this belief. The captives of Judah had prospered in worldly ways in Babylon and many of them had lost the desire to return to their own land. Cyrus bade all those who wished to do so to return and rebuild the temple, and he commanded those who preferred to remain in Chaldea to help the others "with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, beside the freewill offering for the house of God that is in Jerusalem." Cyrus also gave them back the vessels of gold and silver which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple. We are told that those who chose to go back in this first return numbered 42,360 besides 7,337 servants and maids. Zerubbabel was the leader of this return.

[\*See also 25:11-12. Cf. Psalm 90:10.]

About eighty years later, in the reign of Artaxerxes, there was a second return under Ezra. At least 1750 men with their families returned at this time. Ezra was a direct descendant of Aaron and thus a priest as well as a scribe. Josephus says that he had been high priest of those who were left in Babylon. It is apparent that he was in high favor with the Persian king and he was given full authority to raise funds for the journey and for the service of the temple, to dispose affairs in Jerusalem, to appoint judges and magistrates, and to punish offenders even by death. The book of Ezra does not claim to be prophetic; it is a simple historical record beginning with the return under Zerubbabel and ending about a year after Ezra's return. Nehemiah (chapter 8) gives us an account of a great gathering of the people in Jerusalem at the feast of tabernacles, at which Ezra read to them from the Law. (Ezra and Nehemiah do not have an inner sense.)

In @AE 1029[end] Swedenborg gives us an interesting explanation of the captivity and return (see below). This passage explains in part why there is no actual account in the books having an inner sense of the return from captivity. The people returned because it was necessary that the Word and the forms of worship be preserved in the Holy Land until the time was ripe for the Advent, but the people themselves could no longer be used to represent anything of good and truth. Three prophets — Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi — were sent to them to show them their condition and to hold forth to the few good individuals the promise of the Messiah, but the details of their further history were not part of the prophetic Word, and are of interest to us only as they may help us to see the background of the Lord's life.

The purpose of Cyrus in allowing the people to return to the Holy Land was that they should build the house of the Lord, but after the foundations were laid, the work was discontinued for some sixteen years. The Samaritans — the aliens who had been brought in to take the place of the Israelites — offered to help in the rebuilding of the temple, but their assistance was refused by Zerubbabel, and from that time they hindered the work in every possible way and finally sent a letter to the current king of Babylon representing that Jerusalem had always been a rebellious city and should not be rebuilt. Their letter influenced the king to order the work on the temple stopped. And the men of Judah made no protest at that time. At last, however, under the exhortation of the

prophets Haggai and Zechariah, they sent a delegation to the new king, Darius, and at their request Darius hunted out the original decree of Cyrus, which as a law of the Medes and Persians could not be changed. So the work was undertaken again and completed in four years, a period of a little more than twenty years elapsing between the laying of the foundation and the completion of the temple. It was dedicated with appropriate ceremonies and offerings and with the celebration of the Passover. Throughout the Old Testament the celebration of the Passover signalized the accomplishment of each step in the progress of the nation and each great reform.

We recall that the temple pictures the dwelling place of the Lord in us, a character built according to the Lord's plan. The rebuilding of the temple pictures an effort to return to goodness after one has fallen into evil. The prophet Haggai shows us how quickly the people were turned from their high purposes when once they had actually returned to the Holy Land. They built their own houses but let the house of the Lord lie waste. This is a picture of a life outwardly reformed but lacking genuine consecration to the Lord - still caring for self first. This kind of reformation does not bring happiness or peace. "Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith the Lord of hosts. Because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house." The ark was gone from the Holy of Holies. There is no mention of its being preserved or restored after the destruction of Solomon's temple. The heart was empty of the Lord's presence. The restoration of the nation was merely an external one.

So it is with us sometimes when we try to reform. The way back is not so easy or so happy as we expected. We reinstate ourselves in orderly external living and perhaps in the respect of the community, but our real character must be built up all over again, and that is a long, slow process. The Lord does not come to the new temple until we have fully realized our own helplessness and know that nothing but His presence can save us or bring us happiness and peace. No temple which we erect with our own reputation or glory in view can endure. The temple of Zerubbabel suffered one partial destruction and another rebuilding before the Lord's time, and this structure fell into complete decay, and under Herod a new temple — the one of the Gospels — was erected. This was finally destroyed by the Romans in 70 A.D.

But the prophets of the restoration period firmly held out to those who would be faithful the promise that their days of mourning should end. "But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings" (Malachi 4:2). "The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts." (Haggai 2:9) The Old Testament closes with the promise of sure reward to those who look to the Lord instead of to self and persistently obey Him.

## **100:PROPHETS OF THE RESTORATION —**

### **Zechariah 4**

#### **INTRO**

The teachers should read Ezra 1, 3, 4, 5, and 6 to get a complete background for the lesson on Zechariah.

## Adult

There are two major objectives for the teacher of Adults in this lesson. One is to give as clear a story of the return as possible, pointing out the reason for it and making clear the diminished role of the ancient Jewish nation. The other is to make the chapter itself as meaningful and inspiring as possible.

The Minor Prophets are seldom used for lessons in Sunday school. With the exception of the book of Jonah they contain little in story form, and even grown people often find them obscure. Yet they are as important for us as any part of the Word. If they had not contained lessons which all people need, the Lord would not have provided for their recording. As we all know, there are twelve books of the Minor Prophets, beginning with Hosea and ending with Malachi, the last book of the Old Testament. Some of them in the letter place themselves historically. The exact period of others is uncertain, but the first nine all prophesied before the captivity. It is thought that Obadiah may have witnessed the fall of Jerusalem and been carried away with the captives.

The last three of the Minor Prophets — Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi — were sent after the return from captivity. The story of the return is told in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, which are therefore very valuable books although they do not have an inner sense. It had been given Jeremiah to prophesy (Jeremiah 25:12; 29:10) that after seventy years in Babylon some of the people would return to the Holy Land. So the first verse of the book of Ezra tells us: "Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom." In his proclamation Cyrus said that the Lord had charged him "to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah," and that all of those who so desired might now return to their own land. The people knew, therefore, that the rebuilding of the temple was the primary cause and purpose of their return, and Cyrus restored to them all the gold and silver vessels of the temple which Nebuchadnezzar had carried away. He also charged those who did not return to make a freewill offering for the rebuilding of the temple and also to help their returning brethren "with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts."

More than forty-two thousand returned, under the leadership of Zerubbabel, a grandson of king Jehoiachin, and the foundation of the temple was laid with great rejoicing, although some of the "ancient men" wept because they could see that the new temple was not to be so large and impressive as the former one. But now the Samaritans, whose offer of help in the building had been rebuffed by Zerubbabel, made false representations to the kings who had succeeded Cyrus in Babylon, and the people received a command not to continue the building. As we learn from the prophet Haggai, instead of protesting they yielded all too willingly and turned to the building of their own houses. At the urging of Haggai, however, they finally sent an embassy to the second Darius, as a result of which he unearthed the original statute of Cyrus and, as this was one of the laws of the Medes and Persians — which, we recall, "change not" — he ordered the building resumed. The temple was completed, and at its dedication the feast of the Passover was celebrated.

It is important for us to know this history because it gives us the background of the New Testament story. The Lord came to fulfill the Old Testament Scriptures. He had to come, therefore, among those who possessed them. And Swedenborg tells us that because the Holy Land had been the home of the people of both the Most Ancient and the Ancient Churches and its geography had accordingly become correspondential in all its features, the Lord had to come in the Holy Land. So it was under

divine providence that the remnant was brought back and driven to complete the temple. But we remember that the nation no longer represented the Lord's church on earth. Its history after the captivity, except for the warnings of the three prophets, forms no part of the inspired Word. Scholars, especially since the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, have been much occupied with this history in an effort to trace the sources of the various sects in Palestine near the beginning of the Christian era. But we need not concern ourselves too much with their speculations, interesting though they are. The roots of the rejection of the Lord were in the people themselves who so reacted, not in any influences coming from without.

In his summary of the meaning of the prophecies of the last three Minor Prophets in Prophets and Psalms, Swedenborg shows us that they deal with the complete vastation of the ancient Jewish Church and with the imminent coming of the Lord and establishment of the Christian Church. There are a number of statements in these Prophets which latter-day Jews, knowing only the letter, quite naturally interpret as promises of the eventual restoration of their nation to preeminence in the world, but in the spiritual sense there is no suggestion of this.

Our chapter for today has still further implications. Read Revelation 11:4. This ties in the vision of Zechariah with the vision of John and with the Second Coming. In explaining Revelation 11:4 in the *Apocalypse Explained* (see below), Swedenborg quotes from our chapter.\*

[\*See note on Senior notes regarding the translation of certain phrases. -Editor]

In our own personal lives we may think of this chapter as a charge and encouragement to complete the building of our temple — the church in us. In @AC 9548[4] we are told that Zerubbabel, "who should found the house of God and perfect it," represents "the Lord who would come, and would restore the Spiritual Heaven and Church." We become discouraged sometimes. There seem to be too many claims made upon us by our necessities in the world and too much opposition within us to our regeneration. But it is the Lord who is really building our temple and He is able to finish what He has begun, if we can only keep the vision fresh in our minds. We remember that in the first chapter of Revelation the seven candlesticks, or lampstands, were the seven churches. Each of us, insofar as he is faithful to the teachings of the Word, is a church or lampstand. The seven lamps, the "eyes of the Lord, which run to and fro through the whole earth," picture the omniscience of divine providence, which sees our every thought and desire and leads us as straight and as far as we are willing to be led (see Ezekiel 1:18). The two olive trees or olive berries which pour oil into the lamps are the two great commandments — love to the Lord and love to the neighbor. And we should especially note the question, "Who hath despised the day of small things?" It is not by the moments of great crisis that the strength of our purpose is tested and measured, but by the things we do and think and feel in the little affairs of everyday life.

## **101:PROPHECIES OF THE ADVENT — Malachi 3; 4**

### **INTRO**

Mention the two parts of the Bible and explain if necessary the meaning of the word Testament, before taking up the lesson for today.

## **Adult**

A little more has been done in the Adult notes with the personal application of the lesson than in the notes for the other classes. The teacher should study all the notes from the Junior up and be prepared to discuss whichever application seems to interest the class most. In any event, he should first make sure that the class is familiar with the historical events involved before proceeding to the meaning of the prophecies.

We may recall that in our lesson on the story of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, Korah and the two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly who were jealous of Moses and Aaron were slain by fire from the Lord as they offered their incense before the door of the tabernacle, and that this is a picture of how love from the Lord is turned into hatred in the hearts of those who seek to exalt themselves. In @HH 570 we read: "As infernal fire is the love of self and of the world it is also every lust of these loves, since lust is love in its continuity, for what a man loves he continually lusts after. Infernal fire is also delight, since what a man loves and lusts after he perceives, when he obtains it, to be delightful. Man's delight of heart is of no other source. Infernal fire, therefore, is the lust and delight, that spring from these two loves as their origins. The evils flowing from these loves are contempt of others, enmity, and hostility against those who do not favor them, envy, hatred, and revenge, and from this fierceness and cruelty; and in respect to the Divine they are denial and consequent contempt, derision, and detraction of the holy things of the church; and after death, when man becomes a spirit, these evils are changed into anger and hatred against these holy things." Malachi 4:1 is one of several passages quoted in support of this interpretation.

That the people by and large were in this spiritually destructive self-love in the time of Malachi is evident from the charges made against them in the first two chapters of the book and in verses 5 to 15 of chapter 3. And that they were still in that state for the most part four hundred years later when the Lord was on earth is evident from many passages in the Gospels.

Malachi and the two Prophets whose books precede his in the Bible prophesied after the return from captivity in Babylon. Even in the time of Haggai, the first of these three, less than twenty years after the return, the people were already pursuing their own worldly affairs instead of completing the rebuilding of the temple, and were beginning again to intermarry with the idolatrous nations of the land. They refused to heed the warnings of the Lord or to learn the lessons taught by experience. So Malachi was the last prophet sent to them until the appearance of John the Baptist as the herald of the Lord. Their attitude toward their religion is well summed up in Malachi 3:14: "It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts?"

Yet throughout the two chapters of our lesson we see that there were good people in Malachi's time. Malachi 3:16 in its letter is a picture of the quiet drawing together of the good in times when evil forces seem to be in control, and the beautiful promise given them in verse 17 is one which every sincere worshiper of the Lord may cherish. The amazing thing is that the remnant of good people persisted throughout the four hundred years in which there was no new voice from heaven, but we learn from the writings that when a church is being vastated, the Lord always preserves a remnant out of which a new church may be built; as we read in Isaiah 17:7: "Yet gleaning grapes shall be left in it, as the shaking of an olive tree, two or three berries in the top of the uppermost bough, four or five in the outmost fruitful branches thereof, saith the Lord God of Israel." That during this long period the promises of the Messiah made through the Prophets were the support of this remnant

we learn from many statements in the Gospels, notably from the stories of Simeon and Anna in Luke 2:25-38.

In Malachi 4:1-2 the effect which the Lord's coming would have on the evil and on the good is told in the vivid contrast of the consuming fire and the rising sun. The only ones who do not welcome the sun — either natural or spiritual — are those who have "loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." To all the good its light and warmth are welcome, and the sun of righteousness — the Lord Jesus Christ — also brings "healing in his wings." @AE 283[9] tells us that in this verse the sun of righteousness is the celestial divine and the wings of Jehovah the spiritual divine or the one is the good of love and the other truth from that good. Wings in general represent spiritual truths which have the power to lift our thoughts above the plane of worldly living to heights from which we can see life in its true proportions and relationships, and it is this higher view which enables us to cleanse our minds of many afflictions and limitations. And it is said that we shall become "as calves of the stall." The Lord's coming makes our outward affections wholesome and productive and, as verses 3 and 4 teach us, makes it possible for us to overcome our temptations and to live freely according to the commandments.

Later we shall take up the fulfillment of the prophecy in Malachi 4:5-6, the prophecy with which the Old Testament leaves us, but there are one or two things in verse 6 which we may consider here as preparation. We might note that the word commonly translated "children" in both the King James and the Revised Standard Version is actually sons, and Swedenborg consistently uses the more literal translation, which is important to the spiritual interpretation, since sons represent truths. In @AE 724 Swedenborg quotes this verse (using the word sons instead of children) and gives us this interpretation: "From this it may be concluded what 'turning the heart of the fathers to the sons and the heart of the sons to the fathers' signifies, namely, that it means inducing a representation of the conjunction of spiritual goods with truths and truths with goods, thus of regeneration by the Lord by means of the Word. For regeneration is the conjunction of goods with truths and of truths with goods, and it is the Lord who regenerates, and the Word that teaches."

We may perhaps understand a little of what is meant by the last words of this verse - "lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" — by thinking again of the Lord as the sun and of how dangerous it would be for a physical eye from which a cataract had just been removed to be suddenly exposed to the full sunlight. We know that one of the objects of the Lord in the Advent was "to open the blind eyes." The simple good of that day were spiritually blind, because the knowledge of the Lord's teaching in the Word had been obscured by the traditions of the elders. The full light of truth coming to them suddenly would have plunged them into despair and self-destruction. So a messenger was sent to prepare the way.

## **102:THE LORD COMES INTO THE WORLD — Matthew 1:18-25; 2:13-23**

### **INTRO**

Tell all the classes that in passing from the Old to the New Testament we are merely continuing the Bible story, but that there has been a lapse of more than four hundred years while the people settled again throughout the Holy Land and re-established their formal worship. All through the

lesson stress the dependence of the letter of the New Testament upon the Old and the importance of keeping this relation in mind in our study. In all our study of the Lord's life on earth we should keep constantly before the children the thought of His dual nature — the divine from the Father within and the finite humanity from Mary which clothed it.

## Adult

The importance of the first chapter of Matthew to our thought about the verbal inspiration of the Word should be stressed. Discussion may center about what is involved in the dual nature of the Lord while He was on earth. It is this knowledge, revealed by the Lord in His Second Coming, which enables us to recognize and combat the fallacies inherent in the tripersonal concept of God.

Our first chapter emphasizes the virgin birth of the Lord. Doubt and denial of the virgin birth are based wholly upon unwillingness to believe. The letter of Scripture leaves us no possible excuse for questioning the fact. The Lord was born in a miraculous manner without a natural father. If we accept His later claims to divinity, we can see that His birth could not have been like that of any finite man. We are limited by our inheritance from our parents. There are some things which each of us cannot learn to do, no matter how hard we try. There are some temptations with which we have to fight all our lives inwardly, however we may learn to control their outward expression. Swedenborg explains this by telling us that we inherit the form of our internal mind from our father, the form of our external mind from our mother. Thus evil tendencies which we inherit from the mother's side may be wholly conquered and put off, but those which we inherit from the father's side may only be controlled.\* If we make the effort here to control them, when we get into the other life the Lord will hold them in subjection for us so that they no longer trouble us, but they remain as our individual limitations to eternity. If the Lord had had a natural father, His soul would have been finited just as ours are. He would not have been able to overcome all temptations; He would not have had infinite possibilities of development; He could never have made His humanity divine. The angel told Joseph that the child which Mary was to bear was conceived "of the Holy Ghost." That is, it was the divine life force itself which caused in Mary the beginning of the external form which was the Holy Babe of Bethlehem. The father of the child was the infinite God. The internal mind of the child was therefore infinite in its possibilities of development; but the external mind as well as the body was from Mary, and through her contained all the accumulated evil tendencies of humanity from the beginning of the world. Each of us has an internal and an external mind; we have all had experience of the struggle between what we call our higher and our lower natures. Imagine what struggle lay before the babe in whom the internal was the expression of the divine itself and the external contained all the accumulated forces of the hells!

[\*See editorial Appendix at end of this volume.]

The three names of the Lord mentioned in our lesson all express the fact of the Incarnation: Emmanuel, meaning "God with us"; Jesus, meaning "Jehovah saves"; Christ (Messiah in the Hebrew), meaning "the anointed one," the savior promised from the beginning. The more we study this first chapter of the New Testament in the light of the knowledge given the world at the Second Coming the more wonderful it seems in its testimony not only to the deity of the Lord but to the inspiration of both Old and New Testament Scripture. Matthew indeed penned it, but he did not make it up. No mere man could have composed twenty-five verses which so intricately and convincingly sum up the Old Testament and proclaim its fulfillment in the New.

Egypt, the land symbolizing natural knowledges, is familiar to us from our lessons in the Old Testament from Abram's sojourn there and from the story of Joseph and the long bondage of the Hebrews there. Now the Lord is taken there to escape the wrath of Herod. When Abram went into Egypt it was because of famine, and we saw that the famine represented lack of knowledge of the Lord's truth, and that going into Egypt pictured spending time in learning. The Lord's going into Egypt pictures a learning period in His life. Swedenborg says, "The Lord was instructed like any other man, but by virtue of His Divine He received all things more intelligently and wisely than anyone else." (@AE 654[19]). William Bruce, in his Commentary on Matthew, puts the reason for this very clearly:

"The Divine was in the human, in the person of Christ, as the soul is in the body in the person of man. The soul does not inspire the body — or rather the external man, which includes the body — with knowledge, but only gives him the faculty of acquiring it. Nor does the soul manifest its powers in and through the body till the body, or rather the external man, is prepared by growth 'in wisdom and in stature,' to become a suitable instrument for its use. Reason and liberty are faculties of the soul; but without knowledge, rationality would not be able to judge nor liberty to choose."

So the Lord, when He was a child, had to acquire knowledge by the use of His senses just as we do. Especially He had to be taught and to store in His external memory the letter of Scripture, for this was the measure to which He was to grow up. We learn parts of Scripture, and our finite reason acting upon our knowledge enables us partially to understand their meaning, and our finite will leads us to choose partially to live up to what we understand. The Lord learned all of Scripture, His infinite wisdom enabled Him to understand all its meaning, and His infinite love chose to live up to all of that wisdom. Even the learning process was hastened and perfected by the perfect internal within the external.

There is also perhaps a suggestion for us in the fact that Joseph was directed by revelation from heaven in his care of the child. There has been much idle speculation as to the Lord's training and pursuits during the long period in Nazareth, and many questions have been raised — as indeed they were raised in His own day (John 7:15) — as to how far His education was determined by the status and condition of Joseph. But we see that in the letter itself we have the assurance that Joseph as well as Mary knew that the child was extraordinary, and that Joseph was not the one who determined what should be done with Him. So even the letter suggests to us that the Lord's education was not necessarily dependent upon Joseph's knowledge and judgment; and Swedenborg tells us that "in His childhood the Lord did not will to imbue Himself with any other knowledges than those of the Word" (@AC 1461). The Lord's stay in Egypt therefore really pictures the fact that in His childhood He learned the letter of Scripture.

Herod, king of the Jews at this point in their history, pictures selfishness as a ruling principle in the life. As soon as we really recognize the Lord as God and determine to follow Him, all the selfishness in our nature is roused to an effort to change our determination. This is pictured by Herod's wrath and his attempt to destroy the Lord. He did destroy all the children in Bethlehem under two years of age — this means all that remained of innocence and goodness in the church which might have united it to the Lord. Little children represent innocence; the number two, the conjunction of good and truth; and Bethlehem, the connecting link between heaven and earth.

The three divisions of the Holy Land in the Lord's time picture the three planes in our lives. Judea, in which were Jerusalem and the temple and in which the Lord was born and to which He returned for the closing scenes of His earthly life, pictures the celestial or will plane. Galilee, in which He

spent all the early years of His life and where most of the work of His ministry was done, pictures the natural plane, the plane of act or of external conduct. Samaria, which connects the two and through which He passed again and again as He went to and fro between Judea and Galilee, pictures the spiritual or thought plane. The greater part of our life must be given to the problems of external daily conduct, but we go up to Jerusalem regularly for worship and instruction and inspiration, and between the two planes we too "must needs pass through Samaria." We must think in order to worship the Lord and to understand His Word, and we must think in order to apply what we learn of His will in our daily life.

## **103:THE VISIT OF THE WISE MEN —**

### **Matthew 2**

#### **INTRO**

This is the first of our special lessons. In this Christmas lesson, in all classes except the Primary, it should be pointed out that the number and names of the Wise Men are not given in the Word. Tradition says there were three — possibly because of the three gifts — and gives them the names Casper, Melchior, Balthazar, and many Christmas pictures, pageants, and stories are based on these traditions. But the children should know from the start what is Scripture and what is tradition, as the confusion of the two is hard to correct later.

#### **Adult**

The lesson is so familiar to every adult that the teacher need only cover briefly the background of the visit of the Wise Men and the correspondence of the three gifts and then ask what points the class would like to discuss. The question of the reason for the Advent may be raised by the class. The teacher may be helped with this by referring to the first lesson from Matthew, which precedes this lesson in this volume.

We have seen that the Ancient Church possessed the Ancient Word and the knowledge of correspondences. When it ceased to be interested in serving the Lord and began to use its knowledge for worldly and selfish ends — the state pictured by the building of the Tower of Babel — the Lord took away from it the knowledge of the spiritual meaning of its forms and symbols so that it fell into various idolatries and its people were scattered over the face of the earth. One group — Abram and his family — were chosen as the basis for the formation of the Israelitish Church. The other groups continued their development separately in various places and were the beginning of the many pagan nations which we find in the world today. At the start they still possessed the Ancient Word and considerable knowledge of its meaning — Swedenborg says that in his day the Ancient Word was perhaps still in existence in Great Tartary\* — and some among them venerated the book and cherished the knowledge they drew from it so that some study of correspondences persisted. With the evil, this took the form of magic and sorcery, but there were always good individuals who felt it to be their choicest possession.

[\*Tartary: Historically an indefinite region in Asia and Europe, extending from the Sea of Japan to the Dnieper River. — Merriam Geographical Dictionary]

The Wise Men who came to the Lord from the East were such good individuals. They knew and remembered ancient prophecies of the coming of the Messiah and the knowledge that He was to be born in the land of Canaan and to be "king of the Jews." They also looked for a star as the sign of His coming. The prophecy of the star comes into our Word from the mouth of Balaam (Numbers 24:17), who came from the same eastern country as the Wise Men. Balaam showed in other ways that he possessed some knowledge of correspondences, as we learn from the directions he gave Balak for altars and sacrifices, but he was an evil man who tried to use his knowledge to advance himself. When the Wise Men in the East saw the star, they knew what it meant and were willing to take the long journey to the Holy Land to pay homage to the Messiah and to lay their gifts at His feet, the gifts themselves being chosen for their correspondence. The number of Wise Men is not given in the Word, nor are their names given, although tradition says that there were three (probably because of the three gifts) and even names them.

We recall that the sun, moon, and stars picture love to the Lord, faith in Him, and knowledges of heavenly things. When the Lord came into the world, it was to give men sure knowledge about Himself and about true heavenly life. So the star was the natural and beautiful symbol of His coming. It was not a material star; there is no record that anyone saw it except the Wise Men, and it obviously appeared and disappeared in no ordinary way. But the shepherds at Bethlehem saw a great light. Both the light and the star were spiritual appearances, and the spiritual eyes of the shepherds and Wise Men were opened to see them. The shepherds saw a light all about them because they were in good, innocent states and were of the people who possessed the Scriptures. But the Wise Men, who had no knowledge of the truth except from old tradition, saw the light of the new spiritual day as a far-off star. The shepherds picture those within the church who are good; the Wise Men picture those outside of the church who cherish what little truth they have and try to live according to it. The shepherds had only a short way to go to find the Lord, but the Wise Men had to make a long journey.

The Wise Men went first to Jerusalem. Their knowledge was not specific enough to show them the exact place of the Lord's birth; so they went to the king of the country. Jerusalem, where the temple was, pictures the church as to truth. This is where "the Gentiles" expect to find knowledge of the Lord, and the Wise Men did find there those learned in the letter of Scripture who could tell them that it was prophesied that the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem. So the church, even when it is not all that it should be, always has truth to give to those who really wish to find the Lord.

Bethlehem, earlier called Ephratah, was the birthplace of Benjamin — the site of Rachel's tomb — and was situated on the border between the territory of Judah and that of Benjamin, as the land was divided among the tribes. Like Benjamin, Bethlehem represents "the spiritual of the celestial." This is the link between heaven and earth in us — the truth which is acquired as a result of goodness in the heart — just as Benjamin was the link between Joseph and his brothers, by which they could be reconciled to each other. So the Lord, in whose person God and man were united, was born in Bethlehem. Also Bethlehem was the city of David, who represented the Lord as to truth, His kingly quality. And the name Bethlehem means "house of bread," and we remember that the Lord said, "I am the bread of life." When the star appeared the second time to the Wise Men, it led them to the very place where the Lord was. Their knowledge at first was general, but after they had been instructed from the Scripture, it was specific.

In the Scriptures all offerings to the Lord picture the devotion of our lives to His service. The three gifts of the Wise Men represent this devotion on the three planes of will, thought, and deed. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." Gold is

the offering of the heart, the attempt to drive out of our hearts all feelings which the Lord tells us are evil: pride, hatred, revenge, covetousness, jealousy. Frankincense is the offering of the mind: the determination to examine our ideas in the light of the teachings of the Lord's Word and to reject as false whatever does not agree with the Word, no matter how firmly we have previously believed it; this involves trust in divine wisdom as being always and in every situation superior to our own. Myrrh is the offering of the outward life, the effort constantly to act toward others as the Lord would wish us to act.

After the Wise Men had presented their gifts, they returned to their own country by another way, not going back to Herod as he had asked them to do. We know that Herod's motive in helping the Wise Men to find the Lord was that he might kill Him. The Wise Men did not know this when they talked to Herod, but after they had seen the Lord, it could be revealed to them. The Lord's providence often permits selfish motives to bring us on our way toward finding the Lord — as children sometimes go to Sunday school for the sake of winning a pin or other token — but when we have found the Lord and devoted ourselves to His service, we are immediately given an understanding of the selfishness of our earlier motives, and we return to our work in another spirit.

The rest of our chapter shows us the immediate effect of the visit of the Wise Men on the worldly life which we have previously developed. Swedenborg tells us that as soon as a person begins to regenerate, temptation is permitted to come to him. The evils and falsities which have been governing his life, pictured by Herod, are stirred up to attempt to destroy the new beginning of spiritual life, to keep it from growing and coming to rule in their place. But divine providence protects the new beginning by preserving it in our memory — in Egypt — until we have gained the victory over the first temptations, that is, until Herod's death. After that, it is brought up in Galilee — on the plane of our outward conduct — first. It is the same process which we study in the Old Testament story. Every new beginning must spring from the heart and be confirmed by the mind, but then it must be worked out in the outward life before the evils and falsities in the heart and mind can finally be overcome.

## **104:THE LORD'S BAPTISM — Matthew 3**

### **INTRO**

In order to get a full picture of John the Baptist and his work as a background for teaching this lesson, the teacher should read also Matthew 11:7-15; 14:1-12; Mark 1:1-11; Luke 1:5-20, 39-45, 57-80; 3:10-14; John 1:19-30. The prophecies in Isaiah 40:3 and Malachi 4:5-6 should be marked so that they can be found quickly and read to the classes.

### **Adult**

The best discussion topics are the connection of the Old and New Testaments through John the Baptist, the meaning of his message, the three kinds of baptism, and the reason why the Lord wished to be baptized.

In connection with this lesson it is helpful to read Matthew 11:7-15 and 17:10-13 and John 1:19-30, and in the Arcana number 9372 (see the excerpt below). We see that John testifies of himself that he

is the fulfillment of the prophecy in Isaiah 40:3, and that the Lord testifies that John is the fulfillment of the prophecy in Malachi 4:5-6. In the letter, then, John is a very important link between the Old and the New Testaments. The prophecy in Malachi tells us that the Lord sent John to prepare the people so that the coming of the Lord should not smite the earth with a curse. How could the Lord's coming be a curse to anyone? Suppose a person has lived an evil life and has forgotten all he ever knew of what is true and right; then suddenly he sees - really sees — what true human life should be, and sees himself in all his blackness with no knowledge of how any change in himself could be accomplished. Would not this realization seem to curse him and perhaps even drive him to self-destruction? Indeed men have been known to commit suicide because they suddenly awoke to the realization of some great evil for which they had been responsible. The people of Bible days had fallen into a state in which they were wholly corrupt, with no knowledge of right remaining in their minds. If those who might still be affected by good had not been prepared beforehand, the Lord's coming would have struck them like a bolt of lightning. They had first to be turned from their evil ways so that heavenly influences could surround them by means of which they could approach the Lord. In the same way, we have to be led to see the evils in ourselves one by one and to correct them; our interior evils are hidden from us until we have gained spiritual strength by correcting the exterior ones.

The work of pointing out our external evils and calling us to repent and turn from them is done by the letter of the Word. This is our "John the Baptist." In the Scripture story all the prophets represent the Word, but particularly Moses, Elijah, Elisha, and John the Baptist. This is why John is called "Elias which was for to come." It is why he dressed the same way as Elijah (2 Kings 1:8), the camel's hair garment representing the letter of the Word and the leathern girdle or belt the external things which tie it together and connect it with the spiritual sense, the places, for example, where the spiritual sense appears in the letter. It is also why he ate locusts and wild honey, which represent the most external truths and their delight. John lived in the wilderness of Judea because that was a picture of the state into which the church had fallen. John's message, "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," is the message of the letter of the Word, with its commands and prohibitions and its promise of blessedness if only we will obey. Read Luke 3:10-14 and see how John singled out the particular sins of the different classes of people who came to him and bade them turn from them. This is what the Word should do for us. It is not repentance to confess that we are sinners and not single out and correct any particular sin. Repentance is not saying we are sorry; it is refusing to repeat the sin and learning to hate it. If we refuse to do this first work, which is our part of the covenant, the Lord cannot fulfill His part and bless us with His spirit, for His spirit cannot enter where sin is. How often we close our eyes to our own evils or spend our time trying to find excuses for them when the one thing necessary is to acknowledge and get rid of them! How prone we are to blame other people for our unhappiness, when unhappiness always comes from within ourselves! "A man's foes shall be they of his own household."

Baptism with water is the correspondential sign of this repentance. It pictures the cleansing of our outward lives according to the Lord's truth. The Jordan was the symbol of the truths which give entrance into the Holy Land of spiritual living, the simple truths of the letter of the Word, summed up in the ten commandments. So John baptized in Jordan, just as Naaman was cleansed of his leprosy when, in obedience to Elisha, he washed seven times in Jordan. All the washings of the Old Testament had this meaning, and in the Christian Church baptism takes the place of circumcision and all the ancient Hebrew ceremonial washings, as the Holy Supper takes the place of all the ancient Hebrew sacrifices and feasts. The baptism of an infant is a sign that the child's parents intend to bring him up according to the Lord's truth, and it is a symbol of entrance into the

Christian Church. And because the Sacrament of Baptism is carried out in accordance with the letter of the Word, it connects the child with heaven through correspondences and places the child, as to his spirit, in the Christian heavens. So baptism affects both the parents and the child. This is why the people present at a baptism feel the heavenly sphere.

But John speaks of another baptism, with which the Lord will baptize, the baptism "with the Holy Spirit and with fire." We have said that except as we repent of our actual evils, the Lord's spirit cannot come in and bless us. The baptism with water must come first. But as we repent and correct our outward lives, the Lord's spirit does come in to take the place of the selfish spirit which prevailed before. This is the baptism with the Holy Spirit. And finally we come to love to do right because unselfish love has entered our hearts from the Lord. This is the baptism with fire. Repentance is our part. The Lord never fails to perform His part. "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me" is a prayer which we should all know and use.

The Lord taught us, by His own example, that baptism is a necessary step in a truly good life. John recognized the Lord as the Messiah, the one whose shoes he knew himself unworthy to bear, and hesitated when the Lord came to him to be baptized. But Jesus told him, "Suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." With us baptism symbolizes repentance. The Lord needed no repentance; He had committed no sin. But in His assumed humanity were all the tendencies to evil which men had ever had, and He had felt and fought these by means of the truths of the letter of the Word, just as men do. He was cleansing His assumed humanity by means of the truth and bringing it into divine form. So it was fitting for Him to fulfill also the external symbol of the internal work He was doing, and He was baptized by John in Jordan. His baptism was a sign that He was accomplishing in the outer plane of His life the glorification which is the prototype of our regeneration. The dove and the voice from heaven were the signs — correspondential signs — of the inner results of this work, that divine wisdom and love flowed into His humanity as fast as He drove out evil by victories over temptations. The "beloved Son" was the humanity which was being made over into divine form.

Even if we had no understanding of the meaning and uses of baptism, the fact that the Lord insisted upon being baptized should convince us that it is necessary.

## **105:THE LORD'S TEMPTATIONS — Matthew 4:1-11**

### **INTRO**

This lesson should be made very practical for all the children, for they can progress spiritually only as they learn to recognize and fight against their individual temptations as of themselves. All children much of the time feel the desire to do right, but unless the desire is intelligently directed it may be wasted. The efforts of their parents must so often be exercised through correction and restraint when the children are actually in selfish and willful states that parents find it hard to put off the tone of command at other times. But in Sunday school the teacher has the opportunity to treat the children's temptations objectively while they are in good and teachable states. Show them first that temptation comes from the hells and that it is a battle between evil spirits and angels for control of their minds and hearts. And then point out that the deciding factor in this battle is their

own free choice.

## Adult

Point out first that the Lord met temptations constantly throughout His earthly life, and read to the class the quotation at the end of the lesson. Take up the meaning of the three temptations and discuss temptation in general, its source, why it is permitted to come to us, and how we should meet it.

What do we mean by temptation? Perhaps the simplest answer is "the desire to do something we know is wrong." Where does this desire come from? We feel it as coming from ourselves; yet the desire to resist the temptation seems to be in us too. We speak of our higher and our lower self and wonder sometimes which is our real self. The fact is that in each one of us are countless things both good and bad of which most of the time we are unconscious. The impulses which stir them up and bring them to our consciousness are not from ourselves at all but from the heavens and the hells, and the Lord's providence keeps us perfectly balanced between the two so that we are free to choose which impulse we shall follow. The Lord protects us so that we shall never be tempted beyond our power to resist if we look to Him for help (see 1 Corinthians 10:13). We sometimes say, "The temptation was too strong for me; I could not help doing what I did," but this is not being really honest. As we look back over our lives, we know that there is nothing we have ever done which we could not have done differently. We are free to choose between good and bad companions, companions who help us to do right and those who lead us into doing wrong. And it is useful for us to realize that we have other companions than those whom we see in the world around us. We have to choose between good and bad spiritual companions. We feel their influence; sometimes we almost hear their voices. We are not responsible for the bad thoughts and feelings which come up in all of us unexpectedly, but we are responsible if we let them stay. Anger, hatred, jealousy, spite, covetousness, pride are stirred up in us by evil spirits who delight to lead us into harm, just as bad companions in the world do; indeed they are evil spirits just because when they were in the world, they chose to take delight in evil. But these bad impulses and thoughts are not ours unless we yield to them. We can say, "No," to the suggestion of an evil spirit just as we can to the suggestion of a bad earthly companion.

Why does the Lord permit us to be tempted? Because if we did not freely choose what is good, we could not make good our own to keep forever, and if we saw nothing but good, we should have no choice. Choice necessarily implies an alternative. If we did not see the evils in ourselves, we could not reject them. So, as we progress, the Lord permits evil spirits to stir up deeper and deeper evils in our hereditary nature so that we may, if we will, choose higher and higher goods. This is the way in which our character is developed and strengthened, just as our muscles are developed by performing ever harder and harder tasks. We should not court temptation, for we do not know our own weakness; only the Lord can judge how far we are prepared to meet evil. Our own desire should be always to live among good spiritual companions. So we are rightly taught to pray, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." But when, in the Lord's providence, temptation comes, we should meet it boldly and use all the means the Lord has provided to help us resist it. This is what our lesson today teaches.

The account of the Lord's temptations in the wilderness is symbolic of all the temptations which He underwent daily from the beginning of His life on earth to the end. Although His forty days' fast in the wilderness is historically true, all the details of the story are correspondential and some of them

are obviously parable rather than actual fact. We have learned from the story of John that the wilderness of Judea pictures the state of the church at that time. The Lord's baptism, picturing the determination to cleanse the assumed human, immediately brought His divine nature into conflict with the church as summed up in His heredity from Mary. So the temptations in the wilderness follow directly upon the baptism. We know that with us, too, a good resolution always seems to be followed by an immediate temptation to break it. The number forty is a symbol of temptation. In our story the tempter is called "the devil" and is addressed as "satan." These are not individuals. All the power of evil in the hells is summed up under the term "devil," and all the power of falsity under the name "satan." In His humanity the Lord met the attacks of all the powers of the hells.

The three temptations picture temptation on the three planes of life. Stones represent truths on the natural plane, and to make them into bread to satisfy hunger is to find our satisfactions in natural external good works and taking credit to ourselves for them, without looking to the Lord for guidance and power. The Lord's answer to the tempter points to the fact that we are primarily spiritual beings and are not living truly human lives if we take no interest in spiritual things. The second temptation is on the intellectual plane, the temptation to think that "faith alone" is sufficient for salvation, that if we know about the Lord and say we believe in Him, He will somehow save us no matter what we do. The pinnacle of the temple pictures satisfaction in knowledge about the Lord, the temple being the symbol of the doctrine of the church. And to cast oneself down from this pinnacle is to go from a high to a low state of life by not trying to live according to the truth one knows. When we feel that we are better than other people because we belong to the church and go to church on Sunday — and that because we do, the Lord will admit us to heaven no matter how selfish we really are — we are feeling this temptation. And the Lord tells us, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." If we look up this quotation in Deuteronomy 6:16, we find that instead of tempting God we are diligently to "keep the commandments of the Lord," and to "do that which is right and good in the sight of the Lord" if we wish to attain the promised land. In this life we never reach a point where we are "good enough." If we think we are, we are standing on the pinnacle of the temple and are in imminent danger of falling off. And we must not rely on the Lord's mercy to save us, when He has told us plainly never to cease the battle against evils in our hearts. The third temptation of the Lord is the inmost, the temptation to let selfishness take possession of our hearts. To put self first in everything is to "fall down and worship" the devil and Satan; for in our natural self-hood are all the evils and falsities which the evil spirits love to excite, and when we set up self as the most important thing in life, we open the door to evil and come under the rule of the hells. When this temptation comes to us — as it does every day of our lives — we must remember that no matter what the appearance may be, our only salvation is to deny self, to look to the Lord for guidance and strength, and to obey Him: "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."

In each temptation the Lord's answer was a quotation from Scripture. This shows us the right way to meet temptation. Quoting Scripture does two things for us; it reminds us that however trivial the particular temptation may seem, it is really important, for it is a choice between the Lord and the devil; and it opens a way in our minds for the Lord to come in and help us. Recall that the Word is really like Jacob's ladder, with angels ascending and descending upon it — that is, our thoughts going up to the Lord at the top and the Lord's thoughts coming down to us at the foot, where the ladder connects with the ground, or the letter of the Word in our minds. When we quote Scripture in answer to temptation, we are setting up this "ladder," meeting temptation in the Lord's strength in this way, we feel the peace and satisfaction which come only from the Lord and the angels: "Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him."

# 106:THE FIRST DISCIPLES — Matthew 4:12-25

## INTRO

All the classes should be taught the meaning of the two words disciple and apostle.

## Adult

The meaning of the first four disciples, the order in which they are named, and the result of their call are all very important. The expression "fishers of men" should be developed in connection with the meaning of fish and fishing to give us a specific instead of a general idea of what the nature of our missionary efforts should be. If we ourselves have been in the habit of drawing living truths for use in our lives out of our memory-knowledge of the Word by means of the doctrines of our church, we shall be able to apply the same technique for the benefit of others. But it is essential that we recognize that we must all be disciples before we can be worthy apostles.

The Lord, by means of victories over temptations, brought His divine power down into the very outmost plane of His life on earth. This is pictured by His removal from Nazareth to Capernaum on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. The sea pictures knowledges collected in the memory; and fish, the affections for such knowledges which can give them life and make them of use. So the Lord's first four disciples were fishermen, men who were symbolically trying to find truths for life in such knowledges as they had. When the Lord called them, they immediately recognized Him as the living truth and left their nets — that is, their own philosophies which they had been using — and followed Him. The Lord promised to make them fishers of men — to give them real spiritual truths in place of the natural truth on which they had been living. In a less interior sense, they became fishers of men when they went out to draw others into the Lord's kingdom by the preaching of the Gospel.

The first four disciples were to become the best known of the twelve apostles. The apostles, like the twelve sons of Jacob, represent all the capacities in us which may be brought into the service of the Lord, that is, turned from natural to spiritual ends. In @AE 820-821 (see below) we have perhaps the clearest and most complete statement of the meaning of the first four disciples and of their relation to the Lord. The accounts of their call given in Matthew, Mark, and Luke are substantially the same. The order of their call is similar to the order of birth of the first four sons of Jacob. Peter, like Reuben, represents truth or faith. In the Gospel of John (1:35-42) Andrew is represented as having been a disciple of John the Baptist and as having through him recognized the Lord and then informed his brother Simon. This is given to teach us that truth, or faith, to be of real service must be sought from a desire to obey it; so Andrew actually precedes Peter in time. After his call, however, he virtually disappears from the Bible story, just as Simeon in the later history of the Old Testament seems to merge into Judah. And is not this exactly the true picture? Our early desire to obey the Lord becomes, if we regenerate, the life of charity. James, like Levi, represents charity, and John represents the works of charity.

Swedenborg tells us that if our life develops in its true order from the desire to obey into the love of divine truth, then into the love of good or charity, and finally into genuine good works, the good works contain all the other qualities; this also explains why John was loved more than the others by the Lord. But we must not forget the true order of development. Good works — in the ordinary

sense of external good deeds — done from any other motive than love to the Lord and obedience to His commandments, are not genuinely good. Swedenborg compares them to artificial fruit "which in external form appears like fruit from a tree, although it is colored wax containing within it dust or bitumen" (@DP 215[13]). Peter, James, and John, representing the reception of the Lord in thought, will, and act, became naturally the three who were closest to the Lord and who were allowed to witness things not seen by the others. To them were told the things to come, even though the individual men, as we know from the Gospel story itself, often did not understand or even remember what was told them.

The Lord's work in Galilee, summed up in verse 23, pictures His work in the external plane of our lives when we turn to Him for help in temptation. First He calls His disciples — makes use of all our qualities. Then He teaches in the synagogues — shows us true doctrine while we are in a state to receive it. He preaches the gospel of the kingdom — shows us the beauty and happiness of a life according to His laws. Finally He heals all manner of sickness and disease among the people — He helps us to overcome the bad habits and false thoughts which stand in the way of our spiritual health. Even the interests and activities in our lives which apparently have had no connection with our religion come to the Lord to be put right; these are the people from beyond Jordan.

Three types of sickness are specifically mentioned, and we can see that these picture evils in the three planes: those possessed with devils represent evils in the heart; the lunatic are falsities in the mind; and those that had the palsy picture the bad habits of conduct that make it difficult for us to carry out our good desires. All the good effects of the Lord's spirit follow in the train of sincere efforts to give up our own way and follow the Lord.

The Lord began His ministry with John's message: "Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." It is always at hand if we will do the work of repentance. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." (Revelation 3:20) We open the door by repentance, by seeing our evils and our need of the Lord, and by turning to Him in His Word for guidance and strength.

## **107:THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT — Matthew 5; 6; 7**

### **INTRO**

The teacher should be sure the children know the answers to the suggested questions on the lesson at their grade level and any other points mentioned in their own notes. Then take up some of the practical lessons suggested in the Adult notes. The teacher should study these beforehand, picking out and marking the particular verse or verses in the text which express each point. Take these up with the children, having them read them if they are able. Spend more time on any which seem particularly to strike the pupils. You may not be able to get through all of them, as you should leave at least five minutes for the closing parable, but you will be able to do enough to show the children how much there is in the sermon on the mount, and to encourage them to study it for themselves. Be sure they know what is the famous passage in each of the three chapters.

## Adult

Begin by reading the first verse of chapter 5 and commenting on its meaning. Then suggest that the sermon presents us with a real challenge and take up as many of its statements as you have time for.

Although the sermon on the mount is shorter in actual reading time than most modern sermons, it is so packed with lessons both natural and spiritual that it affords material for many sermons. To the people who listened to it, its teaching was absolutely new; even those of them who knew something of the Scriptures had lost the perception that they taught such things as these. It is a curious fact that although centuries have passed since this sermon was given and although men have read and studied it throughout those centuries, its lessons still seem new when we examine them honestly in comparison with our current thought and practice. For example, most of us doubtless know the Blessings; we acknowledge them as the Lord's rules of life and repeat them often. But have they ever become accepted principles in our own lives? Do we really believe that the humble-minded, the mourning, the meek, the persecuted are the happy people? Yet the Lord tells us that this is true. It is so opposite to the commonly accepted methods of seeking happiness that it is startling even after centuries of familiarity with the words.

The same is true of every lesson in the sermon on the mount: each one is diametrically opposed to what we tend naturally to believe and to practice. Perhaps nothing shows us so clearly as this how perverted our natural heredity is. This is what the first verse of the fifth chapter tells us: the Lord, "seeing the multitudes," went up into a mountain and taught them. The Lord saw the multitudes not as we see them but as they were in their hearts and minds. He saw their evils and their ignorance which were leading them to destruction. He saw their dire need of knowledge of the true way of life and of divine help in leading it. He went up into a mountain as a symbol of the fact that their thoughts must be lifted above the level on which they were accustomed to think. Then He proceeded to give them definite practical instruction as to how they must change their lives, how they must learn to act, to think, and to feel if they wished to be really happy or "blessed." He did not hesitate to be specific, to be dogmatic. He did not quibble or compromise or suggest. He told them plainly what was so.

And we read that the people were "astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one having authority." We are all among the multitude to whom the Lord preached the sermon on the mount. We need to follow Him up into the mountain of spiritual thinking and to learn the way of life from the only one having authority. It may seem to us that self-seeking, self-confidence, force, ruthlessness will bring success in life, but it is not so; they will bring unrest, confusion, pain, disappointment, destruction. The Lord Himself tells us so. True and lasting happiness comes only to those who are humble, pure, peace-loving, and steadfast in righteousness.

Let us see if we can list some of the practical lessons in the sermon:

Knowledge of the truth is useless unless we live according to it. It is like salt which has lost its savor or like a light which is hidden.

The commandments are eternally true and necessary. No changing conditions, no special circumstances make it right to break them. The Lord Himself was not superior to them: He fulfilled them in every detail.

It is not enough to keep the letter of the law: we must keep its spirit in our hearts. Hatred is the real sin — murder is only one of its effects.

Love which goes out only to those who return it is self-love. The test of true love is the ability to will and to do good to those who do evil to us.

The Lord should be our ideal of perfection, and we should not take any less perfect life as our pattern.

If we do good for the sake of being praised or admired or rewarded, we should not expect a spiritual reward too; such good does not benefit our souls.

We should not be disturbed if we do not have worldly success; our concern should be to make ourselves more and more what the Lord wishes us to be.

We should not think that we can compromise with evil. We cannot love the Lord and self at the same time.

We should not worry about the future; our business is to do right in the present and trust our future to the Lord.

We should not be critical of other people, but we should be critical of ourselves.

We should try persistently to find out the Lord's will and do it, recognizing that the easy way is not necessarily the right way. There are many wrong ways of doing anything; we should seek the right way.

In thus trying to summarize the lessons taught in the three chapters, we learn to appreciate more than ever the power of the letter of the Word. For there is no substitute for the actual words of the text, no simpler or more striking way of expressing the thought. We need to read and reread the sermon itself.

The closing parable of the sermon is familiar to us all. The rock is the same rock upon which the Lord told Peter He would found His church, the "cornerstone which the builders rejected," the truth that the Lord Jesus Christ is "God with us." This belief alone gives His words compelling authority in our lives. Our house is our character. We build our house on rock when we form our character according to the Lord's teachings, rejecting our own ideas when they differ from His. Sand is pulverized rock, truth broken up because it has no unifying element to keep it together. We build our house on the sand when we form our character according to the ideas of men, ever-shifting, multitudinous like the sand, giving no promise of permanence or security. The storm beat upon both houses alike. Trials and temptations come to the believer and to the unbeliever. These are the rain and floods and winds which beat upon the two houses. Great worldly prosperity is nowhere promised to the good. But those whose lives are based upon belief in the Lord will weather the storm, while those who rely only on themselves or on other human beings are crushed. Take bereavement as an example. If we believe in the Lord, we know that there is a spiritual world to which our loved ones have immediately gone, the world for which we are all created and where alone we can be safe and happy forever; we know that the Lord loves each one of us and guides all things for our highest good, so that however hard the loss may be for us, it is only temporary and it is somehow necessary; we know that we still have uses to perform in this world or we should not be left here. So, in spite of our natural sorrow, we can go on with our life here cheerfully and

hopefully. But the man who does not believe in the Lord has no assurance of any other life than this. What he loses out of this world seems to him gone forever. He sees no use, no wisdom in his bereavement; he wastes his energies bemoaning his loss; his character, having no solid foundation, is further undermined. "And it fell: and great was the fall of it."

## 108:THE LORD'S MINISTRY — Matthew 8

### INTRO

In a brief course such as a Sunday school course must necessarily be, it is impossible to take up all the Lord's work of preaching, teaching, and healing. This chapter has been chosen as showing the variety of the acts of the Lord in His ministry and something of their significance. With the classes from the Juniors up the discussion of miracles in general is perhaps of primary importance. Doubt of the miracles is so prevalent that even the children will inevitably meet it occasionally, and they should understand as clearly as possible why the miracles were necessary and how it was possible for the Lord to perform them. They can be shown that the ground of doubt of the miracles is not reason but unwillingness to believe. A very general statement of the spiritual meaning of the various miracles in this chapter will be enough to show them the importance of the miracles to the writing of the Word. Questions of disease and healing may be raised even by the Juniors, and the effort has been made in the notes to suggest the basis for answering such questions.

### Adult

The teacher should read, if possible, @DP 129-133, but in any case the quotation from n. 133 which is printed at the end of the lesson. Adult discussion should center on the nature and purpose of the Biblical miracles and why miracles are not orderly today. This is information found only in the writings of the New Church and much needed today. If there is time at the end of the class period for discussion of particular miracles in the chapter, the teacher will find their basic correspondence developed in the Senior notes.

Many people do not believe in the Biblical miracles, even some who profess to follow Jesus Christ. This is not because the text of Scripture — the only source of our knowledge of the Lord — leaves any room for doubt, but because they are unwilling to believe in what they call the "supernatural," and so reject all evidence of it. This rejection should be recognized for what it is: a purely arbitrary act of will, not based on knowledge or reason. There is ample evidence of the existence of the supernatural in everyone's experience if he is willing to recognize it.

If we believe in God, we must believe that He is the creator of the universe and everything in it, and that He has power to act in it and to control it. To give the name of God to the forces of nature is not to believe in God. There are many things, even in the natural universe, which we do not understand although we know they exist and even make use of them in our everyday life — electricity, for example. These forces have been in the world from the beginning and have affected men's lives, but it is only recently that men have known enough to make any intelligent use of them. We do not know enough even about the laws of nature to have any rational ground for denying the possibility of the miracles. In the growth of a seed into a tree, in the preservation of life through the dormant winter states, in the knitting of a bone, in countless daily happenings we see the Lord doing things which we do not understand and could not do ourselves. The Lord made the world, the laws of

nature are His laws for nature, and He alone fully understands them. The laws of nature were not broken in the performance of the miracles. Divine power, immediately present in the world, simply operated in nature in ways which we are not prepared to understand. And it was the same divine power which operated through the disciples when, at His command, they also performed miracles. All healing today, by whatever instrumental means, is wrought by the Lord.

Yet there is a difference between the miracles of Scripture and those which the Lord is constantly working today. Scripture miracles were performed more rapidly — some of them instantaneously. Why should not such things happen now? It is because the Lord had a special purpose in performing His miracles. He had but a limited time to be present to the sight of men on earth. He had to crowd into that time acts which should teach for all time His power over every type of affliction. Because the people he ministered to were a wholly external people, they could not be impressed except upon the most external plane. It is not so with men today. The Lord's resurrection set men free from bondage to materialistic and sensual thinking. It is possible for us today to understand spiritual things, the realities behind nature, and the Lord wants us to come to Him because of these realities and not merely for bodily health, comfort, and success.

Moreover, miracles never really convince anyone. We may think that if we could see a miracle performed we should believe, but this is not true. Many times people who did not wish to believe in the existence of the supernatural have had spiritual experiences so powerful that at the time they knew them to be real; yet as soon as the experience was over, they began to explain it away as hallucination or dream. The scribes and Pharisees were not convinced by the Lord's miracles, although they witnessed many of them. Read Matthew 9:34.

The Lord did not perform His miracles for the sake of convincing those unwilling to believe. He never seeks to force belief in Him. He performed miracles only for those who already believed. The very devils whom He cast out believed in His power before they were cast out. He makes this point very clear, for in almost every account of a miracle in the Word there is some preliminary assurance of the faith of the person involved.

But the Lord had another purpose in performing His miracles.

They were necessary for the sake of the letter of the Word, that they might stand forever in the Scripture as the ultimates in which spiritual truths might be contained. In general they teach us that all life and health and power come from the Lord and that faith in Him and obedience to His commandments are required of us. And each miracle also teaches its particular spiritual lesson.

Three general types of miracle are included in our chapter. The stilling of the storm manifests the Lord's power over inanimate nature and should teach us the limitations of natural science. We think we know a great deal about the cause of storms. A pertinent question is, "Why is the weatherman not always right?" He is kept informed of the storms that are coming his way and of atmospheric conditions all over the country. Why should he not be able to predict accurately for his own section? The answer is, because unexpected things "happen." There are factors in the case of which he is ignorant. Something happened to shift the course of the wind, to dissipate a storm or to bring one about. This happening was not accidental; it was according to law, only the law was too deep or too high for human knowledge. The Lord's will is active in nature today as really as when He stood in the boat on the Sea of Galilee. His wisdom directs nature according to our spiritual needs. It is literally true today that "even the winds and the sea obey him." And this is only the outermost lesson involved in this miracle.

The healing of physical disease manifests the Lord's control over the conditions of our bodies. When a person is ill and recovers, he attributes his recovery to the medicine he took or to the doctor who treated him or to a faith healer or to the prayers of his friends. Yet none of these agents always succeeds, and many recover without recourse to any of them. There are factors in physical health which we cannot understand or predict. It is still the Lord's will which operates and the Lord's wisdom which directs our recovery or our continued trial or our passing into the spiritual world. And again, this is but the outmost lesson.

And the Lord has power today (just as He did when He cast out devils long ago) over mental disorders. There is perhaps no other field in which men feel so helpless, in which prediction is so uncertain. And all efforts to prevent and to cure insanity point to the fact that one of its underlying causes is dwelling upon self. Give the person something to "occupy his mind," "to take his mind off himself," is often the first advice. There is only one course which can really take one's mind off himself, and that is turning to the Lord, choosing the spiritual company of angels in place of that of the devils associated with our natural heredity, and applying our efforts and talents to the service of the Lord and the neighbor. It is the Lord alone who can keep the mind sane.

Each miracle in our chapter has its individual lesson and is a study in itself. Each physical or mental ailment has its spiritual correspondent, and every detail in the Lord's healing of it is significant. Our chapter, like every chapter in the Word, is a challenge to continued study.

## **109:PARABLES OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN — Matthew 13**

### **INTRO**

The essential general points in this lesson are the reason why the Lord spoke in parables, the fact that heaven must be within us if we are to go to heaven when we die, and the fact that heaven is developed gradually within us as we receive and cultivate seeds of truth from the Word.

### **Adult**

Each parable in the chapter might furnish material for the whole discussion period, but it will be better to treat them all briefly, tying them together with the realization that they form a series on the development of heaven within us, from the first sowing of the seed to the final ingathering.

A parable is a story which has a lesson within it. When we talk to little children, we instinctively put things we wish to teach them in story form — we do not expect them to understand abstract statements. In the eyes of the Lord we are all children. The most logical and well-trained finite mind can grasp only a little of the Lord's truth. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts ... saith the Lord." Yet the Lord's thoughts are expressed in language which we can grasp, for in the Word they are ultimated in the things of nature and of our daily life. He speaks to us constantly, as we speak to little children, in concrete forms which we can grasp because they are part of our experience. The Lord never leaves anyone without the means of salvation. The simple stories which He told to the multitude would remain in their minds. If the time ever came when they really wished to learn more of the Lord, the stories could be recalled from their memories and they could be given to see

their meaning. So it is with each one of us. We learn stories of the Word in childhood when they are nothing but stories to us. But because in their external form they are easily understandable, they remain in our memories and later, when we develop a desire for spiritual understanding, the Lord can enlighten us through them.

The familiar parable of the sower is simple and striking in its outer form. The knowledge that in the Holy Land in the Lord's day seed was sown broadcast enables us to understand the details of the literal story. The wayside was not like our waysides, full of wild vegetation: it was the hard, trodden paths across the fields. The rocky ground was the ground where rock came almost to the surface, with only a thin covering of earth. The thorny places were corners which had been allowed to run wild. As the Lord sat in the boat looking at the multitude gathered before Him on the shore, He saw their hearts and minds with their varying conditions of receptivity, and He was speaking of Himself when He said, "Behold, a sower went forth to sow." The seed, as He later told His disciples, is "the word of the kingdom," the divine truth which He wished to plant in their minds. Every word which proceeded out of His mouth was like a seed, concealing within it a germ of living truth which, if rightly received and cared for, would grow into a plant bearing fruit "unto life eternal." He had told the tempter, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Later He would call Himself the "living bread which came down from heaven." As He spoke to the multitude, He perceived the state of each one in it, saw the seed He was sowing broadcast falling into the minds of those before Him, and knew what would happen to it with each one. In the different kinds of ground in His parable, He was painting a picture of what He saw.

In our chapter there are seven parables, all about the kingdom of heaven. Why so many? Swedenborg tells us that the Lord's purpose in creation was "a heaven from the human race." It is essential, then, that men should know what heaven is and how to attain it. So from the beginning the Lord has told us about the kingdom of heaven in every way which could reach our understanding and appeal to our wills. It is not His fault if we are blind and deaf to His teachings. The seven parables present seven pictures which portray the beginning and the growth of the kingdom of heaven, which the Lord elsewhere tells us "is within you."

We have seen that the parable of the sower teaches how the seed is sown and received. The next parable, that of the wheat and the tares, points out that good seed is not the only seed sown in our minds, that evil spirits seek to sow seeds of falsity while we "sleep" — in states when we are not awake to spiritual realities — and that we cannot always distinguish between good and evil in their beginnings. When we cannot, both truth and falsity must grow in us and bear fruit before we can be sure of their quality. "By their fruits ye shall know them."

The parable of the mustard seed is one of encouragement. We need encouragement when we are trying to live a heavenly life, for as we go on, we see so many "tares" in ourselves, and so little "wheat"! But the Lord tells us that every little beginning we make has the power to grow and expand into a veritable tree. This parable is especially fulfilled when we come into the other world where all our beginnings of heavenly life are forever increased.

The fourth parable, that of the leaven, takes us another step in spiritual development. Leaven, which was a piece of old sour dough, is a symbol of falsity. The Lord told His disciples to "beware of the leaven of the Pharisees." But leaven is made to serve a use. It sets up fermentation in bread dough which causes the bread to become light and digestible as the gases are expelled. So falsity is used by the Lord to set up a fermentation in our minds so that we may recognize and expel our evils and "digest" the truth. Spiritual combats or temptations are fermentations in the spiritual

sense (@AC 7906). To the church in Pergamos, whose danger was that they had there the doctrine of Balaam and the Nicolaitans, the Lord said, "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna." (Revelation 2:12)

These first four parables the Lord spoke to the multitude. The last three He spoke to the disciples alone. They picture states of heavenly living which only those who have "continued" with the Lord in temptations are able to experience. The fifth pictures the kingdom of heaven as a treasure hid in a field. Those who have endured long enough to realize something of the genuine happiness of spiritual living become willing to give up their own ways for the sake of gaining the Lord's way of life — the field — in which that treasure is hidden.

The sixth parable sums up this treasure in one "pearl of great price," for which the merchant who discovered it was willing to sell everything else. Swedenborg tells us that pearls represent "knowledges of good and truth" (@AE 1044) and that the one "pearl of great price" is "the acknowledgment and knowledge of the Lord" (@AR 916). In the latter number he also tells us, "the knowledge of the Lord is the universal of all things of doctrine and thence of all things of the church." The realization of this fact does not come early in our Christian experience. It is rather the culmination of a long life of effort to learn the Lord's truth and to live the spiritual life. But when we do come to this realization, everything else will seem insignificant in comparison with it.

The final parable pictures the close of life when the net is full when all the experiences, good and bad, of a lifetime are gathered up and examined in the light of that final holy state of love to the Lord, and the bad are rejected and the good carried forward to be developed to eternity in the new life of heaven. We should note that "end of the world" [KJV] is a mistranslation. The Greek words mean "consummation of the age." Nowhere does the Word speak of the destruction of the material universe.

The final incident of the chapter emphasizes the whole teaching that the prime essential for receiving heavenly blessings is acknowledgment that the Lord Jesus Christ was not a finite man but what He claimed to be, "Emmanuel, God with us."

## **110:THE TRANSFIGURATION — Matthew 17:1-13**

### **INTRO**

In all classes begin by speaking of the twelve special disciples of the Lord and especially of the first four chosen: Peter, Andrew, James, and John. Even the youngest can learn these four familiar names. Be sure also that they know which three of these were closest to the Lord. Explain the meaning of the word transfigure and then go on to the story. A good plan is to read it verse by verse from the Word, explaining as you go.

### **Adult**

Good discussion topics are: the reason why Peter, James, and John were chosen to witness the transfiguration, the reason why Moses and Elijah were seen with the Lord, and the meaning of

Peter's suggestion of the three tabernacles or booths and the answer to it.

Again the Lord goes up into a mountain — this time a high mountain — taking with Him only Peter, James, and John. These three are favored above the other disciples and chosen to witness certain great scenes not only because of their close friendship with Jesus, but also because of their representative roles. The twelve disciples picture all the good and useful affections which build up the church in each one of us. In their capacity of receiving and transmitting the Lord's instructions they represent the church. Peter, James, and John picture the three great essentials: faith, charity, and the works of charity (@AE 820), or devotion to the Lord in mind, heart, and act. So they were chosen as symbolic of the church in the individual and in the world. The possession of these three essentials is necessary to the attainment of high spiritual experiences. When we are in high spiritual states — the high mountain — lesser affections are temporarily left behind, and our essential devotion to the Lord is taken by Him "apart" to be the recipient of such deep revelation as He sees to be needed for our future development. Note that this experience follows "after six days," the period of labor and struggle, like the six days of creation which must precede any spiritual attainment.

What was it that the three disciples saw? It was the real Christ, the divine humanity which had been taking form within the material shell — the body they knew — as the Lord lived out the life of the Word, fulfilling the Law and the Prophets. Because the soul looks out through the face, the face in the Word represents "the interiors." In the transfiguration the Lord's face "did shine as the sun," because the Lord's inmost was the divine love which warms our hearts. We are told that in the spiritual world the Lord appears as a sun, and that His love and wisdom are the sun of that world. And the Lord's garments picture the truth in which His love clothes itself; so they were seen to be white as the light.

The minds of the three disciples had been prepared by instruction and by struggles with temptation to see the Lord as the living Word. Only a few days previously Peter had declared Him to be the Christ, and after this declaration the Lord had begun to teach His disciples about His coming death and resurrection, the final means of His glorification. Swedenborg tells us that everyone sees the Lord differently, according to the preparation he has made in his mind. When we come into the other world, we cannot see spiritual and divine things for which we have laid no basis in this world. If we form our idea of God correctly by studying His Word and His life and attempting to bring our minds and lives into conformity with His truth, we shall sometime see Him as the three disciples saw Him on the mountain. Later we shall study also the vision of Him which John saw on Patmos (Revelation 1:12-16). In Revelation 22:4 it is said of the Lord's servants that in the Holy City "they shall see his face." The Psalmist says: "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness." (Psalm 17:15) And we remember the blessing: "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." If we seek to cherish in our lives the three essentials for which Peter, James, and John stand, we shall see Jesus Christ transfigured in our minds even in this world and clearly with our eyes when we come into the world where the sight of the mind is likewise the sight of the spiritual body. Read the blessing which the Lord gave through Moses for the children of Israel, the people who were to preserve the written Word, in Numbers 6:22-27.

The Lord came into the world to live out the truth which was expressed in another form in the written Word. He was the Word made flesh. Swedenborg says of the transfiguration that "the Lord represented Divine truth, which is the Word, for the Lord, when He was in the world, made His Human Divine truth, and when He went out of the world, He made His Human Divine good by

uniting it with the Divine Itself, that was in Him from conception" (@AE 594[2]). In order that the disciples might identify the truth which they saw lived out in Jesus with the truth as they had learned it in the Scriptures, they were permitted to see Moses and Elijah talking with Jesus. Elias is the Greek form of Elijah. In the minds of the people of that day the Scriptures were divided into two great parts, the Law and the Prophets. Moses stood for the Law and Elijah for the Prophets. Later the Lord would show some of the disciples more specifically how the Law and the Prophets taught of Him:

"And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself." (Luke 24:27) The vision we are considering was a glimpse of the same truth.

This vision is intended for us also. There is a tendency in the Christian world today to pass by much of the Old Testament Scriptures, to think of them merely as showing the ancient Hebrew concept of God and as being superseded by the New Testament. The vision of Moses and Elijah talking with the Lord at the transfiguration teaches us that interiorly the Old Testament Scriptures are also "settled in heaven" (Psalm 119:89), that they are forever and inseparably connected with the Lord and must always be read and studied if we are to know Him. This is one pertinent lesson which we should draw from our story, confirming the fact which we have already noted that through prophecy and quotation the Old and New Testaments are so inextricably bound together that it is impossible to understand one without studying the other. In the vision of the transfiguration we see that this external connection is the result of a living internal connection. And the further details of the story show us a still deeper reason.

Peter, recognizing that the vision taught the holiness of the Law and the Prophets, proposed to make three tabernacles or tents, one for the Lord, one for Moses, and one for Elijah. A tabernacle is a symbol of worship. In its internal meaning Peter's desire expressed the threefold character of true worship — worship in the heart, in the outward life, and in the thoughts — but in the letter it shows a confusion in Peter's mind. The Lord does not appear to answer Peter's proposal, but the rest of the vision is actually an answer. Read verse 5. The bright cloud is the letter of the Word illumined by divine truth within. The voice is divine love speaking, and the words are the seal of authority which divine love sets upon divine truth. "And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only." The lifting up of the eyes pictures the lifting up of the understanding. They were finally given to see that all they had seen in vision was in Jesus, in the familiar friend whom they knew and loved. And this is what we should come to see also. In Jesus Christ "dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily," says Paul (Colossians 2:9). Jesus is Jehovah our savior. Old and New Testament Scriptures alike treat of Him. He is the sole object of our worship.

As they came down from the mountain, the Lord told His disciples not to tell others of the vision until after His resurrection. The resurrection was to be the general "sign" for all the world. After it many would be ready to believe the report of the transfiguration who would not have believed it before. And as they came down, they were able to understand more clearly the mission and work of John the Baptist. We cannot stay on the mount of vision, but as we come down again to practical everyday life, we can see our past experience in new light.

## 111:PALM SUNDAY — Matthew 21:1-27

## INTRO

There is no need of making a connection between this lesson and the last one. Special days can be treated as special, rather than in a series. In all classes it is enough to start by asking the pupils if they know what special day this is. The story itself is simple and striking and is easy to tell.

## Adult

The special discussion topic for the Adults should be what it means in our individual life really to accept the Lord as our king, remembering that a king represents truth. It is not enough to have good intentions or even to do outward good works. We must study the Word regularly in the light of the writings of the Second Coming. The conflict which followed the Lord's entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday and its result show us clearly where the temptation is and how and why we all too often yield to it.

We remember the correspondence of the three parts of the Holy Land: Galilee, the outer life; Samaria, the thought life; Judea, the life of the will. Whenever the Lord enters Judea, it is a picture of His desire to be present in our wills and to make them pure and holy. His final coming into Judea and His work there during the last week of His earthly life picture the searching of our inmost will to see whether it will receive or reject Him. Our lesson today shows that many of the people received Him gladly, recognizing Him as their king and savior; but we know that the political power in Jerusalem was still in the hands of His enemies and that they finally persuaded the people to reject and crucify Him. On the Sunday before the resurrection the Lord entered Jerusalem riding upon a donkey, as kings and judges had done in Old Testament times, and acclaimed as the "son of David," the Messiah, multitudes casting their garments in His path and waving branches of palms, the recognized symbol of victory. The multitudes acclaimed Him because they had seen His wonderful works of healing and resurrection. They thought they were ready to accept Him as their king. In much the same way, when we have recognized the power of the Lord to make over the external life, to restore the faculties men have allowed to become sick and even to die through neglect or abuse, we think we are ready to welcome Him into our minds and hearts as king.

A king is one who rules, whose laws his people accept and obey, who is looked to as the final authority. If we really accept the Lord as our king, we will obey His laws and recognize Him as our final authority — we will not merely call upon Him to save us from the consequences of our follies and misdeeds. Are we ready to do this? The final test for us is pictured in the results of the Lord's entry into Jerusalem. The Lord's rule is not always what we want it to be. He does not support our selfish desires and ambitions. His law often cuts directly across the path we wish to follow, and says "Stop!" In our hearts and minds are "priests and Pharisees," selfish feelings and thoughts which do not wish to submit to the Lord's rule, as well as a few loving "disciples" who wish to see Him on the throne. The "multitudes" are all our everyday thoughts and affections, which are swayed this way and that according to the deep currents of our souls. Our final test as Christians is whether or not we allow ourselves to be persuaded by our hereditary selfishness. For if we do, we shall finally reject the Lord's rule, even though we have seen it to be right and best. A great many of us see that the Christian life is the right and happy life and are willing to correct our ordinary conduct according to Christian principles and to learn to live an outwardly orderly life for the sake of the obvious benefits which result from such conduct. We are anxious to call ourselves Christians, to acclaim the Lord as king, because we see what Christianity has done for the world and for individuals. But when we really try to open our hearts and minds and submit them to the Lord's

cleansing control, we find the chief priests and Pharisees too strong for us and yield to their insistence that we free Barabbas and crucify the Lord.

In Zechariah 9:9 it is prophesied that the Lord would enter Jerusalem "riding upon a donkey, and upon a colt the foal of a donkey." We learn from the writings (@AC 2781) that the donkey (properly translated "she—donkey") and colt picture the natural man as to good and truth, and that the Lord's riding upon them not only shows that He claimed the prerogatives of king and judge but also represents the fact that He subordinated the natural planes of mind and heart to the divine. In Mark 11:2, and also in Luke 19:30, the colt is said to be one "whereon never man sat." The Lord alone completely reduced the natural plane to order and made it serve its true use. In the statement that the disciples placed their clothes on the donkey for the Lord to ride upon we see pictured the attitude of the true disciple who submits his own ideas to the Lord's government and correction. The same thing is represented by the fact that the multitudes "spread their garments in the way." Palm trees picture "spiritual good, or the good of truth" (@AC 8369). The palm branches which the people carried and strewed in the way of the Lord thus represent genuine affection for divine truth, through which alone the Lord can be victorious in anyone's life and reign there as king. For this reason the ancient Hebrews were commanded to bring palm branches at the feast of the ingathering (Leviticus 23:40), palm trees were carved upon the walls and doors of Solomon's temple (1 Kings 6:29, 32), and the multitude who stood before the throne in John's vision had palms in their hands (Revelation 7:9). It is also said of the righteous, those who practice the truth and so are in the good of truth, that they "shall flourish like the palm tree" (Psalm 92:12).

This was one of the first fruits of the Lord's entry into Jerusalem — He went into the temple and drove out the money-changers and overthrew the seats of those who sold doves, those who were profaning the temple by turning its worship to their own selfish advantage. The temple, the Lord's house, is the symbol of the church in each one of us. It is meant to be a "house of prayer." That is, the purpose of worship is to open the mind and heart to the Lord, acknowledging our weakness and need, and seeking instruction and help. But the temple had, both literally and figuratively, become a den of thieves. The sale of animals for sacrifice and the changing of ordinary money into the shekel of the sanctuary had come to be carried on for profit within the very court of the temple itself. And the scribes and Pharisees had come to use their outward piety to win reputation and power for themselves. The money-changers picture the use of the Scriptures for selfish ends, and the vendors of doves trading on pretended piety to win reputation and honor. Therefore the cleansing of the temple was one of the first things the Lord did after He entered Jerusalem as king. When the Lord is received into our inner lives as king, the selfish motives which have previously been in our religious life are exposed. Why have we called ourselves Christians? Has it always been from a genuine desire to learn of the Lord, to see our own faults, and to obtain the Lord's help in overcoming them? How often do we go to church to be seen of men? How often do we give because we are ashamed not to instead of because we really want to? How often do we sit in church and think how the sermon applies to someone else? The genuine recognition of the Lord leads us to recognize these attitudes of mind for what they are and to try with all our might to drive them out.

It is significant that the Lord did not spend the night in Jerusalem, but lodged with his friends Mary and Martha and Lazarus in Bethany. It is in our daytime states, when we are able to see clearly, that we make progress against our evils. And in the morning we have the incident of the fig tree. In the triad of olive, vine, and fig, the fig represents outward conduct, good in the outward life. And as the church of that day was a wholly external church, the fig tree was its special symbol. So the Lord's finding no fruit on the fig tree is symbolic of the fact that that church no longer bore its proper fruit

and had come to its end as the representative of the Lord's church in the world. So the fig tree withered away. This little incident was a divinely appointed herald also of what the people were about to do to the Lord, destroying their own life by rejecting Him. We, too, die spiritually when we do not "practice what we preach."

## **112:THE LORD'S LAST DAYS ON EARTH — Matthew 26; 27**

### **INTRO**

Part of the lesson time must be spent upon the literal story of the trial and crucifixion to be sure the order of events is known. The principal effort should be to bring out the thought that the cross symbolizes victory, the victory of the Lord's goodness and truth over all the forces of evil. It should also be pointed out that the Lord's victory can enable us to conquer, if we accept His guidance and look to Him for strength. We must obey Him if we are to be partakers in His victory. In telling of the betrayal suggest that we also may betray the Lord by not trying to live according to the teachings we profess to believe. All the classes should be told that the Holy Supper was instituted by the Lord during His last celebration of the Passover, and that it takes the place of the Passover for the Christian Church.

### **Adult**

There are two aspects of the lesson which are especially important for the Adults: the difference between the New Church teaching concerning the cross and the ideas prevailing in some other churches, and what betrayal of the Lord is in our own lives. The teacher should study the Intermediate and Senior notes also.

The Holy Supper is the one great feast of the Christian Church.

It takes the place of the Passover and of all the feasts and sacrifices prescribed for the ancient Jewish Church. As the Passover commemorated deliverance from bondage in Egypt, so the Holy Supper commemorates our deliverance from bondage to the hells. The Lord Himself is "the Lamb that was slain" for our salvation, and the bread and wine of the Holy Supper are symbols of His body and blood, which are divine good and divine truth, as He Himself told His apostles. The "bread" which nourishes our souls is divine good, and the "wine" which refreshes us is divine truth. The Lord invites us all to partake of these for the strengthening of our souls against evil and falsity and their nourishment unto eternal life.

The name Gethsemane means "oil press." Oil is a symbol of love. The oil press is a picture of temptation as to love, the deepest temptation of all. The Lord went to the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives with His apostles after the last supper, knowing that Judas had agreed to betray Him. The physical suffering which He was to undergo was doubtless not even in His thoughts when He prayed that the cup might pass from Him. He did not have Himself in mind in His prayer — He never had Himself in mind — but those who were to reject the salvation which he had come to give them, as well as those who, having become His followers, were to yield to the weakness of the flesh and desert Him. He longed to save them all from committing these sins and to save them by force of

His very divine power in spite of their own perverted wills. The fact that even this deepest temptation came from what remained of His assumed humanity is shown by the change in the form of His prayer. He prayed three times, representing His turning to the Divine with all three planes, but only the first and most external prayer admitted the possibility of any change in the divine order which He was fulfilling. His disciples fell asleep, as we all do. Their sleep is a picture of our inability to keep our minds awake to spiritual realities, of our proneness to fall back into natural ways of thinking even when we have been instructed in the truth, to think in terms of worldly standards and values. This is to be spiritually asleep. So the Lord says to us, as well as to the apostles:

"Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

In the Christian world Judas has come to be a symbol of all that is despicable. This has led to the question of why the Lord chose Judas in the first place to be one of His apostles, since the Lord knows the hearts of all. But we must distinguish between Judas the man and Judas the representative. In chapter 27 we learn that Judas recognized his sin and tried to undo it, and finally hanged himself from remorse. And Swedenborg tells us that after True Christian Religion was completed the original twelve apostles were sent throughout the spiritual world to proclaim the Second Coming; so we may well infer that Judas the man found his home in the heavens. From the writings we learn that he represents the church of that time, which was then in the love of the externals of worship. The affection for the externals of worship is a necessary and valuable affection but one which is easily led astray. When we, as did the scribes and Pharisees, put on outward piety as a cloak for inner selfishness and in order that we may have worldly honor and power, we are like Judas betraying the Lord with a kiss, for all outward worship purports to love the Lord.

The Lord made no effort to prevent Judas from betraying Him; neither would He permit His disciples to use force against the enemies who came to seize Him. It was necessary that His enemies be permitted to do their worst in order that His glory might afterward appear. As He said, He could have summoned "more than twelve legions of angels" at His will to restrain His enemies, but this would have been contrary to the divine purpose of leaving men in freedom. We are often tempted to try to force the truth upon others who do not want it, or to fight evil with its own weapons. But this method never succeeds. Truth is steadfast and unyielding; only falsity is violent and anxious to dominate. The same weakness which prompted Peter to draw his sword led him to forsake the Lord after He was seized and to deny Him while He was being tried, for it was the feeling that material power is greater than spiritual power. It is the same weakness which prompts people in the church today to try to make the church succeed by doing "what everybody else does," and leave the church when it does not appear to be prospering.

The Lord was tried first by the people themselves before Caiaphas the high priest. We recall that the Jews, in comparison with other nations, represent the church in us, our relation to the Lord. This is where the real trial of the Lord in us always takes place. The Lord refused to argue with Caiaphas or even to answer the false witnesses who were brought against Him. He merely asserted His divinity and pointed to the time when He would appear as their judge, and left them free to decide as they chose. So He does with us. We have all the evidence which the people then had. The Gospels stand for all time as authentic records of the Lord's life and claim. If we reject Him, it is not because of lack of evidence: it is simply because we do not wish to accept Him, because we prefer to follow our own guidance, to have our own way. The trial before Pilate represents merely our confirmation by reasonings of the decision of our will.

Many in the first Christian church theoretically and also actually regarded the cross as a punishment. Many today believe that on the cross the Lord suffered the punishment which men deserved, and so paid the price of our salvation. This is the doctrine called "vicarious atonement." Many others — perhaps the majority — nominally reject this doctrine; yet actually many still believe it, for they believe that because they call themselves Christians they will be saved, even if they live and think as they please, ignoring the Lord's teaching and rejecting the Scriptures which are our only source of knowledge of Him. They think of the crucifixion as a defeat and a tragedy, and feel bound to the Lord by pity for His voluntary suffering. This is not the New Church doctrine.

The passion of the cross was the Lord's final victory over all the temptations which beset our finite humanity and to which we so often yield, the final putting off of all the limitations and weaknesses which He had voluntarily assumed in the humanity He took on from Mary, in order to meet and overcome the evil forces which men had created by their misuse of His gifts and with which He could not have come in contact in any other way.

The cross teaches us that evil and falsity have no power against goodness and truth, that if we choose to walk with the Lord, not even death itself can hurt us. The thought of the cross should inspire us to say with the four and twenty elders (Revelation 11:17):

"We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come: because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned."

## **113:EASTER — Matthew 28**

### **INTRO**

In the younger classes the teacher should start with a brief review of the Palm Sunday lesson and then tell the children as simply as possible the story of the last week of the Lord's life on earth. He spent the first two days of the week teaching in the temple, but at night He went out of the city to Bethany, the home of His friends Mary and Martha and Lazarus. On Thursday evening He went into the city again and celebrated the Passover feast with His disciples. It was at this feast that He instituted the Holy Supper, which in the Christian Church takes the place of the Passover. After supper He went out to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray, and it was there that the crowd, led by Judas, seized Him. He was tried before the high priest, before Herod, and finally before Pilate, the Roman governor. No fault could be found in Him except by the use of false witnesses, but they demanded His death, and on Friday He was crucified. This review of events should be given in full to the Juniors but more briefly to the younger ones.

### **Adult**

Most of the Adults may already be sufficiently familiar with the details of the Easter story and their meaning, although the correspondence of the tomb and the stone that sealed it should be mentioned. Good discussion topics are the historical effect of the resurrection and its implications for the New Churchman especially.

The first ten verses of our chapter are very familiar to all of us.

Most of us know them by heart. It is a simple, beautiful story. The sorrowing women come to the tomb to care for the body of their master and friend, upon whom they had counted so much and whose death seemed to them the end of everything. But instead of the sealed tomb guarded by soldiers, they find the tomb open and empty and an angel of glorious countenance in white raiment, who tells them to fear not for the Lord is risen and will come to them in Galilee. Then, as they run to tell the wonderful news to the disciples, they see the Lord Himself coming to meet them. "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." This resurrection scene takes place "in the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week." Night always pictures a time of spiritual darkness and dawn the coming of a new spiritual day, a new state of recognition of the Lord. The sabbath of our first verse is not the holy sabbath of rest in the Lord, but the false sabbath of the religious leaders, the state of rest in the thought that they had triumphed by putting the Lord to death and would no more be troubled by Him. And the change is heralded by an earthquake, picturing a complete change in the state of the church.

The stone with which they had sealed the tomb represents their false interpretations of the letter of Scripture, by which they kept the people from seeing the spirit of truth within. False interpretations of the letter of the Word have not been confined to that day: they are prevalent today also and they still come between men and the Lord. The stone is rolled away when these false interpretations are given up and the Lord Himself is seen coming forth to reign and to bless.

The apostles were not the first at the sepulchre. In spite of all that the Lord had told them of His death and resurrection, they had given up hope when they saw Him die on the cross. But the women, who picture our affections, clung to the thought of the master even after His death and sought at the earliest opportunity — as soon as the sabbath was over — to serve Him still in the only way they thought remained to them. So our affections, even when hope seems dead, when the ideas of God in which we have trusted appear to be proved false, still cling to belief in the Lord Himself and seek to serve Him. And it is to this spirit of loving service that the Lord's resurrection is first declared. The keepers, who represent the false arguments in the mind which seek to keep the Lord in the tomb, to convince us that Christ is after all a mere historical figure, shake and become as dead men before the mighty truth of the resurrection. But this same truth encourages the loving affections and bids them instruct our thoughts and seek the Lord in the joy of willing service, in Galilee. We remember that Galilee pictures the plane of daily living and a mountain a high state of thought from which we can see our daily life in its true proportions and relationships. It is in carrying out the Lord's will in our daily life that we find His living spirit; without such active effort our knowledge of the Lord is dead. A similar truth is pictured by the fact that when the women actually saw the Lord, they "came and held him by the feet." The Lord's "feet" are the outmost plane of His activity, where His spirit affects our conduct.

The resurrection was the promised "sign of the prophet Jonas" (Matthew 16:4). The Lord rose on the third day, and between that time and the ascension forty days later, He walked and talked with many, opening their spiritual eyes to see Him.

But those whose spiritual eyes were closed by willful blindness did not see Him. That the apostles did see Him is proved by the effect on their lives. They had deserted Him when He was on the cross; they withdrew to mourn and wonder and doubt, as we see by the conversation described in Luke 24:13-21, and even the report of the women failed to convince them (Mark 16:10-11, Luke 24:10-11). But when they saw Him themselves, their whole life was changed; they then recalled and believed all He had told them of Himself, and were ready to go forth and suffer martyrdom for their belief in Him. Moreover their belief was so sure that they were able to convince others and to found the

Christian Church. The very existence of the Christian Church is ample evidence of the fact of the resurrection. And the spirit of the glorified Lord working through the lives of those who accept Him has changed the course of history and brought about a new type of civilization. There is no logical reason to doubt that the resurrection was a fact.

If we accept the fact of the resurrection, we must believe, as the apostles did, that the Lord told the truth about Himself, that He is God with us, and that His Word is binding upon us. In the resurrection He gave the world a single great sign which stands for all time as proof of His claims and of His power. Belief in the resurrection entails upon us the responsibility of studying the Lord's teaching and obeying it, giving up our own judgment when we see that it is contrary to His teaching. This is the difficult side of the acceptance. But there is another and very joyous and beautiful side which we always have especially in mind on Easter Sunday. The Lord rose not only to prove to us that He is God, "the resurrection and the life," but to prove that His power is always victorious in the long run, that, whatever the appearance may be, falsity and evil always fail in the end. "Fear not them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do." If we will adopt the principles of love to the Lord and the neighbor as our ruling principles and act steadfastly from them, nothing can harm us spiritually; everything that happens to us in this world, however hard and disastrous it may seem outwardly, will be turned by the Lord into a means of developing fuller and happier life; our lives, no matter how humble and circumscribed they may seem, will advance the kingdom of heaven on earth. And when life here is over, when the evil forces of worldliness and selfishness have done their worst, we shall merely discard the outworn garment which served us so imperfectly and rise to full life and freedom in the spiritual world. The resurrection shows us death as the gateway to life; it enables us to live in the certainty of eternal values.

And the resurrection teaches us another lesson. The Lord is always with us although our physical eyes cannot see Him. He is not far away in heaven, indifferent to our struggles and needs. He is always at the door, waiting to come in when we open to Him. He is nearer to us than any earthly friend we have. He knows us better than we know ourselves. He is always ready to listen and not only willing but able to help us, if only we will trust Him and accept His advice. "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." He says this to us. And He tells us, as He told the apostles, to go out in the strength of this knowledge and spread the gospel of the kingdom. What we need to remember is that the Gospel is His, not ours — the truth as we find it in the Word, not our own ideas of what the truth ought to be. Again and again we are told in the writings that the Lord's spirit cannot act through falsity. Our church can succeed in the world and in our individual lives only so far as it is truly Christian, so far as it opens the way for the Lord's presence and power by seeking Him in His Word and obeying the truth as He speaks it there.

## 114:THE LORD'S BAPTISM — Mark 1

### INTRO

The general introduction for all classes should be concerned with the fact that there are four Gospels and the value to us of having four accounts of the Lord's life given us by Him through different individuals.

# **Adult**

Interesting discussion topics are the reason for the return from captivity, the nature of the four-hundred-year period following, the value of having four Gospels, the facts we know about Mark as an individual, and the reason why John had to come before the Lord.

Each of the Gospels makes the connection with the Old Testament in a different way. Matthew and Luke give the genealogies and cite the fulfillment of certain prophecies by the coming of the Lord. John shows the inner connection with all that went before from the beginning of creation. Mark makes the most immediate direct connection with the end of the Old Testament, quoting in his second verse the prophecy of Malachi, the last of the Old Testament prophets.

We now begin the study of the Gospel of Mark. The four Gospels complement each other. Although for the most part they present the same facts, each one adds details not mentioned in the others, and each offers a slightly different viewpoint. This has always been recognized. The first "harmony" of the Gospels was produced by Tatian as early as 170 A.D. The first thing that strikes us about the Gospel of Mark is his omission of any account of the Lord's birth and childhood. We know that the Lord in dictating the Word made use of the things which were in the minds of the individuals through whom He wrote. Mark's mind was apparently preoccupied with the marvelous works of the Lord in His public ministry. Mark was not one of the apostles. He is not mentioned by name in any of the Gospels. That he had personal acquaintance with the Lord we may assume from the first mention of him in Acts 12:12, where it is evident that his mother's home was a rendezvous for Christians in Jerusalem. We learn here that Mark's Hebrew name was John. Mark is the English form of the Latin Marcus. During the time of Roman rule, many boys were given double names in this way. In Acts 13:5 we hear of John Mark again as assisting Paul and Barnabas on their missionary journeys. In Acts 13:13 he leaves them and returns to Jerusalem, and we find that his return prejudiced Paul against him and caused a separation between Paul and Barnabas (Acts 15:36-41). Colossians 4:10 gives us the information that Mark was a nephew of Barnabas, and by that time he had also been re—accepted by Paul as a companion. Paul again speaks of him favorably in 2 Timothy 4:11. In 1 Peter 5:13 we learn that he was with Peter in Babylon, and tradition says that it was from Peter that he received most of his knowledge of the Lord's life. At least it is apparent that he was in a position to learn from Peter, one of the three disciples who had been with the Lord most constantly from the beginning of His public ministry.

The general impression we get from the opening chapter of Mark is that of the impact of the first public appearance of the Lord upon the common people. The immediate reference to the prophecy of Malachi bridges the four-hundred-year gap in the coming of the word of the Lord. Malachi prophesied a messenger of the Advent. John the Baptist is that messenger. Malachi (Malachi 4:5-6) had also prophesied that Elijah would be the one sent. The fact that John looked and dressed like Elijah and that he lived in the wilderness, thus fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah 40:3, must have disposed the people to accept him and welcome his instruction. Even Herod recognized him as a holy man and feared him (Mark 6:20).

John's preaching in the wilderness may well be compared to the wilderness period in Jewish history. The relation of his mission to the Lord's ministry is the same as that of the wilderness journey to the conquest of the Holy Land. We recall that the Israelites had to remain in the wilderness until all those had died who were unwilling to face the sacrifices and dangers involved in the conquest, and that this pictured that our regeneration cannot begin until we are willing to

recognize and with the Lord's help fight the evils within ourselves. Malachi 4:6 tells us that unless John had prepared the way, the Lord's coming would have smitten the earth with a curse. Sin is to acknowledge the truth and be unwilling to try to obey it. Again and again in the writings we read that the Lord enlightens only those who are seeking the truth for the sake of life. The Lord teaches this same lesson when He says to Nicodemus (John 3:19):

"This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." It is taught also in many passages in which the Lord is said to have blinded men's eyes lest they see.

We do not read of baptism as such before John, but the people of that day were familiar enough with washings and purifications to accept it as necessary, and the Lord made it a Christian sacrament by His example first and later by command (Matthew 28:19). It is the symbol of our desire to cleanse our lives according to the truths which the Lord gives us in the Word. We recall that the Jordan, the boundary of the Holy Land, pictures introductory truths.

Mark does not record the story of John's hesitation to baptize the Lord and the Lord's answer. He gives us the simple, powerful picture of the sudden appearance of the stranger from Nazareth coming to be baptized with the rest and then, as He came up from the water, the opening of the heavens, the descent of the dove, and the voice proclaiming this to be the "beloved Son," the long-awaited Messiah. It is not surprising that in the first verse of this Gospel as well as in verse 11 the Lord is referred to as the Son of God. The people had been taught to think of the Messiah, as they would see Him in the flesh, as the Son of God, but they knew also that He would be Jehovah Himself. We may be certain of this by studying the familiar prophecy in Isaiah 9:6.

## **115:NEW WINE — Mark 2**

### **INTRO**

Review briefly the last lesson, calling attention especially to the latter part of chapter 1, as the connection with today's lesson can be made most easily by speaking of the miracles, and pointing out again that the Lord's ministry had three parts: preaching, teaching, and healing, and that the physical healings were always done as signs of His power to heal the souls of men.

### **Adult**

A profitable discussion topic is the attitude of the scribes and Pharisees toward the Lord and its counterpart in our modern world. One of the prime tasks of the New Church is to counteract the prevailing superficial materialistic trend. The new wine of which the Lord spoke is spiritual truth, and this cannot be confined in materialistic forms of thought.

As we saw in our lesson on chapter 1, the impression made by Mark's Gospel is that of the sudden appearance of the Lord at the beginning of His ministry. So we are almost immediately confronted with the miracles and with the reaction of the scribes and Pharisees against the new prophet to whom all the common people were flocking. John the Baptist had prepared the way of the Lord literally as well as spiritually. Because John dwelt in the wilderness and wore the hairy mantle of the prophets, and especially because nothing he said or did interfered with the position or

convenience of the scribes and Pharisees, they had been willing enough to recognize John's claim to be a prophet. In fact, we can imagine that the appearance of such an authentic prophet after four hundred years in which the prophetic voice had been silent might be regarded as a strengthening of the position of religious orthodoxy. But now a person appears of very unorthodox demeanor who nevertheless has the sanction of John. As we learn later (Mark 11:29-32), they were afraid to discredit John because he had been generally accepted as a prophet. So it was a long time before they dared to do more than harass the Lord.

Swedenborg tells us that the miracles could be wrought among the people of that day because they would not interfere with their freedom, as they would have with people of greater spiritual sensitiveness. We read in Luke 10:13, "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes." But the scribes and Pharisees could witness the miracles and merely say, "He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of devils casteth he out devils." (Mark 3:22) The Lord never performed miracles to create faith. Faith had to be present before the miracle was performed. We read in connection with Nazareth, "He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief." (Matthew 13:58) The Lord did have compassion on the sick and maimed and obsessed, and He healed as many as were in humble and receptive states, but we are told that the miracles were wrought principally for the sake of the Word, that they might serve as pictures of the works of healing which the Lord can perform in our souls.

This is clearly illustrated in the miracle performed in our chapter. When the palsied man on his bed was let down through the roof into the Lord's presence, we read, "When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee." His first concern was with the state of the man's faith and His second with the removal of his sins. Then he healed the man of his sickness "that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins." There is a lesson in this miracle for us. The man had faith but could not walk. We often mean to do right but somehow are too weak to carry out our good intentions. We fall back on the mental "bed" we have made to support us in our weakness, excusing ourselves on the ground of our inherited limitations or of our worldly environment or of the provocation under which we labor. If we look to the Lord for help, He shows us that we must first fully trust Him, then recognize that the fault is our own and desire to be forgiven, and finally that we must "take up our bed and walk" in the strength that He can give us.

Our chapter is really a series of encounters with the scribes and Pharisees. They were present at the miracle and objected to the Lord's claim to the power to forgive sins. The physical miracle silenced them only temporarily. When the Lord called a despised publican to be one of His disciples, Levi or Matthew (Matthew 9:9), they immediately found occasion to criticize Him for consorting with publicans and sinners. The new prophet was not following their pattern and so became a threat. The Lord's answer reminds us of the story of Jonah's experience when he refused to take the Lord's message to Nineveh. The religious leaders were proud, hard, contemptuous of everyone outside their own class and especially of Gentiles. We recall the Lord's condemnation of them in Matthew 23:13-33. The Lord is "no respecter of persons" (i.e., He does not show partiality). Humility and need are the gateway to His mercy. The scribes and Pharisees could not answer Him. They knew He was right. But their opposition was merely turned into another channel.

The next attack was on the fact that the Lord's disciples did not fast, and here they took pains to remind Him that the disciples of John did fast. And the Lord pointed out to them that fasting has a meaning and a purpose and that apart from its meaning it is of no value. Fasting, Swedenborg says,

is a representation of sorrow, especially of sorrow during temptation. The Lord Himself fasted during the forty days' temptation in the wilderness. But the consciousness of the Lord's presence brings only joy to His disciples. Fasting under such circumstances would be a mockery.

The same distinction between substance and shadow is made in answer to the final complaint in this chapter in regard to the observance of the sabbath. The Lord did not say that either fasting or the sabbath is to be abandoned. Each is to be observed in the time and way for which it was ordained. The individual human soul is the thing in whose interest all observances were commanded, and the way in which these observances are to be kept is the way which promotes the welfare of the soul. The church then was an empty shell, merely the representative of a church, with no spiritual life within it. The Lord came to restore the church, to fulfill the Law and the Prophets, to live out before men the divine truth contained within them. Observance of the old outward forms was not adequate to express the spiritual power which He brought down to men. We know that for the Christian Church the sacrament of baptism is substituted for all the ceremonial washings of the ancient Jewish Church, and the sacrament of the Lord's Supper for all the sacrifices and feasts. There are laws, such as the ten commandments, whose letter can never be abrogated because they are the basic general laws of divine order. But most of the Old Testament ceremonial and civil laws took their literal form, as the Lord noted concerning the law of divorce, "because of the hardness of their hearts."

The teaching of the whole chapter is summed up in verses 21 and 22. (See the quotation from @AE 376[28] below.) We need to remember this teaching in our thought about the New Church in its relation to the first Christian Church. When the Lord came into the world He brought new "wine," new truth from the Divine. It required new forms of expression, new "bottles." When He came the second time, He again brought new "wine" and the old forms will not contain it. The new truths revealed in the opened Word vastly expand our concept of our duty to the Lord and the neighbor. They cannot be lived adequately within the boundaries and forms of other churches. While there are all over the world in all religions people who "will be" of the New Church in the other life, they are not yet of that Church. With them the old "bottles" are merely being broken by the new "wine." There must be the specific New Church in the world to keep the new "wine" from being spilled and lost. The organized New Church is a new "bottle" with which its members are entrusted.

## 116:THE TWELVE APOSTLES — Mark 3

### INTRO

The connection with the last lesson is easily made through the teaching in regard to the sabbath. Draw from the classes first what the Lord said about the sabbath and what its true purpose is, and then use the miracle in the beginning of today's chapter as an illustration.

### Adult

You will find that many of the adults will actually know very little about the twelve apostles and will be interested in such details as you can give them. In general, discussion should center on the various ways in which the people of the Lord's time reacted to His presence, and their counterparts in the life of today.

The Lord's life and teaching in the world accomplished the consummation of the ancient Jewish dispensation and the beginning of the first Christian dispensation. The scribes and Pharisees were the official spokesmen of the decadent church, and throughout the Gospels their attitude toward the Lord is one of stubborn and willfully blind rejection. It is interesting that in verse 5 of our chapter for today the word translated "hardness" is actually "blindness." Blindness of heart is the rejection of the truth by the selfish will. It is the "unforgivable sin" of verse 29. Again and again the charges of the scribes and Pharisees were countered by the Lord with such unanswerable truth that they could not argue. But in each case their opposition to Him was increased. In our chapter they "went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against him, how they might destroy him." The Herodians were a political party which supported Herod and favored dependence upon Rome. They were enemies of the Pharisees. So a joining of forces with the Herodians was an acknowledgment by the Pharisees that they had no legitimate means of silencing the Lord.

The state of the common people at the end of this dispensation is pictured by the man in the synagogue whose hand was withered. The hand is the symbol of power. Whatever the physical cause of the man's affliction may have been, the use of the word withered involves in the spiritual sense the result of a lack of truth. It is lack of water which causes things to wither, and water corresponds to truth. The people had been deprived by the scribes and Pharisees of the truths of the Word. They had lost the power to do good because they did not know what was good. In Matthew 23:13 we read, "But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in." The man in the synagogue is a picture of those who were devout and really desired to be able to live good lives.

Another class of people — the most numerous perhaps — is represented by the multitude who "pressed" (literally "rushed") upon the Lord at the seaside, desiring only to be healed of their diseases. Even in the natural sense, these people were thinking of themselves, not of each other or even of the Lord. They recognized their wretchedness and sought relief wherever it was promised. The Lord healed and taught these people by the seashore, a picture of how He is able in the Church universal of any age to lead men to better states by recalling to their minds whatever of truth they have stored in their memories. Verse 11 expresses a truth which is illustrated in several places in the Gospels — the truth that the hells and evil spirits cannot stand in the presence of the Lord. This should teach us that when we are struggling with a temptation, our ability to resist the evil will come only as we admit the Lord into our thoughts.

Then the Lord went up into a mountain and called unto Him whom He would. Those who are called to go up into the mountain with the Lord are those who want more than to be saved from suffering and disaster themselves. They really want to learn of the Lord and serve Him. The Lord found among this group His apostles, men in whom He saw the capacity to learn and also to transmit what they learned to others. Even here we should note that it was He who gave them all the power they had. After the Lord left them, the apostles did go out into the world and establish the Christian Church. But the Gospel they preached was the life of the Lord, and the miracles they performed were done in His name and by His means. One of the most subtle fallacies of our times is the assumption that the beginnings of the Christian Church and the Gospel records of the life of Christ were simply products of the minds and deeds of the apostles. Many conclusions of some modern theologians can be traced to this false premise, and we need to be able to recognize its influence and to discount such conclusions accordingly.

The twelve apostles were all different. Like the twelve sons of Jacob they represent "all things of

faith and love in the complex" (@AC 9643[4]). The particular correspondence of Peter, James, and John is given us a number of times in the writings: "faith, charity, and the good of charity" (Arcana Coelestia preface to 2135) or "truth in the understanding," "truth in the will," and "truth in act" (@AE 444[11]). @AE 821[3] gives the correspondence of Andrew as "the obedience of faith." The difference between Andrew and John is probably analogous to the difference between the good of truth and the good of love. @AE 740[8] says that Judas represents the ancient Jewish nation.

None of the other apostles is discussed specifically in the writings, but an interesting study could be made of them from the little we learn of each from the letter of the Word taken in connection with the correspondence of the sons of Jacob. Philip, whose home was at Bethsaida, is mentioned several times in the Gospel of John, first as bringing Nathanael to the Lord (John 1:43-46), then in connection with the feeding of the five thousand (John 6:7), then as a means of access to the Lord for "certain Greeks" (John 12:20-22), and especially in the incident in John 14:8-11, when it is Philip's request, "Show us the Father," which brings forth the Lord's clearest statement of His identity. Bartholomew, which means "son of Tolmai," may possibly have been that same Nathanael of John 1:47-51, since the name Bartholomew appears only in the lists of the twelve, and Nathanael, whose home was in Cana of Galilee, is included with several of the apostles in John 21:2 when the Lord appeared to them after His resurrection beside the sea of Tiberias. Thomas has come into our common speech as "doubting Thomas" because of his slowness to believe in the Lord's resurrection (John 20:24-29), but we should read also John 11:16 and 14:5. The second James, James the son of Alphaeus, is often referred to by commentators as "James the Less," but he became after the Lord's resurrection a great leader of the early Christians, the head of the Church in Jerusalem. Thaddaeus is the surname of Lebbaeus (Matthew 10:3) and is identical with "Judas the brother of James" in the list in Luke 6:16. He is the Judas "not Iscariot" of John 14:22 and the writer of the Epistle of Jude. Simon the Canaanite is also called Simon "Zelotes." This means that he was a member of the Zealots, a fanatical sect who worked especially for the overthrow of the Roman rule and the re-establishment of a theocracy.

An interesting thought is presented to us of the New Church by the statement in @TCR 4: "It is a noteworthy fact that some months ago the Lord called together His twelve disciples, now angels, and sent them forth throughout the spiritual world, with the command to preach the gospel there anew, since the church that was scarcely a remnant of it survives." From this we may presume that all twelve became angels. In the letter of the Word (John 6:70) the Lord Himself speaks of Judas Iscariot as a devil. But Judas the man who, when he found that the Lord actually was taken prisoner by his means, tried to return the purchase money in order to release Him and, finding that impossible, went out and hanged himself (Matthew 27:3-10), evidently had in him the basis of salvation like all the others.

## 117:PARABLES — Mark 4

### INTRO

The connection can be made very simply by explaining what a parable is and the fact that the whole Word — everything we have been studying — is actually a parable. Then point out that the meaning of this first parable in our chapter was explained by the Lord Himself, and go on from there. Even the little children can understand this much.

## Adult

The teacher would do well to read carefully the Doctrine of the @DSS, nos. 50-61 and try to present this teaching as a whole in its bearing on our reading and study of the Word. In the New Church people have tended to swing to one extreme or the other — to neglect the study of the letter of the Word, or to neglect the study of the writings. The letter of the Word is the basic study and should be pursued systematically throughout our life, but if we, in this new age, did not also need the knowledge which the writings give us, it would not have been given us. And our study of the letter of the Word should be governed and directed by our knowledge that it is divinely inspired, and not by the pronouncements of those who study the Word as the product of human intelligence. We should see clearly the difference between these two approaches and study the Word in light rather than in darkness.

Three of the universally recognized parables of the Lord are in this chapter of Mark. The parable of the sower and the parable of the mustard seed are found also in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, but that of the seed growing secretly is found only in Mark. There are in all some ten parables in the Old Testament and thirty-six in the New which are recognized as parables by all Christians [see note\* in Intermediate section]. But our chapter tells us that "without a parable spake he not unto them," and in the New Church we know that this statement has a far wider application than is generally understood. The whole Word is parable.

The principal reason why the Lord speaks to men always in parable is given in verses 11 and 12 of our chapter. To understand these verses we need to know who are meant by those to whom "it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God" and by those who are said to be "without." They are the same two groups who are meant in verse 25 by "he that hath" and "he that hath not." In the Doctrine of the @DSS, nos. 50-61, Swedenborg tells us how we are taught in the Word. These sections need to be studied very thoughtfully because certain statements in them, taken out of their context, have been used to support exactly opposite positions as to our proper study of the Word. Number 57 tells us that "enlightenment is from the Lord alone, and exists with those who love truths because they are truths and make them of use for life." These are those who — in verse 25 of our chapter - are said to "have." We do not have anything which we have not made our own by receiving it in the heart. Those who "have not" are described in number 60: "The contrary takes place with those who read the Word from the doctrine of a false religion, and still more with those who confirm that doctrine from the Word, having in view their own glory or this world's riches. ... For nothing blinds a man but his proprium and the confirmation of what is false. Man's proprium is the love of self and the derivative conceit of self-intelligence." The Lord, we know, never forces anyone to believe in Him or in His Word, and so far as possible He guards us against seeing truth which we are not prepared to apply to life. This is what is meant by verse 12, and is the principal reason why the Word is given in parable.

There is another reason which is suggested in @DSS 51: "Many truths also are accommodated to the capacity of simple folk, who do not uplift their thoughts above such things as they see before their eyes." This was true of most of the multitude to whom the Lord spoke when He was in the world. It is true of all young children and of those adults whom Swedenborg often refers to as "the simple good." But it is also true of all of us at the beginning of our acquaintance with any new truth. It has to be presented to us first in a form in which it can be easily grasped and which can serve as a permanent basis for growing understanding.

But that we should not stop with this simple understanding of the letter, the Lord showed by explaining not only to His chosen disciples but to all of us through the recorded Word the meaning of the parable of the sower, as an indication of what lies within the letter and as a clue to the meaning of many other passages in which sowing, seed, ground, etc., are mentioned. He showed it later by opening the understanding of the apostles to see "in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms" the things concerning Himself (Luke 24:44-45). And especially He showed it by opening the Word in His second coming through the instrumentality of Swedenborg. The Lord does nothing useless.

We may take the parable of the sower as an example of the process by which we learn from the Lord. We all heard this parable when we were children. It came to us in simple words which we could understand, presenting a vivid picture which our imaginations could grasp. So it stayed with us. The fate of the seeds in the different kinds of ground touched our tender hearts. When we were a little older, the Lord's explanation of the parable was given us, and we realized suddenly that we might be one of those kinds of ground which did not bring forth fruit; we might be letting the Lord's truth be carried out of our minds by the birds of false thought, or scorched by our selfishness, or choked out by worldly pleasures and temptations. Our childhood concern for the poor seeds is transmuted into more mature shame for our own faults. Today, when life experience has illustrated the parable to us again and again, reading it leads us into many paths of thought concerning our own state and the state of the world. But we should note that it is as we read the parable in the letter that these thoughts come to us. The letter still stands in our minds as the "basis, containant, and support" of the meaning we have found and of new meaning which we shall continue to find to eternity.

In our chapter there are two other parables concerning seed, but before they are introduced, we have the warning of verses 21 to 24. If we have received the seeds of truth into our minds with a desire to apply them to life which has enabled them to grow and bring forth fruit, we must leave no dark corners in our character into which we will not let the light of truth penetrate. We must be willing to go all the way in self-examination and correction. This world is our opportunity to get rid of our evils. When we pass into the other, all those things in ourselves which we have been unwilling to see will be brought to light in spite of us, and in that world we shall find that they have become a permanent part of our character. We can no longer get rid of them.

If, however, we are honestly trying to follow the Lord "in the regeneration" (Matthew 19:28) we shall find that wonderful things have happened to the seed which has been sown in this world. We all fortunately are able to see some progress in understanding as we go through life. The seed springs up, we know not how. No truth that is sown in the good ground of a sincere heart will fail to produce its harvest — if not here, then in the world to come. Read here @AE 1153[6].

Then the thought presented in these verses is carried further by the parable of the mustard seed, which tells us that even the least truth received from the Word has in it tremendous capacity not only for growth but for future helpfulness. It can become "greater than all herbs," and we remember that the herbs in the Creation story, the first vegetation brought forth by the earth, represent the small beginnings of good and truth which man ascribes to himself.

The chapter ends with the stilling of the storm by the Lord, and the whole thought of the chapter is focused in verse 38: "And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish?" Compare this with Psalm 107:23-30. As long as we have the letter of the Word in our minds, the Lord is present with us, and although

we may imagine that the Lord is not caring for us when trouble and anxiety distress us, it is only because to us at that time He is, as it were, asleep in the hinder part of our ship. We really know that the Lord neither slumbers nor sleeps and that He cares for us always. It is we who are asleep to His presence and power, and we have only to call Him to remembrance in order to have our troubled sea become calm.

## 118:MIRACLES — Mark 5

### INTRO

With all the younger children the emphasis in this lesson may well be on the Lord's statement, "The damsel is not dead, but sleepeth." The fact that all our life is from the Lord, that it does not depend on our bodies, but goes on forever, no matter what happens to the body, should be impressed upon a child as early as he is able to think about death at all. In all the miracles of our lesson also it is very clear that the one for whom the miracle was performed had full faith in the Lord's power to heal. In one case it was an outcast, in another a rich and powerful man who had this faith; in the third it was a poor woman. So belief in the Lord is not a matter of outward conditions, and it was not the miracle which produced faith. This applies to all our efforts to overcome our faults. We must believe that with the Lord's help we can overcome them, or we shall not make the necessary effort. Parents find even very young children falling back on "I can't" when they are asked to pick up their toys or do some other orderly or helpful thing.

### Adult

Good topics for discussion are the reason why outward miracles were performed by the Lord and why they are not performed today, what "magical miracles" are, the difference between "possession" then and now, and the various statements of the Lord concerning death and resurrection.

This chapter gives us an opportunity to consider three different types of miracles. We know that the Lord performed the miracles primarily for the sake of the Word, that through their spiritual meaning they might reveal His power to heal and restore to spiritual health and life all who look to Him.

In the beginning of our chapter the Lord has crossed the Sea of Galilee to "the country of the Gadarenes." The cross—Jordan country pictures the life which has not been developed under instruction from the Word. Possession by devils was a very real thing in the Lord's day and could happen even to one who wanted to be good. We know that there are always with us both angels and evil spirits. The evil spirits suggest wrong thoughts and stir up our natural, selfish desires; and the angels at the same time recall to our minds and hearts the knowledge of truth which is in our memories and the good desires we have felt in the past. So we are kept in freedom to choose between what is true and what is false, and between what is good and what is evil, and to do either the right or the wrong. In this way we build our characters by our own free choice. In the Lord's day, however, the truth had been so mixed with falsity by the religious leaders that there was not enough good and truth in the people's minds to balance the falsity and evil. So the evil spirits could get possession of anyone.

We know that the demoniac was essentially a good man because "when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him." The life he had been living is a picture of the life of a good man possessed by evil spirits. He lived sometimes in the mountains and sometimes in the tombs. That is, he had his times of high thought and resolve, but at other times his lowest nature controlled him. Swedenborg says that sepulchres "because of the dead bodies and bones in them, signify things unclean, and thus things infernal." The people of the city had tried to bind him with chains, but he had broken them. Such a man tries hard to control his passions so that he may live an orderly life like that of other men, but the evils always break out again. And so he goes about unhappily, condemning himself by such standards as he has — "cutting himself with stones."

When the demoniac finally recognized the Lord and came to Him for help, the Lord commanded the evil spirits to come out of him and afterward he was found by the people "sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind." The Lord overcame all the temptations from the hells which attacked Him in His assumed human nature, and holds the hells subject; so if we sincerely wish to get rid of our evils and look to Him for help, He will cast them out for us. It is not by accident that the man was afterward found "sitting." Sitting pictures a settled condition, here a state of security and peace. That it may also represent a state of confirmed evil we learn in the first verse of the first Psalm. "Clothed" we recognize as meaning furnished with truth appropriate to his state, and "in his right mind" means restored to the use of his reason and free choice. Whenever we are unwilling to trust in the Lord and accept His guidance, we are for the time being spiritually insane.

Swedenborg tells us that devils are those who have allowed themselves to believe that the whole of life is in the satisfaction of their physical appetites. So they believe that if this satisfaction is taken away, they will perish utterly, and this was why the devils asked to be allowed to go into the swine, for swine picture just this kind of low, selfish desire. But actually the devils destroyed the swine, for our physical appetites, if indulged as the whole object of life, in the end destroy the very satisfaction they crave. When we overeat, for example, we may become too sick to enjoy food. The picture of the whole herd of swine running "violently down a steep place into the sea" is given us as a warning against allowing any physical appetite to get control of us.

The other two miracles in our lesson took place in Galilee, after the Lord had re-crossed the Sea of Galilee. They are both recorded in the same order in Matthew and Luke also; so we may be sure that there is a very close connection between them in the spiritual sense.

We should first note that Jairus was a "ruler of the synagogue."

We know that very few of the prominent Jews accepted the Lord's claim to be the Messiah. Besides Jairus, we know of Nicodemus and of Joseph of Arimathea, who after the crucifixion begged the Lord's body of Pilate and laid it in his own new tomb. It is not easy for those in prominent places to make a radical change in their lives which they know will not prove popular. The state of Jairus is pictured by the type of his need. His daughter — Luke says his only daughter — lay at the point of death, and she was a child of twelve years of age. Daughters picture affections, and the number twelve throughout the Scriptures is the symbol of all good and truth in one complex. So Jairus pictures those of the orthodox and well-instructed who still had concern for genuine goodness and truth and recognized that they were on the point of losing it altogether.

The woman of the multitude who had the issue of blood represents the uninstructed people who were in a like recognition, the loss of blood signifying constant ebbing of truth necessary to a good life. Both had faith in the Lord's power to heal, and some knowledge of how this healing could be

effected. Jairus asked the Lord to come and lay His hands on his daughter. Swedenborg tells us that the laying on of hands signifies the transmission of power through the fullest conjunction. Jairus possessed the knowledge necessary for such conjunction, and the Lord fulfilled his desire. The woman took the simplest and most humble means. She did not even speak to the Lord. We are reminded of the publican in the temple who "would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven." She had such faith that she felt that if she but touched the Lord's garment - Luke says "the border of his garment" — she would be made whole. The Lord's garment of course pictures the letter of the Word and the border or hem the ten commandments in which the law of life is summed up. The power which healed the woman was the power of simple obedience to the commandments with recognition of their divine origin. We recall the Lord's teaching in Matthew 19:17, " ... there is none good but one, that is God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments."

The power of the Lord to revive the spiritual life even of the religious leaders is pictured in the simple account of the raising of the little girl. The Lord's words, "The damsel is not dead, but sleepeth," accurately expressed the spiritual state of Jairus, in which the remains of goodness and truth had not been completely destroyed. And the Lord's command after the miracle that something be given the girl to eat, pictures the necessity of feeding the spiritual life once it was awakened.

There is a clear progression in the four miracles of raising from the dead recorded in the Gospels. The first was the son of the widow of Nain, the picture of the restoration of truth to one who has lost it; the second is this of our story today, the reviving of good affections in those who have the truth; the third is the raising of Lazarus, the restoration of one who has had both goodness and knowledge and has apparently lost them; and the final one is the resurrection of the Lord Himself, the full manifestation of divine life and power.

## 119:THE LOAVES AND FISHES — Mark 6

### INTRO

Remind the classes of the varying attitudes toward the Lord exhibited by the multitudes, the disciples, and the scribes and Pharisees. Our lesson today adds further varieties: the people of Nazareth, Herod, and Herodias. Even the Primary children can see this as a picture of the different ways in which we may respond to the truth when it is presented to us by our parents and teachers and later as we read the Word for ourselves.

### Adult

While the correspondence of the details of the miracle should be taken up, because some of the class may not know the meaning of even this very familiar story, the most fruitful topic for discussion may well be the reason for the sequence of events as arranged by the Lord in this chapter, because the introduction of the Herod story seems in the letter almost entirely unrelated to the rest of the chapter. The context in which any Bible story appears is always extremely interesting and important.

The miracle about which our lesson today centers — the feeding of the five thousand — is the only one of the Lord's miracles which is narrated in all four Gospels. In addition, a similar miracle, the

feeding of the four thousand, is described in Matthew 15:32-39 and in Mark 8:1-9. Some commentators have considered the second miracle an interpolation on the ground of its similarity to the first, but there is no warrant for this, especially in view of the Lord's own reference to the two as separate miracles in Matthew 16:9-10. Every one of the Lord's acts which is recorded in the Word has its own special significance. In this case the difference in numbers gives an immediate clue to the difference in meaning, and a comparison of the details of the miracles makes a rewarding study.

But our thought today may be concerned with the basic meaning of this miracle and the reason for the particular sequence in which it appears in the Gospel of Mark. We recognize readily that the Lord's feeding of the multitude by the multiplication of a small supply of food pictures the Lord's power to increase whatever small store of goodness and truth each of us possesses as we look to Him for spiritual understanding and strength. The number five, which is the striking number in this miracle, signifies "a little" but also, considered as a factor in ten, a hundred, a thousand, etc., it signifies "much." That is, it expresses something, in itself small, which is capable of great development. So we have here the five loaves made to feed five thousand people. The loaves, made of ground grain, represent goodness in the life. John speaks of them as "barley loaves," which suggests that the goodness is of a natural rather than of a spiritual quality. The fishes represent affection for natural knowledges and the fact that there were two means that the knowledges are desired for the sake of use. The fact that twelve baskets of fragments were gathered up after the meal suggests that when we use in our lives the goodness and truth which we receive from the Lord in response to our prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread," we always see that there is much more there than we can immediately understand and apply to life — enough more to meet every need we can ever have, twelve meaning all. The seating of the multitude "by companies upon the green grass ... in ranks, by hundreds, and by fifties" pictures our need of taking time for orderly consideration of what the Lord has to give us, with the basic thought of our everyday problems — the green grass — but recognizing that spiritual states are involved so far as we are capable of responding to His influx — the hundreds and fifties. The multitude represent all the complex and heterogeneous collection of thoughts and feelings of which each of us is conscious in himself. The disciples who brought the loaves and fishes to the Lord and passed them out as He multiplied them, are our higher faculties which have become capable of recognizing and specifically serving the Lord.

With this thought in mind of the meaning of the miracle, let us look for a moment at the background against which it appears in our chapter, and at its immediate results, for these are present in us, also.

First there is the Lord's visit to His "own country," to Nazareth, and His rejection there because of the inability of the people to believe that He could be different from themselves. In our personal experience this is perhaps best illustrated by our tendency to cling to childish concepts of the Lord: the babe in Bethlehem, the child in the carpenter shop in Nazareth, the man hanging on the cross, trying to visualize the Lord's earthly life and react to what our own imagination creates in this way. We must learn to think of the glorified Christ instead of the historical figure. The angel at the tomb said, "Why seek ye the living among the dead?" Also, we remember that when Mary Magdalene finally recognized Him, His immediate command was (John 20:17), "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father." He had to rise in her thought as well as in fact.

Resuming now our consideration of the narrative: Then the disciples were sent out by the Lord by twos to preach and heal in His name, and were told not to take money, or food, or extra clothing,

but to trust for their maintenance to those who would receive them willingly. This teaches us that even those higher faculties in us which acknowledge the Lord and serve Him are to take no credit to themselves and to put no reliance on their own powers, but to trust in the Lord for knowledge and power, and not to try to buy or force reception where it is not freely offered. Here is a lesson, too, in the manner of our missionary efforts. To go by twos is to use both love and wisdom in our approach, and we must always keep in mind that the message we bear is the Lord's, not to be tampered with by our own intelligence, and that there will be those who will welcome it and those who will reject it. This applies equally to certain areas in our own lives. We all receive the Lord's truth gladly in some fields of our thought and action, and reject it in others.

So it is not by accident that the story of the death of John the Baptist is introduced at this point, for the spiritual counterparts of Herod and Herodias are the two greatest obstacles in the way of our spiritual development. This Herod was the son of the Herod who was on the throne when the Lord was born. The Herods were Idumaeans, descendants of Esau. The Idumaeans had adopted the Jewish religion for the purpose of gaining control of the nation. Herod therefore represents the principle of self-interest at work in the mind, making use of the things of religion for selfish ends; and Herodias is the self-love in the heart which is the consort and the moving spirit behind that principle. Herod could recognize John as a prophet and hear him gladly and obey him in many things (verse 20), but when John pointed out the evil of self-love, Herod put him in prison. Self-interest recognizes the value of an orderly life and an appearance of religion, but will not listen to any deeper prompting. And self-love itself hates all restraints and is constantly trying to remove them. Herod and Herodias are in each one of us. We know how, when we are facing any decision, considerations of self-interest inevitably come into our minds, and we all struggle constantly with our natural selfish impulses. Self-interest recognizes the power of religion and fears it. Self-love merely seeks to destroy it.

Our chapter shows us how slow we are to learn even by experience. After the feeding of the five thousand, the Lord went into a mountain to pray after sending the disciples in a ship across the Sea of Galilee. We have to go back into the world of everyday affairs. The Lord seems to withdraw and leave us alone. Our minds, like the Sea of Galilee, are subject to contrary winds and we seem to be getting nowhere. Like the disciples we are prone to forget even recent experiences of the Lord's power (verse 52). The Lord has to manifest it to us all over again, walking to us across the troubled sea of our memories and entering again to calm the winds and bring us safely to shore (cf. @AE 514[22]). The order of regeneration is by means of one temptation after another, and it is helpful to remember that "in temptations apparently man is left to himself alone, although he is not; for God is then most nearly present in man's inmosts and sustains him; therefore when man conquers in temptation he is inmostly conjoined with God." (@TCR 126)

## 120:LITTLE CHILDREN — Mark 10

### INTRO

We can lead into this lesson by linking it to Palm Sunday and telling them that our story is of some things that happened on the journey to Jerusalem that last time. Point out to the Juniors and Intermediates on a map the three divisions of the Holy Land and how the Lord and His apostles came down on the east side of the Jordan this time and crossed near Jericho. We learn also in Luke that He went up from Jericho to Jerusalem.

## Adult

The various quotations from Swedenborg in connection with the text of the chapter give discussion material. Verses 18 and 25 should be taken up, as they are often questioned.

The incidents recorded in our chapter for today happened as the Lord was on His way to Jerusalem for the last time. He had come down from Galilee this time not through Samaria but on the other side of the Jordan through Perea and crossed into Judea near Jericho. As usual the series of events in the chapter presents an interesting sequence. Judea, we know, of the three divisions of the land in the Lord's time, represents the will. It is in the will that our worship centers. It is there that the Lord is born in us as a simple desire to "be good." But it is also there that the most bitter and persistent opposition to the Lord centers, in our natural selfishness and worldliness. And it is there that men reject and crucify the Lord as a result of that selfishness. As we should expect, the whole teaching of the chapter centers in the nature of a good will. The Pharisees, the rich young man, and the apostles were all proud of their externally correct lives, but in the Pharisees and the rich young man knowledge of the truth was not united with love of being led by the Lord. Marriage pictures the union of goodness and truth. Spiritually the Pharisees had divorced the true "wife" - love of the truth for the sake of life — excusing themselves in the literal story on the ground of a law of Moses (Deuteronomy 24:1) which they misinterpreted to suit their purpose. This misinterpretation is an accurate picture of what exponents of "faith alone" have always done, defining the word faith to suit their desire to be saved without getting rid of their evils.

Marriage, as our traditional New Church marriage service states, "has its origin in the union of the Divine love and wisdom in the Lord." The verses which the Lord quotes suggest to us the need of putting aside our natural inherited selfishness in order to come into a true spiritual union. The breaking of a marriage is almost always due to selfishness in one or both parties to the marriage. And the only way of overcoming selfishness is through looking to the Lord for guidance and strength. Swedenborg says (@AC 162):

"It is the celestial (or heavenly) marriage from and according to which all marriages on earth must be derived; and this marriage is such that there is one Lord and one heaven, or one church whose head is the Lord. The law of marriages thence derived is that there shall be one husband and one wife, and when this is the case they represent the celestial marriage, and are an exemplar of the celestial man." If the husband and wife both recognize the Lord as the only source of love and wisdom and are really trying to serve Him together, they will inevitably attain increasing union and increasing happiness. This is an ideal of marriage which we should not only hold in our own minds but which we should hold before our children by both our teaching and our example. If children grow up with this ideal, they have a powerful protection against the temptations presented by the low standards of marriage in the world around them.

It is not by accident that the Lord's discussion of marriage with the Pharisees is immediately followed by His blessing little children. Not only is it natural to think of children when we think of marriage, but the quality of innocence which they represent is exactly the quality which was lacking in the Pharisees. The Latin root of the word innocence literally means "harmlessness." The desire to hurt others is the end result of self-love. It was evident in the Pharisees and it is also one of the most noticeable attitudes in the partners in a marriage on the way to being broken.

But innocence has a deeper significance also. Swedenborg discusses it at some length in @HH 276-283. Here he shows that innocence is basically "a willingness to be led by the Lord" and that, while

little children exhibit innocence in its external form and so correspond to innocence, their innocence — being from ignorance — is not genuine. Genuine innocence is that humility into which the regenerating person grows gradually as he overcomes self-love and pride in self-intelligence and learns to trust wholly in the wisdom and love of the Lord. (See the quotation from @HH 278 below.)

The story of the rich young man teaches the same lesson in a different way. He wanted to lead a good life and to get to heaven, but his ideas of both were wholly external, and he had no thought of his need of or dependence on God. That was why the Lord said to him, "Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God." The Lord was not disclaiming divinity, for He proceeded to answer the young man's questions with authority. He was pointing out to us as well as to the young man that unless we receive His words as proceeding from God, they will not be effective in our lives. That the young man did not so receive them is evident from the fact that he turned away when the Lord told him to give up his own possessions and follow Him. Verse 25 has troubled many, but the Lord's own significant change from "have riches" to "trust in riches"/\* should show us what He means. Throughout the Scriptures the rich in a bad sense are those who are rich in their own estimation, as opposed to the "poor in spirit" of whom it is said that "theirs is the kingdom of heaven." In @HH 365 we read: "By the rich man of whom the Lord says: 'It is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God' (Matthew 19:24), the rich in both the natural sense and the spiritual sense are meant. In the natural sense the rich are those that have an abundance of riches and set their heart upon them; but in the spiritual sense they are those that have an abundance of knowledges and learning, which are spiritual riches, and who desire by means of these to introduce themselves into the things of heaven and the church from their own intelligence." The apostles themselves needed the same lesson. They truly desired to follow the Lord, but their minds were clouded with worldly concepts. In @AC 29 Swedenborg says: "The man who is being regenerated is at first of such a quality that he supposes the good which he does, and the truth which he speaks, to be from himself, when in reality all good and all truth are from the Lord."

[\*Most versions after KJV omit the phrase "for those who trust in riches" on the presumption that it is a later gloss. Swedenborg nowhere quotes the verse in question. -Editor]

The healing of blind Bartimaeus forms a fitting close for the chapter. In contrast to the others with whom the Lord has been dealing this man is poor and insignificant. But he has perfect faith and looks only to the Lord's mercy for the restoration of his sight. In a number of other cases of blindness the Lord employed means for restoring sight and the miracle was gradual. But it is said that Bartimaeus, when the Lord summoned him, "casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus." That is, he immediately put off all thoughts of his own and lifted his mind toward the Lord, and he asked only that he receive sight. "And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight." And the way he chose to go was to follow Jesus. He received the kingdom of God as a little child.

## 121:PALM SUNDAY — Mark 11

### INTRO

This second of our special lessons can easily be tied in with the course by referring to the Christmas

lesson and reminding the classes of the purpose of the Lord in coming into the world. The meaning of the words Messiah and Christ — the anointed one — should be mentioned as well as the fact that anointing is putting oil on a person or object, that oil is the symbol of the Lord's unselfish love, and that this means that the Lord came into the world as the Messiah out of pure love for mankind.

## Adult

The story and its meaning should be so familiar to the Adults that it needs only a brief review, and most of the time can be spent on the controversial incident of the fig tree and the statement about faith and prayer. The reason for the variation in the order of events in the four Gospels should be mentioned.

We are all familiar with the story of the Lord's entry into Jerusalem at the beginning of the last week of His life on earth, and probably with its general correspondence. He fulfilled the prophecy in Zechariah 9:9. The people knew the prophecy and also that it was the custom for kings and judges to ride on mules and donkeys. Read Judges 5:10, 10:3-4, 12:13-14, 2 Samuel 16:1-2, 13:29, and 1 Kings 1:33, 38, 44. They had no doubt that they were welcoming the Messiah who was come to be their king and savior. Palm leaves have always been the victor's award. The palm tree represents the principle that the Lord alone saves. The cry of the people — Hosanna! — means, "Save, we pray thee!" This word, which in our English translations of the Bible appears only in the New Testament, was in common use in the musical service of the temple.

The translators of the Old Testament translated instead of transliterating it.

The donkey's colt "whereon never man sat" pictures the natural reason, which only the Lord fully mastered from beginning to end in His earthly life. Our natural reason, like the donkey, is very surefooted but looks always at the ground and is stubborn and willful. It is a very necessary and useful faculty, but it must be kept under control. We remember that Abraham, when he was moved to sacrifice Isaac, "rose up early in the morning, and saddled his donkey." His natural reason, which would have rebelled against such a sacrifice, had to be prepared to obey. Our natural reason is the first reason we develop as we come out of infancy. Mark — alone of the four Evangelists — tells us that the two disciples "found the colt tied by the door without in a place where two ways met." The "door" is the entrance to our souls — the same door at which the Lord stands and knocks (Revelation 3:20) - and the natural reason is tied to it on the outside, the side where our senses connect us with life in the material world. In that life from the beginning two ways are set before us, the way of self-interest and the way of the Lord's service. It is safe to "loose" the donkey only if he is to be brought to the Lord. We "bring the colt to the Lord" when we are willing to rethink our natural ideas in terms of the Lord's teaching concerning eternal values. We "cast our garments before the Lord" when we submit all our thinking to the test of comparison with the truths of the Word. A king is one whose laws are acknowledged and obeyed. We welcome the Lord into Jerusalem as king when we accept His precept and example as the inmost law of our life.

In the Gospel of Mark the order of events is slightly different from the order in the other Gospels, and we need to remember that the order as well as the words was preserved under divine inspiration. The development in each Gospel has its special use. There are three major events in our chapter which follow the Lord's entry into Jerusalem, and they represent the immediate effect on heart, mind, and conduct of the Lord's entry into our souls as king and judge. The cleansing of the temple is the examination of our motives; the incident of the fig tree pictures the judgment of our

conduct; and the question posed by the chief priests, scribes and elders, and the Lord's answer to it, search our thoughts.

In this Gospel the first two incidents are interwoven. As in Matthew and Luke, the Lord is said to have gone directly to the temple, but in Mark it says He merely looked about and then, because evening was come, went out to Bethany. In the morning, as He came toward Jerusalem again, He looked for figs on the fig tree and finding none said, "No man eat fruit of thee henceforth forever." Then He entered the temple, cast out the money-changers and dove-vendors, and told them they had made His house a den of thieves. Again He went back to Bethany for the night, and in the morning on the way to Jerusalem the disciples noticed that the fig tree was withered away.

The incident of the fig tree has been a favorite point of attack on the authority of the Bible story, the argument being that certainly the Lord would not have been so petulant as to curse a tree for having no fruit on it when it was not the season for fruit. That there is something more in the story than this we should know from the parable of the barren fig tree in Luke 13:6-9. Swedenborg tells us that the Lord had to open the Word in order that belief in it might not perish. See the quotation from @AC 885 below regarding the incident of the fig tree.

The direct cause of the barrenness of the church was the perversion of their worship through self-love. So the cleansing of the temple — the exposure of this self-love — followed immediately. Then the result became apparent in the withering of the fig tree. That the cursing of the fig tree was no careless outburst should be evident from verses 21 and 22, for when Peter called attention to the fact that the fig tree was withered, the Lord's answer was, "Have faith in God." The verses which follow have also often been brought into question, but this is because of a wrong idea of what religious faith is. We understand well enough what faith is in every other field. If we have faith in a doctor, we follow his advice. If we have faith in a friend's honesty, we believe what he says and act accordingly. But men seem to think that a man has faith in God if he merely says, "I believe in God," whether he knows and obeys God's teachings or not. We should know better. True faith — which involves the belief that the Lord is all-wise as well as all-powerful - is a prerequisite for the fulfillment of the promises in verse 23 and 24. Read @AE 405[53].

Finally we have the question posed by the chief priests, scribes, and elders: "By what authority doest thou these things?" This is the reaction of the self-satisfied mind to the impact of the Lord's coming. Its immediate thought is, "What right has anyone to tell me what I ought to be and to do?" "Why should I believe the Bible?" And the Lord's answer is the one unanswerable one: "The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men?" The people believed John to be a prophet. All our common mental faculties recognize that virtue is better than vice, unselfishness better than selfishness, humility better than pride — that is, that the precepts of the Lord present the true ideal of what life ought to be. If we deny these things, we put ourselves outside the pale of common decency. But if we accept them, we are admitting their right to authority, and condemning ourselves.

So the Lord put squarely before the religious leaders the question of accepting or rejecting Him. That they rejected Him we know, and their rejection brought their dispensation to an end. If we accept the Lord as our king and savior, we must accept His laws as the laws of our life. We must "loose the donkey" only to bring him to the service of the Lord.

# 122:THE HOLY SUPPER — Mark 14

## INTRO

As an introduction to this lesson review briefly the Palm Sunday account, calling attention to the fact that the Lord came to Jerusalem to die and told His disciples so, but that they did not understand or remember what He said. Note that during the last week of His earthly life He spent the nights at Bethany.

## Adult

A topic for this lesson with the Adults might well be: "How we as members of the church may be betraying the Lord." Some of the younger and newer members of the class will also need a discussion of the meaning and value of the Holy Supper and of what constitutes proper preparation for approach to it.

We read in @AC 5915 that sustenance in the spiritual sense is "nothing else than the influx of good and truth through heaven from the Lord. From this are the angels sustained, and from this is the soul of man (that is, his internal man) sustained. To this sustenance corresponds the sustenance of the external man by food and drink; and therefore, by 'food' is signified good, and by 'drink' truth. Such also is the correspondence, that when a man is partaking of food, the angels with him are in the idea of good and truth, and wonderful to say with a difference according to the species of the food. Thus when a man in the Holy Supper receives the bread and the wine, the angels with him are in the idea of the good of love and the good of faith ... for the reason that bread corresponds to the good of love, and wine to the good of faith; and because they correspond, they also signify the same in the Word."

The New Church recognizes only two sacraments, baptism and the Holy Supper, considering these two to have been specifically instituted and commanded by the Lord Himself. In Luke (22:19) we are told that when the Lord gave the bread to His disciples, He said, "This do in remembrance of me." As we have seen before, the disciples in spite of all the Lord had told them did not realize that the Lord would actually be put to death. Even Judas, as his later acts indicate, obviously expected the Lord to save Himself as He had so often done before. But the Lord knew what was about to happen. On the previous day in Bethany, as our chapter tells us, when the woman anointed Him with the precious ointment, He told them: "She hath done what she could: she is come beforehand to anoint my body to the burying." We are told in John 12:4-6 that it was Judas who voiced the objection to Mary's act on the ground that the precious ointment should have been sold to benefit the poor, "not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein." And in both Matthew and Mark it is immediately after the Lord's commendation of Mary that Judas goes to the chief priests with his offer to betray the Lord. Judas, we have seen, represents his nation, which put the all of religion in the externals of worship. Yet Judas was one of the twelve chosen by the Lord Himself, and in @TCR 791, in connection with the historical Second Coming, we are told:

"After this work was finished the Lord called together His twelve disciples who followed Him in the world; and the next day He sent them all forth throughout the whole spiritual world to preach the Gospel that THE LORD GOD JESUS CHRIST reigns." Judas, we may infer, was still one of the twelve.

In @TCR 4 in the same connection it is said, "his twelve disciples, now angels." Apparently Judas the man had in him the basis of salvation. As a representative character he belongs with the apostles; the externals of worship are an essential part of the complete Christian life. But we must always keep in mind that it is through them, when the emphasis is put on them rather than on the celestial and spiritual things which they represent, that the Lord is betrayed. The first Christian Church betrayed the Lord in this way by adding interpretations and regulations of its own to the simple and beautiful teaching and example of the Lord as given us by Him in the Word of the New Testament. When we compare the elaborate rituals of some churches today with the simple ceremony of the Holy Supper as the Lord first gave it, we realize the danger into which the love of the externals of worship can lead.

We should note in our chapter that a state of humility preceded the institution of the Holy Supper. The Lord told the twelve that one of them would betray Him, and instead of looking at each other with suspicion "they began to be sorrowful, and to say unto Him one by one, 'Is it I?'" This is the pattern for our own approach to the Holy Supper. "What weaknesses are in me which may be leading me to betray the Lord?" The thirteenth chapter of True Christian Religion (nos. 698-752) is devoted to the subject of the Holy Supper. Section 6 of this chapter is headed: "Those come to the holy supper worthily who have faith in the Lord and charity toward the neighbor." See the excerpt from n. 726 below.

We recall that even James and John had in their minds thoughts of their own power and glory, and this universal tendency in man to wish to place himself first is further impressed upon us by the story of Peter's denial of the Lord. Peter, we know, represents faith, and Peter was sure that though all others failed, he would remain true. He needed to see and acknowledge his own weakness, and each of us needs the same lesson. Another example of the same weakness is found in verses 51 and 52. This little incident is recorded only in the Gospel of Mark, and commentators with some reason have suggested that the young man may have been Mark himself. We remember that Mark lived in Jerusalem and that his mother was among the most prominent of the early Christians. Tidings of the exodus of the multitude with swords and staves in the direction of the garden where the Lord had gone might well have reached her home and prompted young Mark to leave his bed hastily and follow. The important thought for us, however, is rather that in the correspondence the linen garment represents the possession of truth from the divine - "the fine linen is the righteousness of saints" — and nakedness represents lack of truth. When the enemy laid hold on the young man's garment, he left the linen cloth and fled from them naked. Although he had received and accepted the Lord's teaching, his belief was not strong enough to stand in the face of personal danger.

There are other things in this chapter which we need to note especially. One is the prayer of the Lord in Gethsemane. We may be sure that the Lord was not praying to be spared physical suffering. What the suffering on the cross was we shall consider in our next lesson. The form of the prayer, however, is a divine recognition of the weakness of human nature; "For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust." What the Lord is saying to us here is that it is not wrong for us to pray to be delivered from some impending trial or bereavement provided that at the same time we are at heart willing to go through it if the Lord sees that it is for our good.

We all recognize the betrayal of the Lord by Judas with a kiss as picturing the betrayal of the Lord which is involved in professing to be a Christian while inwardly serving self instead of the Lord. One of the strongest arguments men offer against uniting with a church is that so many of its members are obviously sinners.

Finally we should note verses 61-64, because sometimes people say that the Lord never claimed to be the Messiah, when in fact this very claim was made the basis for His condemnation by the high priest. Note that there is nothing in this chapter which has to do with Gentiles — people outside of the church. Its lessons concern those who profess religion, and it shows us our constant need of humility and of the consciousness of our own weakness and selfishness, of not pointing at others but at every point asking sincerely, "Is it I?"

## 123:THE CRUCIFIXION — Mark 15

### INTRO

Review the institution of the Holy Supper and make your connection through the betrayal of the Lord by Judas. In all the classes make clear that it was the high priests who actually condemned the Lord, but that Pilate had to give his consent.

### Adult

Take up first the New Church doctrine of salvation and the nature of the Lord's temptation on the cross. Then be guided by the interest of the class as to which details of the story you discuss. They may have questions as to one or another incident in the chapter.

In the New Church we are familiar with the thought that the passion of the cross was not a matter of physical suffering voluntarily endured by the Lord as a vicarious atonement for the sins of the world. But even today this idea is still frequently expressed, especially by revivalists, and converts are actually solicited through pity for the Lord's physical suffering. Crucifixion was indeed a painful form of death, a true expression of the cruelty in men's hearts at the end of that dispensation. But many others besides the Lord underwent crucifixion, some of them — probably including the apostle Peter — voluntarily. And we know that when the soul is under stress of emotion, men can suffer severe injuries without being conscious of the physical pain. The Lord on the cross was not thinking of His physical body.

The passion of the cross was the last and most severe of the Lord's temptations. See the passage from @AC 1690 below. The Lord, from His earliest childhood up to the last hour of His life in the world, was assaulted by all the hells, against which He continually fought, and subjugated and overcame them, and this solely from love toward the whole human race. @AC 1787 says: "Every temptation is attended with some kind of despair (otherwise it is not a temptation) ... He who is tempted is brought into anxieties, which induce a state of despair as to what the end is to be ... The Lord also, as He endured the most dire and cruel temptations of all, could not but be driven into states of despair." Since the Lord's love was the love of the whole human race, His deepest temptation was despair because they would not be saved. He might have performed a miracle and come down from the cross and so convinced their minds. That this was at least a part of His last temptation we know from verses 29 to 32 of our chapter, for the cry of His enemies was certainly inspired from hell. But such a miracle would not have changed their hearts. He could not interfere with their free choice without destroying them. Read Matthew 23:37.

We recently thought of what betrayal of the Lord means in our own lives. The first part of our chapter today shows us just how that betrayal leads us to crucify Him. The chief priests, we recall,

condemned the Lord as a blasphemer because He said He was the Christ. The chief priests represent self-love in the heart. Self-love refuses to acknowledge that the Lord is divine and that the Word is divine truth, because it wishes to determine all things in the interests of self. But our will has to have the cooperation of our understanding. Pilate represents falsity ruling in the mind, and the mind has to consent before truth can be utterly rejected. Pilate could find no actual fault in the Lord — the reason has to admit that His teaching is harmless — but Pilate was "willing to content the people." The people in this case represent all the considerations of self-interest which are stirred up by self-love. So Pilate condemned the Lord and released Barabbas, a rebel and murderer. Is not this a clear picture of the course we take when we are determined to have our own selfish way? We force our minds to justify what we wish to do and so we reject truth altogether and let loose in our souls the willful and evil things which we should be destroying. And we thus mock at the truth, as the Roman soldiers mocked the Lord, pretending to reverence it, but actually falsifying it at its very fountainhead. This falsification of divine truth is pictured by the crown of thorns.

We recognize that the parting of the Lord's garments pictures the way in which the Christian Church was to treat the letter of the Word, each sect taking certain passages as the basis for its separate existence and discarding the rest.

In @AE 519[2] Swedenborg gives us an interesting interpretation - based on Matthew 27:34, 48 rather than on Mark — of the two drinks offered to the Lord at the crucifixion: "Their giving the Lord 'vinegar mingled with gall,' which was also called 'wine mingled with myrrh,' signified the quality of the divine truth from the Word with the Jewish nation, namely, that it was mingled with the falsity from evil, and thus altogether falsified and adulterated, therefore He would not drink it. But that afterwards 'they gave the Lord vinegar in a sponge and placed it upon hyssop' signified the kind of falsity there was among the upright Gentiles, which was falsity from ignorance of the truth, in which there was something good and useful; because this falsity is accepted by the Lord He drank this vinegar. The 'hyssop' upon which they placed it signifies the purification of the falsity." The hyssop is mentioned in this incident as given in John 19:29-30.

When the Lord "gave up the ghost," He finally wholly separated Himself from the finite humanity. @AE 220[5] says: "That 'the veil of the temple was rent in two parts from the top to the bottom' ... signified the union of the Lord's Divine Human with the Divine itself." The veil was the curtain which hid the Holy of Holies from the view even of the priests who ministered in the Holy Place. The Holy of Holies represented the Divine itself, which after the crucifixion was one with the divine human.

That the Scripture (Isaiah 53:9) might be fulfilled and the scene laid for the resurrection story, another person is active in our chapter. It was not the custom to bury the bodies of those who were crucified. In Europe and in England even up to a century or so ago criminals were hanged on gibbets set up to public view at crossroads, and their bodies were left hanging indefinitely as a warning to other would-be malefactors. So it was with the crucified in the Lord's day. Presumably the two thieves who were crucified with the Lord were left in this way. But the Lord had two disciples who were members of the Sanhedrin, the high court of Judaism, and one of them obtained permission from Pilate to bury Jesus' body. Only Joseph of Arimathea is mentioned in Mark, but John (19:39) tells us that Nicodemus came to assist him with the burial. Nicodemus was the one who came to the Lord by night (John 3:1-21), and John tells us (19:38) that Joseph also was the Lord's disciple "secretly for fear of the Jews." But both of them were brave enough to show their reverence for Him openly when their associates had put Him to a shameful death.

The women who watched with the Lord after the disciples had left Him, and who waited to see where His body was laid, represent the simple affection for the Lord which cannot be alienated by adversity. It was to these women that the resurrection was first made known. The sepulcher or tomb in the rock with the great stone rolled in front of the entrance represents the Word as it appears to those who know only the letter, and especially to those who believe that letter to be the product of the minds of men only, and not divine wisdom.

## 124:THE EASTER LESSON — Mark 16

### INTRO

The teacher may start with the fact that it is Easter and draw from the class their knowledge of what Easter means before taking up the lesson himself. The older classes are so familiar with the story that a very brief review of it will be enough to begin with.

### Adult

This is such a familiar story to the Adults that the teacher needs to give special thought to his preparation and to try to bring the material to them in a new way which will illustrate the depth and variety still untapped in even the best-known parts of Scripture.

The resurrection of the Lord changed history. After the crucifixion the disciples were completely discouraged. The Lord had told them that He would be put to death, but they had not really believed Him. He had told them that He would rise again, but they had not been able to imagine such a possibility. All the Gospels tell us that they would not believe until they actually saw Him. Thomas would not believe until he could touch the nail prints. Yet after the resurrection and ascension they went out into the world and preached the good news — the Gospel — without fear. Tradition says that all except John suffered martyrdom. Our natural reason alone should tell us that the Christian Church was not founded on a myth.

But the story of the resurrection shows us that it was not the disciples who rolled back the stone and revealed the empty tomb. It was a divine work. It is a divine work with us. The stone represents in this case the materialism of the people of that day which made them unwilling to acknowledge anything spiritual, and it represents similar materialism in all times. The sepulcher in which the Lord was laid pictures the letter of the Word, which must be opened if we are to see the Lord as a living and present being.

Three types of disciples appear in the Bible story of the resurrection. There were the apostles, who had been close to the Lord for three years and had been instructed by Him, and yet deserted Him when their earthly hopes seemed to be over. There were the two "rulers" of the Jews, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, who had believed in Him without daring to acknowledge Him openly while He was alive, yet when He was dead came forth publicly and cared for His body. And there were the women, who loved Him for what He was, remained near Him throughout the hours on Calvary, watched to see where His body was laid, and returned to the sepulcher at the first opportunity to do what small services they could still perform for Him.

The disciples, like the twelve sons of Jacob, represent the faculties we have which enable us to serve

the Lord. These faculties "mean well," but are very much under the influence of the materialistic thinking of the world. In the face of disappointment and apparent failure it is hard for them to take a firm stand. They are dismayed and doubtful. The two counsellors represent the principles which rule in our minds. These, if they are good principles, come out of hiding in times of discouragement and keep us in at least outward order. And then there are the women, the simple affections for divine qualities, which cling to the Lord in spite of appearances and, in the final analysis, are the ground of our reception of a true understanding of the Lord. This is taught in many places in the Word: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God," "I thank thee, O Father ... because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." And Swedenborg tells us: "The Lord flows with power into those who are humble; but not into those who are puffed up, because the former receive influx, but the latter reject it" (@AC 9039), "Those cannot possibly be in any enlightenment who have not as their end a life according to Divine truths from the Word; but who have as their end honor, gain, and reputation; and who thus regard the Divine truths of the Word as means" (@AC 10551), and "There is no other way than for a man to go to the Lord God the Saviour, and under His auspices read the Word; for He is the God of the Word; and man will then be enlightened and will see truths which reason also will acknowledge ... A man who reads the Word not under the Lord's auspices but under the auspices of his own intelligence, thinks himself a lynx and better sighted than Argus; and yet he inwardly sees not a shred of truth, but only what is false; and under self-persuasion this falsity seems to him like a polar star towards which he directs all the sails of his thought; and then he no more sees truths than a mole does, or if he sees them he bends them to favor his phantasies, and so perverts and falsifies the holy things of the Word" (@TCR 165).

We are told in Acts 1:3 that the Lord's post—resurrection appearances extended over a period of forty days. Mary Magdalene was the first to see Him. Then Mark refers to His appearance to the two disciples as they "went into the country," the incident more fully told in Luke 24:13-35. Then He appeared to the disciples in Jerusalem — Mark says "to the eleven," but John tells us that Thomas was not with them at that time but that he was present with the others eight days later (John 20:24-29). He had told them (Matthew 26:32 and Mark 14:28) that after He had risen, He would go before them into Galilee, and the angel messenger at the sepulcher tells the women to repeat this message to the disciples. Matthew tells of one of His appearances in Galilee (Matthew 28:16-17) and John of another (John 21:1-23). The ascension took place at Bethany (Luke 24:50-51). The account in Mark is very much condensed and yet he adds to the others the Lord's teaching concerning the power to be given to "them that believe."

This last teaching is found in verses 17 and 18 of our chapter.

The Lord had given similar powers to the seventy when He sent them out (Luke 10:19), but now He says that all who believe shall have them. We know that in the early church such signs were literally given. See Acts 5:15-16, 8:7, 9:18, 16:18, 19:12, 28:5-8. Some people think that one who has sufficient "faith" should be able to do the same now. But we read in the writings: "No one is reformed by miracles and signs, because they compel. It has been shown above that man has an internal and an external of thought, and that the Lord flows into man through the internal of thought into its external, and thus teaches and leads him; also that it is of the Lord's Divine providence that man should act from freedom in accordance with reason. Both of these would perish in man if miracles were wrought and man was thereby driven to believe" (@DP 130). The people in the Holy Land at the time of the Lord's Advent were so external that they were not compelled even by miracles, as is evidenced by the fact that those who had witnessed the miracles

nevertheless rejected the Lord, but the Lord through His life and teaching on earth reopened the spiritual plane of thought, and when interior thought is possible, miracles compel and are disorderly.

Yet the promise of the Lord is always fulfilled spiritually with those who have true faith — the faith which leads to obedience. The devils who infest the will are cast out, a new understanding and speech are given, sense pleasures no longer injure, falsities heard or read do not poison the mind, and a new power is given to help others in times of weakness and disorderly living.

Easter should mean more to us than merely the assurance that we shall continue to live after the death of the physical body. It should impress upon us the fact that even while we are in the body the real and living part of us is the soul and the important thing from day to day is not what is happening to our body but what is happening to our soul. The body, whatever its physical condition, is only a tool for temporary use. We should keep it in reasonably good condition as we would any tool, but if we are doing our real work in the world well, we may trust the Lord to enable us to go on here as long as He sees best, and we may be sure that He is preparing within us the spiritual body which will serve us to eternity.

## **125:THE BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST —** **Luke 1**

### **INTRO**

The lessons we are taking from the Gospel of Luke do not in themselves depend at any point upon geographical background, and yet the pupils should be aware of the final divisions of the Holy Land as a completion of their map study for the year. It is suggested, therefore, that in connection with this lesson the Sunday school be shown a map of the Holy Land in the Lord's time, pointing out the three divisions and the location of Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Nazareth, the Sea of Galilee, Capernaum, the cross-Jordan country, and Jericho.

We have assigned the whole first chapter of Luke, which includes the annunciation to Mary, and with all classes above the Primary this should be taken up and the events of the Lord's birth as told in Luke 2 should be mentioned briefly. The principal lesson, however, is about John the Baptist, and this should be taken up as the fulfillment of the prophecy in Malachi.

### **Adult**

In many of the other Christian churches there is a strong tendency to relegate the Old Testament to the past and to feel that the New Testament is the only part of the Word we really need to study. This lesson is a good one in which to bring out the inseparable nature of the two and the fact that no one can understand the New Testament without knowing the Old. The meaning of John's message in our own lives is also important for Adults.

Concerning the state of the church at the time of the Advent Swedenborg says: "The church was then altogether vastated, so that there was no longer any good, or any truth" (@AC 2708). The Roman Empire, whose doctrine was "might is right," controlled the world. The Jews had the Word

but had made it "of none effect" through their traditions. The Scriptures were read, and worship was carried on in the temple with all the traditional ceremonies; but the aim of the church was temporal power, and the temple was in reality no longer a house of prayer, but a den of thieves. Yet even in this bleak situation there were a few simple pious people who cherished the prophecies of salvation and longed for their fulfillment. Examples of such people were Zacharias and Elisabeth, who "were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless"; Joseph and Mary; Simeon (Luke 2:25-35) and Anna (Luke 2:36-38); the shepherds and the apostles. And outside the church among the Gentile nations were multitudes who knew that they walked in darkness and longed for light. The song of Zacharias (Luke 1:68-79) is a glorification of the Lord for His mercy in fulfilling the prophecies and visiting His people, "To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death." Swedenborg tells us that visitation is predicated of the exploration of both the good and the evil as to their real quality, preceding a judgment, and that darkness may be the darkness either of falsity from evil or of falsity from ignorance. The death in whose shadow they were was spiritual death, which must have overtaken the whole world if the Lord had not come to restore the light of truth; for those who had the truth had perverted it so that those who came seeking it found only falsity. The Lord said of the scribes and Pharisees, "Ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves." (Matthew 23:15) The whole of the twenty-third chapter of Matthew, as also most of Luke 11, is a vivid description of the conditions existing in the church.

Zacharias and Elisabeth were both descendants of Aaron. Zacharias was of the "course" or division of Abia, or Abijah. The house of Aaron was divided into twenty-four "courses" or groups of priests, who took turns in administering the worship of the temple (1 Chronicles 24:1-19). When a course finished its period of ministry, its members returned to their homes until their turn came again (Luke 1:23). The duty of Zacharias on this particular day was to burn incense on the altar of incense. @AE 298 explains that the angel appeared to Zacharias standing on the right side of the altar because the "right hand" in reference to angels and men means "the wisdom and intelligence that they have from the Divine good through the Divine truth proceeding from the Lord." Swedenborg also tells us that Gabriel, Michael, and Raphael in the Word are not the names of individual angels but of angelic societies, named from particular functions, and that by Gabriel is meant "the ministry of those who teach from the Word, that Jehovah came into the world, and that the Human He there assumed is the Son of God, and Divine" (@AR 548). Study also the messages which the angel Gabriel brought to Daniel (Daniel 8:16, 9:21 ff.).

The Gospel of Luke gives the most complete, although not the most detailed, account of the life of the Lord. It begins with the annunciation concerning John the Baptist, and it is the only Gospel which describes the ascension. Miracles attending John's birth link the New Testament directly with the Old, bridging a period of four hundred years, for the last verses of the last chapter of Malachi are a prophecy of the coming of Elijah to prepare the way of the Lord.

Swedenborg tells us what is meant by these last words of Malachi: "John the Baptist was sent before to prepare the people for the reception of the Lord by baptism, because baptism represented and signified purification from evils and falsities, and also regeneration by the Lord by means of the Word. Unless this representation had preceded, the Lord could not have manifested Himself and have taught and lived in Judea and in Jerusalem, since the Lord was the God of heaven and earth under a human form, and He could not have been present with a nation that was in mere falsities in respect to doctrine and in mere evils in respect to life; consequently, unless that nation had been

prepared for the reception of the Lord by a representation of purification from falsities and evils by baptism, it would have been destroyed by diseases of every kind by the presence of the Divine Itself; therefore, this is what is signified by 'lest I come and smite the earth with a curse' (@AE 724). The Lord says of John, "And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come." (Matthew 11:14) The angel says that John will come "in the spirit and power of Elias." John himself says that he is the fulfillment of the prophecies in Isaiah 40:3 and Malachi 3:1. And after the transfiguration the Lord revealed to Peter, James, and John that John the Baptist had been the promised Elijah (Matthew 17:10-13). Elias [KJV] is the Greek form of Elijah. We are thus made to realize how close is the relation between the two testaments, the whole of the Old Testament being in reality a prophecy of the life of the Lord. The Lord said that He came to fulfill the Law and the Prophets, and He later expounded to the disciples in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself "beginning at Moses and all the Prophets."

The dumbness of Zacharias offers an interesting correspondence, for the slang expression "dumb" may be thought of as one of the natural outgrowths of correspondence. "Dumb" of course means unable to speak; yet we use it to mean "ignorant" or "stupid."

Ignorance or lack of intelligence with regard to any subject makes it impossible for us to speak effectively on that subject. Dumbness is thus the direct result of lack of knowledge, understanding, and consequent convictions. The angel said to Zacharias, "And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season." Swedenborg says that in the internal sense by the dumb are signified "they who cannot confess the Lord, thus cannot profess faith in Him, by reason of ignorance, in which state are the nations outside the church, and also the simple within the church" (@AC 6988). In the same number he says that the miracles wrought by the Lord all signify the state of the church and of the human race saved by His coming into the world. The healing of the dumb man by the Lord thus pictured the deliverance of men from falsities which prevented their acknowledging Him. Of the idols that men make it is said, "They have mouths, but they speak not" (Psalm 135:16). Of the coming of the Lord's kingdom Isaiah prophesies: "Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing; for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert." (Isaiah 35:6) The wilderness and the desert picture the state of the church at the time of the Advent — for this reason, of course, John was in the desert — and the waters and streams breaking out picture the truth which the Lord came to restore. When John was born according to the angel's prophecy, and Zacharias had signified that his name was to be John — the name means "the Lord is gracious" - it is reported, "And his mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue loosed, and he spake, and praised God." Ignorance in regard to the Lord, lack of understanding of Him and of His purposes make it impossible for one to confess Him in such a way as to convey any impression to anyone else. If we do not wish to be spiritually "dumb," we must learn all we can about the Lord as He reveals Himself in His Word, and by living according to what we learn acquire that spiritual wisdom which will also enable us to show forth the Lord's praise "not only with our lips, but in our lives."

The good people of that time recognized in John a power which cut through all the superficialities with which the scribes and Pharisees had obscured the Scriptures, and revealed to them anew the fundamental principles of right and wrong which the Scriptures laid down for their own daily lives. Once they were able to recognize their evils and falsities and to make the effort to overcome them, they were prepared to recognize the Lord, to welcome Him, and to listen to the deeper truths He preached. This is equally true for us. The Lord's spirit cannot enter except where the way is

prepared by humility and obedience to truth from the Word. We recall that in the Old Testament the period of the wilderness wanderings represented a similar period of reformation, a setting in order of the external life by obedience to the commandments, and that this had to precede entrance into the Holy Land, which pictures a state of inner achievement and happiness. John's whole appeal was to reformation of the external life. He wore a garment of camel's hair, which represents the truths of the literal sense of the Word as to good (@AE 5620[12]).

John's message, "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," is eternally valid. The kingdom of heaven is always at hand. The Lord stands at the door, always ready to enter. Our part is to open the door, to clear the way for the Lord's spirit by rejecting the things in us which stand in His way.

Our chapter weaves together the fulfillment of two prophecies in Malachi. The angel Gabriel appeared first to Zacharias and then to Mary. Mary was told that her cousin Elisabeth was to have a child, and was moved to visit her. And even before he was born John bore witness — the child leaped in the womb — and Elisabeth and Mary were given divine confirmation of the promises which had been made to them. So we have given us in this same chapter both the Benedictus spoken by Zacharias and the Magnificat spoken by Mary. John was born first; he entered upon his public mission first; and at the time of his baptism of the Lord he made the first public proclamation of the Lord's identity, which was immediately confirmed by the voice and sign from heaven. Then, as the Lord's ministry became established, John's came to its end, as he himself prophesied: "He must increase, but I must decrease." (John 3:30) He was imprisoned during the second year of the Lord's ministry and put to death early in the third year. So the Lord takes fuller and fuller possession of the prepared heart and mind, and the ordering of the external life becomes a matter of course as the expression of the spirit within.

## **126:THE BIRTH OF THE LORD — Luke 2:1-20**

### **INTRO**

Although the Christmas lesson follows in order here, it probably will be studied separately, making it necessary to tell the classes that you are interrupting your regular sequence just for the Christmas lesson and that you will go back to it next Sunday. Be sure that they know what the next lesson will be. Then tell them that the Lord came into the world many hundred years later than the time about which they have been studying.

### **Adult**

Discuss the necessity of the constant growth of our concept of the Lord and of our understanding and appreciation of the meaning of the details of the familiar Christmas stories. Use Isaiah 9:6 to point this up and Isaiah 9:7 to suggest the effect which this growing concept should have on our lives.

Looking back after nearly two thousand years we can see that the Lord's Advent changed the whole course of history. We all know that our calendar dates from the birth of Christ and that the Christian nations, in spite of their obvious shortcomings, are the progressive and dominant nations. The life of the Lord gave the world a new standard, a new ideal, without which spiritual life would have perished; for men, looking to themselves or to other men for wisdom, were becoming more

and more confused, uncertain, and fearful. The only genuine truth in the world was in the Hebrew Scriptures, and the church of that day had so perverted these that they were no longer read with an open mind. The object of the lifelong search of Socrates was for the wise man. No man could be found who could point out the way of life.

This spiritual darkness was the night upon which the great light broke. The star which the Wise Men saw afar off and the "glory of the Lord" which shone round about the shepherds were the same light, the Lord coming into the world as the truth, "the way," "the light of the world," "a light to lighten the Gentiles," the only wise man, to whom men in all time to come could look for light and guidance. When we are little children, we love and cherish the picture of the holy babe in the manger with Mary and Joseph and the shepherds in adoration, but as we grow older every detail of this picture must be filled with deeper and deeper meaning. We begin to glimpse the tremendous significance of this seemingly obscure event which is celebrated all over the world on Christmas day, and to see that nothing less than the coming into the world of the Lord God Himself could so profoundly have affected the history of the world and the course of individual lives.

Then comes the question, "Why did so few recognize the Lord?"

This is answered for us many times in the Word. "For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed" (Matthew 13:15); "And men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil" (John 3:19). Owls, which depend upon the darkness to help them surprise their prey, see in the dark and are blinded in the daytime. We can all refuse to see truths which we have not prepared ourselves to use, just as a child who has not studied his lesson or the lessons which went before it is not prepared to understand what the teacher is talking about. "God sent not his son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved." His light would have destroyed eyes not prepared to receive it if He had not permitted the eyes to be closed. So His Advent was accomplished in a way which represented His accommodation of Himself to men, and only those who were prepared knew of it. But the light which was at first seen by so few grew and spread and continues to grow and spread throughout the whole world.

The Lord was born in Bethlehem, the birthplace of Benjamin as well as of David. Of Himself He said, "I am the bread of life." Bethlehem means "house of bread." To each of us, when we are children or in childhood states, the Lord comes in simple instruction as to how we may be good and useful, and the beautiful story in the letter of the Word of His coming as a humble babe in the manger at Bethlehem moves our hearts. But as we pass out of our childhood states, our knowledge of the Lord and our concept of Him must grow. We are all familiar with the general correspondence of the Christmas stories: the Wise Men, those who cherish and love the truths of spiritual living; and the shepherds, the simple in heart who love what is good and innocent. These are the two classes of people who are able to recognize the Lord: those who love and cherish the knowledge of Him which they have received through the Word from their parents and teachers, as the Wise Men cherished the prophecies which they had from the Ancient Word; and those who, in the absence of knowledge of the Lord, still are humble and loving, preserving their own good innocent affections in spite of the worldliness which surrounds them, as the shepherds watched their flocks by night.

There was no room for the Lord at the inns. An inn represents a "place of instruction." The church was the only place of instruction to which men could go who wanted to learn of the Lord, but it had so perverted the precious knowledge entrusted to it that the divine truth was altogether crowded out. So the Lord was laid in a humble manger, the feeding place of horses and cattle, the few

humble minds and hearts which still found some instruction for life, and He was wrapped in swaddling clothes, which represent the first simple truths which clothe our early perceptions of the Lord (@AE 706[11]).

To many it seems strange that so few people acknowledged the Lord's birth when it was accompanied by signs and wonders and when the Hebrew nation had looked forward through all its history to this very event. But we must not think that the signs and wonders were visible to everyone, though many stories based on this assumption have been written. Verses 17 and 18 of our lesson gives us a suggestion here. They make it rather evident that others knew of the shepherds' vision only as the shepherds told of it and that, while they wondered at it, only Mary really thought much about it. Belief is a matter of the will. We do not believe unless we want to. Even the Lord never forces us to believe in Him, and when He came into the world, He came in such a way that only those recognized Him who really longed for His coming and so would worship and protect the child Jesus. These few were told, each in a way that would be most assuring to him: the Wise Men, who understood something of correspondences, saw a star; the simple shepherds had in common a beautiful and awe-inspiring vision and heard the actual announcement; Mary and Joseph, Zacharias and Elisabeth were told by an angel (and the doubting Zacharias was still further impressed by being struck dumb); and Simeon and Anna were taught by a perception within their own hearts when they saw the child. Most of the people who wanted no truth which might condemn them, neither saw nor heard.

It is much the same with people today. Swedenborg tells us that the angels never try to instruct men on earth. They know that the Lord has given men the Word and leaves them in freedom to receive or reject its teaching, and that this freedom must be preserved at all costs. Only evil spirits seek to speak to men.\* But at the time of the Advent the angelic host was permitted to express in one great beautiful message the very sphere of heaven: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace, good will toward men." The more accurate translation is "to men of good will." Love to God and love to the neighbor, afterward pointed out by the Lord Himself as the two great commandments, are the way to peace both for the individual and for the world. This is a message which we should ponder most deeply at Christmas time. The angel told the shepherds where to find the Lord. That is all the angels can do for us. If we are wise, we shall do as the shepherds did: go quickly to find the Lord in the manger of the letter of the Word: and we shall worship Him and tell others what we have found; and then we shall go back to our daily tasks "glorifying and praising God."

[\*See, e.g., @HH 249. -Editor]

## 127:THE WIDOW OF NAIN — Luke 7:1-30

### INTRO

As noted in the first lesson from Luke, our effort - after covering the basic story of the Lord's life in Matthew - is to center the lessons as far as possible in stories in the particular Gospel under consideration which do not appear in the other Gospels. This means that the facts of the Lord's life must be brought in by the way. In this lesson, for example, the teacher should tell briefly the story of the Lord's early years and of His baptism before taking up the chapter for the day. The latter part of the lesson ties in with the review and with the Old Testament.

## Adult

Two parts of this lesson will lead to helpful discussion: the meaning for us of the raising of the widow's son, and the Lord's words concerning John the Baptist. Verses 29 and 30 help to point up His meaning.

We are all familiar with the Gospel story of the Lord's life.

Therefore, after following its basic outline in Matthew, we have tried in the other Gospels to pick out, for most of the lessons, stories which are told in only the one Gospel we are studying. It is interesting to look at the lists of the Lord's miracles and parables as given in the reference section of a teacher's Bible. The Gospel of Luke is preeminently noteworthy for its parables, giving us seventeen which are not found in any other Gospel, as well as ten of the more common ones. It is not known whether or not Luke came in direct contact with the Lord, as he is not mentioned in any Gospel narrative. He was one of the early Christians and a companion of Paul on some of his travels, and is generally believed to have been for seven years at least in charge of the group at Philippi in Macedonia, the first Christian Church established in Europe. Paul calls Luke "the beloved physician" (Colossians 4:14). His name indicates that he was not of Jewish descent. He is accepted as the writer of the book of Acts as well as of the third Gospel. His brief introduction to the first chapter of his Gospel (Luke 1:1-4) indicates that his memory-knowledge of the Lord's life and teaching was the result of eager application to all possible sources of information, but we know, of course, that his Gospel as recorded was set down under inspiration like the other three.

The first of the two miracles recorded in our chapter is also recorded in Matthew. From the point of view of healing, it is noteworthy as being a case in which the Lord healed at a distance with no physical contact with the person healed. This miracle is usually remembered, however, because of the Lord's comparison of the faith of the centurion with that of the Jews. The second miracle, the raising of the dead son of the widow of Nain, is one of the seven miracles recorded only in Luke. Both were performed in Galilee. The centurion's message was delivered to the Lord at Capernaum. Nain was a village not far from Nazareth. We remember that Galilee was called "Galilee of the Gentiles" and that it represents the outward life. The Roman conquerors also represent the life of the world, usually in its character of usurper of time and effort which should be devoted to higher things, but in the person of the centurion in its less common character of the friend and benefactor of the spiritual life. So the healing of the centurion's servant represents the restoration of some useful external ability through inspiration from the Lord.

The story of the widow of Nain teaches a similar lesson. Throughout the Scriptures a widow pictures a good desire which is bereft of the truth needed to support and make it productive. A son pictures a derivative truth. People who want to be good but have no true knowledge of the Lord and His purposes are easily deprived of such simple truths as they may have. They are easy to deceive and mislead and become a prey to evils. All of us are in this state so far as we are in ignorance of truth which we need in order to do good.

Swedenborg speaks of two kinds of resurrection: the natural, when a man's body is laid aside and he rises to life in the spiritual world, and the spiritual in which the life of the natural self-hood is put away and a new will is given from the Lord. "He that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." See the passage from @AE 899[11] below.

In the spiritual sense the sequence in the Word is always interesting. We have in the story about

John the Baptist which immediately follows an illustration of the sort of distress pictured by the condition of the widow of Nain. John at this time has been cast into prison by Herod. His active preaching was ended, although his disciples still resorted to him in the prison. John is pictured as discouraged at the seeming frustration of his life work, even to the point of allowing himself to wonder if he could have been mistaken. How often when our own efforts for the church and for others seem to come to nought, we allow ourselves to wonder if our work and sacrifice have been worthwhile! John in prison could not see the Lord at work. When we are shut up within the narrow circle of our own accomplishment, we cannot see the Lord at work. The Lord allowed John's messengers to see the miracles His presence was accomplishing, as He will always let us see them if we are willing to face the fact that it is He and not we from whom the good is to come. This is the lesson taught in verse 28.

John the Baptist, like all the prophets, represented the letter of the Word. The letter of the Word is not a reed shaken with the wind, something which may be twisted to suit our passing desires and imaginings. It is not a man clothed in soft raiment; as long as we are in this world it will present to us truths which go harshly against our preferences. It is a prophet: it speaks for the Lord. And when we see it so, it becomes more than a prophet: it becomes the medium through which the Lord enters our minds and hearts.

Of the statement made in verse 28 Swedenborg says in @AC 9372[6]:

"That in the internal sense, or such as it is in heaven, the Word is in a degree above the Word in the external sense, or such as it is in the world, and such as John the Baptist taught, is signified by, 'he that is less in the kingdom of the heavens is greater than he'; for as perceived in heaven the Word is of wisdom so great that it transcends all human apprehension."

## **128:THE APOSTLES ARE SENT OUT — Luke 9:1-36**

### **INTRO**

There are really four parts to this lesson. We have chosen the sending out of the apostles as the center of our study because we have had a lesson on the feeding of the multitude and one on the transfiguration in our studies of the other Gospels. Both these stories, as well as the Lord's question and Peter's answer can easily be taken up in direct relation to the assigned topic, as examples and types of the Lord's preparation of the apostles for their life work.

### **Adult**

It is suggested that the outline of the assignment as a whole and its meaning be covered first as briefly as possible by the teacher, and the rest of the time given to any one phase which may appeal to the class. There are many very practical discussion points.

As we take up the story of the Lord's life in this course in each of the different Gospels in turn, we come to the same familiar incidents, as the feeding of the five thousand and the transfiguration. The story in general is the same; yet there are significant variations in context. Isn't this true of the

way in which familiar passages from the Word come up in our own minds? The Lord brings them to us in their application to different states and different experiences as we go through life. So today we are thinking of these two familiar stories as a part of the preparation of the apostles for their great life work, and consequently as part of our preparation for true apostleship. The Lord says to all of us: "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bear much fruit, and that your fruit should remain." We all want to be true apostles. We want our lives and words to bear testimony to our belief and to lead to lasting good. In this chapter from Luke we are given particular guidance for this task.

This sending out of the apostles was in the nature of a practical experience. They went out as directed and then came back and reported to their teacher. They were given certain powers, which we recognize as the ability the Lord gives each of us to overcome evils in himself and to help others to correct their weaknesses. They were given their mission: "to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick," as we are to "show forth not only with our lips, but in our lives" the power of the Lord to heal and bless. They were to take nothing of their own with them, but to trust to the Lord that they would be received and provided for. We need this instruction especially, because we are all so prone to self-confidence and self-assertion that our ego often looms up between the Lord's message and the people to whom we are trying to bring it. We are to tarry with those who welcome what we have to bring them; and when our efforts are not well received, we are to withdraw and not to let thoughts of the disappointing experience — the dust of the city — cling to us. You will find it interesting to go over the petitions of the Lord's Prayer which we say each morning as we begin our day, and see how fully they express our desire to follow these same instructions. Then at night, when we look back over the experiences of the day, we shall not be ashamed to tell the Lord, as the returning apostles did, all we have done. And the Lord will give us the further instruction we need.

In Luke this further instruction first takes the form of the one miracle which is recorded in all four Gospels, and which we have studied in the Gospel of Mark. We so often feel inadequate in the face of an opportunity or obligation to give needed spiritual food to our neighbors or to our children. How shall I explain New Church teachings to my friends? How shall I answer my children's questions? Our impulse is to send them to others for the answers, as the apostles asked the Lord to send the multitude away into the villages to buy food. But the Lord says to us as to the apostles: "Give ye them to eat." However small our store of knowledge and experience, we have something to give, and we shall always find that as we try to give it, looking to the Lord for blessing, He will multiply it so that it will more than meet the need. And as we study the Word with the help which the Lord has provided for us in the writings, we shall become better and better able to serve as the Lord's apostles. Swedenborg tells us that influx is into our knowledges (@AC 4096).

Then in our chapter we come to a different type of instruction.

The story of the transfiguration is given in three Gospels. (The other accounts are in Matthew 17:1-9 and Mark 9:2-10.) In all three cases it is directly preceded by the story of the Lord's question and Peter's answer, the prophecy of the crucifixion and resurrection, and the teaching that whosoever will save his life shall lose it. First comes the necessity of recognizing the Lord as God, then the understanding of how He laid down His life for our salvation, then the recognition of the fact that we must lay down our self life if we are to be conjoined to Him, and finally the ability to see Him in His glorified humanity and to understand in the letter of the Word the teaching concerning Him.

@AE 64[2] states the correspondence of the story of the transfiguration more clearly and more briefly than any paraphrase could possibly do: "The Lord took Peter, James, and John, because by

them the church in respect to faith, charity, and the works of charity was represented; He took them 'into a high mountain' because 'mountain' signifies heaven; 'His face did shine as the sun' (Matthew 17:2) because 'face' signifies the interiors, and it did shine as the sun because His interiors were Divine, for the 'sun' is Divine love; 'His garments became white as the light' because 'garments' signify Divine truth proceeding from Him; the like is signified by 'light'. 'Moses' and 'Elijah' appeared, because the two signify the Word, 'Moses' the historical Word, and 'Elijah' the prophetical Word; 'a bright cloud overshadowed them' because 'a bright cloud' signifies the Word in the letter within which is the internal sense; 'a voice out of the cloud said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye Him,' because 'a voice out of a cloud' signifies Divine truth out of the Word, and 'beloved Son' the Lord's Divine Human. And because Divine truth is from Him, and thence all truth of the church, it was said out of the cloud 'in whom I am well pleased, hear ye Him.'" See here the passage from @AC 5922[5] below. See also @AE 195[18], @AE 2576[19], and in Arcana Coelestia the preface to Genesis 18.

In the story of the transfiguration, after the cloud passed they saw Jesus only. When we, through belief in the Lord as God with us and faithfulness to His teachings, have been led up into the mountain of spiritual vision where we can see Him in His glory as the internal sense of the Word reveals Him, we come to recognize the Lord alone as God and as the whole of the Word. The three apostles could not share this vision with others "in those days." Such a vision is the crown of faithful service. It cannot be shared with those who have not prepared themselves to see it. The actual Second Coming of the Lord was a revelation of the internal sense of the Word, and the transfiguration is thus a prophecy of the understanding of the Lord made possible by His Second Coming.

## **129:THE GOOD SAMARITAN — Luke 10:25-42**

### **INTRO**

Although there are several chapters in Luke between this one and the entry into Jerusalem, we might note that from Luke 9:51 we learn that the Lord is already on His way to Jerusalem for the last time. The subject matter of these chapters is largely composed of parables, teaching for the disciples, a few miracles, and the exposing of the states in which the religious leaders were. The first part of chapter 10 contains a condemnation of those whose minds were closed, and the teacher should read it in preparation for the lawyer's question and the Lord's answer, which bring the matter into clear light.

### **Adult**

Discussion topics for this class might be: (1) the order of the two great commandments, (2) the meaning of the parable for the lawyer and its meaning for us, (3) the practical applications of the story of Mary and Martha, and (4) the wonderful balance which the Lord always preserves for us if we are careful to study each story in the Word in its context.

With this lesson we enter upon the last period of the Lord's life.

The Lord is on His way to Jerusalem for the final scenes of His earthly career (Luke 9:51). The greater part of the teaching in the next few chapters is in the form of parables, most of which are

not found in any of the other Gospels.

In our lesson for today the teaching of the Scriptures is reduced at the outset to its simplest terms. The lawyer — we must remember that the law then was primarily the Scriptures — asks his question and is directed to the Scriptures for his answer. In Matthew (22:34-40) the Lord, instead of the lawyer, answers the question and emphasizes love to the Lord by saying of it, "This is the first and great commandment." In Luke He approves the lawyer's answer and says, "This do, and thou shalt live." Love to the Lord and love to the neighbor are a summary of the teaching of the whole Word. Of the two tables on which the ten commandments were originally given, the first contained those relating to our duty to the Lord and the second those relating to our duty to the neighbor. We cannot break the first great commandment and keep the second, nor break the second and keep the first. It is generally recognized today that love to the Lord is not genuine unless it expresses itself in justice and kindness to the neighbor — nothing is more common than criticism of a church because some of its members show a lack of justice and charity in their outward dealings. But it is often asserted that love to the neighbor is possible without love to the Lord. ("So-and-so hasn't any use for religion, but he's always doing things for other people." "There are better people outside of the church than in it." "I always try to treat other people right, and I'll take my chance at salvation with anybody in the church.") The immediate popularity in its day of the poem by Leigh Hunt (1838), "Abou Ben Adhem", in which love to the Lord is made a sort of involuntary appendage of love to the neighbor, testifies to this feeling. But the fact is that no one can do genuine good to the neighbor without recognition of his dependence upon the Lord for the will and the power to do good, as well as upon the Lord's guidance as to what is good. If a man does not do good from love to the Lord, he does it from love of self, which renders his goodness spurious. People reject this teaching at first, but it is not hard to demonstrate. Those brought up in orderly, respectable homes find it much pleasanter and more profitable to fulfill — even at the cost of some personal inconvenience — the ordinary external requirements of civilized neighborly living which will make them liked and respected in their community than to be openly selfish, miserly, and uncharitable. They like the approval of their neighbors and they like to feel pleased and satisfied with themselves. We remember the story of the rich young man (Matthew 19:16-26). He had kept all the commandments but turned away when the Lord told him to sell all that he had and follow Him. To sell all that we have represents giving up the sense of our own goodness and wisdom. And without looking to the Lord for guidance we cannot know what is the neighbor nor how we should express our love for him. The lawyer in our story unconsciously showed this and confessed his own ignorance when he asked, "And who is my neighbor?"

The Lord's answer, the parable of the Good Samaritan, which is recorded only in Luke, is one of the best known and most frequently referred to of the parables, but its lesson is not always carefully analyzed. It is often cited as evidence that we should look outside of the church for true charity and also that the essential of love to the neighbor is caring for the bodily wants of others. We like to imagine ourselves as filling the role of the Good Samaritan. In truth, however, we are all much more likely to play the role of the man who fell among thieves.

A brief study of the correspondence of the story will repay us.

"To go down from Jerusalem to Jericho" is to go from "the truth of doctrine to the good of life" (@AE 458[10]), that is, to try to put into actual practice something that we have learned of the Lord and His will. On this journey we are all often attacked by our own selfish desires and the false reasonings that come from them, and are robbed of our garments of truth, weakened in our good resolution, and fall by the roadside half dead — with very little of our spiritual vitality left. The

priest and the Levite in a good sense represent worship of the Lord and the good of charity; so in a bad sense as here they picture the opposite, namely those who have no love to the Lord and no love to the neighbor (@AE 444[14]), who are indifferent to our spiritual condition. The Samaritan pictures those who are in "the affection of truth" (@AC 9057[2]), that is, in the love of practicing what truth teaches, or "those who are in the good of charity toward the neighbor" (@AE 375[42]). Such people can and do help us, pointing out to us good and true things — the oil and wine — to strengthen our shaken resolution, carrying us along so far as their own understanding permits, and bringing us to those who can give us more instruction and help. An inn signifies a place of instruction. Thus the whole story is a picture of spiritual service. Even in the letter it should be noted that it is the Samaritan and not the injured man who is called the neighbor. Swedenborg tells us (@AC 6708) that the Samaritan is called the neighbor because he exercised the good of charity and that everyone is our neighbor in accordance with the quality of his love to the Lord (@AC 6711). That is, it is love to the Lord in a man that is the "neighbor" to whom we are to do good, and in all our dealings with others we are to act in such a way as to foster love to the Lord in them. With this end in view we shall not give alms indiscriminately to everyone who asks, for to give alms to an evil man is to make it more possible for him to go on in his evil course. @AC 6703-6712 states the general principle very clearly, as does @TCR 428. When the Lord made the lawyer acknowledge that the despised Samaritan might be more his neighbor than the priest or the Levite, He taught that genuine goodness is to be recognized wherever it is found.

And lest one should feel justified in misinterpreting the parable of the Good Samaritan, the parable is immediately followed in the Word by the story of Mary and Martha. "Martha was cumbered about much serving." How often we are so distracted by our external activities — useful though they be — that we think we have no time to sit at the Lord's feet and hear His word! We see these activities as duties, as services to the Lord, just as Martha was preparing for the Lord's physical entertainment. But we become so "careful and troubled about many things" that we lose our sense of proportion. Churches sometimes become so busy with external service that they almost wholly neglect the study and teaching of the Word. It is a common plea that it is of no use to talk to men of spiritual things until their physical needs are met, but not only is this not true (for many have found peace and joy in spiritual things in spite of physical want): if we take this attitude, we shall never finish the work of supplying physical wants and never find the right time to supply the spiritual. The Lord teaches this elsewhere in connection with this same Mary, when she anointed Him with costly ointment which Judas thought would better have been sold and the money given to the poor (John 12:3). Read also the Lord's words in Mark 14:7. To Martha He said, "But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part." Love to the Lord is the first and great commandment. We cannot do good to the neighbor unless we learn of the Lord what is good and perform our services in His name instead of in our own. "What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" Further helpful numbers are @AE 240, 962; @AR 316; @TCR 287, 407-411; @NJHD 84-90.

## 130:THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES — Luke 11

### INTRO

With the younger classes we have chosen the latter part of the chapter for emphasis because it is less familiar than the portion on prayer, but with the older classes both parts should be taken up. Verse 33 may be used to bind the two parts together, for it is only as we turn to the Lord as our

Father and seek His guidance and help that we can keep the eye of our soul "single" or clear. The scribes and Pharisees are the classic example of what not to do with our religion.

## Adult

The whole subject of hypocrisy is an interesting discussion topic. We all condemn hypocrisy, and we should recognize that we are all hypocrites to some extent. The quotations from True Christian Religion and Apocalypse Explained given in the notes below help us to think this problem through and to meet it in ourselves. The question of the limits we should set upon our judgment of others is also important.

Our chapter begins with the giving of the Lord's Prayer. We are more familiar with the somewhat different form given in Matthew, where it is recorded as part of the sermon on the mount. For the New Churchman such differences of form and context create no problem, because we know that the incidents were recalled to the minds of the different evangelists in each case in a providential order, and that the words were providentially directed each time to serve the needs of the internal sense. We should remember, however, that the Gospel was written in Greek and that, whenever any difficulty arises over differences in form in connection with the same incident, it becomes important to know what the Greek says. In the Lord's Prayer, for example, the order "as in heaven, so in earth" is the order in the Greek both in Matthew and Luke (but see the footnote at the Junior level). This order has an evident bearing upon the lesson of the rest of our chapter for today.

In the first thirteen verses of the chapter we are given the picture of what our true relation to the Lord is. We are children of our heavenly Father, dependent upon Him for guidance and help in every phase of our daily life, just as little children depend upon their earthly parents: and if we acknowledge and accept this relationship, we may look to Him with confidence for the supplying of our every spiritual need.

Against this background we are given the picture of the scribes and Pharisees who, while professing to know and keep the law of Moses above all others, rejected the promised Messiah when He appeared among them, because at heart they wanted no rule but their own will. As Isaiah wrote of them, they honored God with their lips, but their heart was far from Him. Read Isaiah 29:13-19 as an exact description of the conditions presented in our chapter.

We may take verses 33 and 34 as a summary of the teaching of the chapter. The scribes and Pharisees had done just what is pictured by putting the candle in a secret place or under a bushel instead of on a candlestick. They had covered up the light of truth in the word of the Old Testament with their own false interpretations and additions, instead of lifting it up where it might give light to the people around them. They posed as the special spokesmen of the church. We recall words of the Lord to John in Revelation 1:20: "The seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches." The primary function of any church is to teach truth from the Word so that people may walk in the light. When a church covers over this light with reasonings which spring from the exaltation of human intelligence above revelation, it is false to its high calling.

Verse 34 goes to the root of this evil. "The light of the body is the eye." The eye is a symbol of the understanding. The eye has to be "single." Swedenborg renders this word "simple."<sup>\*</sup> The Greek work [and its Latin counterpart], according to the dictionary, means "single, simple, candid, ingenuous, frank, sincere." In our verse this is contrasted with "evil." The Greek word means

"wicked, perverse, malignant, evil." So the emphasis is on the state of the heart as influencing the understanding. And in the two words used, the contrast is between an inner state of humility and one of self-will. If we follow this thought through a study of the charges which the Lord makes against the scribes and Pharisees, the picture becomes very clear. We should also read the more detailed record of this condemnation in Matthew 23. The teaching is that we believe what we at heart want to believe, however our outward life may appear.

[\*In @AE 526[13], e.g., he has "oculum purum" seu "simplicem" ("clear or simple" [honest] eye).]

In @TCR 147 we read: "It is as yet scarcely known in the church that in all of man's will and thought and his consequent action and speech, there is an internal and an external, and that from infancy man is carefully taught to speak from the external, however the internal may dissent; and that this is the origin of simulation, flattery, and hypocrisy; and thus man becomes double-minded. But he alone is single-minded whose external thinks and speaks and wills and acts from the internal; and such are meant by the 'simple (single)' in the Word (as in Luke 8:15; 11:34; and elsewhere). Nevertheless these are wiser than those who are double-minded." The rest of this number elaborates and illustrates this thought. Does this mean that we should always say exactly what we think? We have all known individuals who prided themselves on this practice, and they are likely to have been very disagreeable people. Does it mean that we should always do just what we feel like doing? Does it mean that we should not teach our children to observe good manners whether they feel like being polite and considerate or not? The answer to all these questions is, "No." We are taught in our doctrines that reformation of our outward conduct must precede regeneration. But the motive in the effort must be the motive of obedience to the Lord, not the motive of being socially acceptable. When we find that our pleasant words and kindly deeds are not sincere expressions of our inner thought and feeling, our duty is not to change our words and deeds but to set to work to change our thoughts and feelings. For we read in @AE 394[3]:

"When a man does and speaks what is good, true, sincere, and just, for the sake of self and the world he does and speaks them from self, because from the external man without the internal; and such deeds or works are all evil, and if heaven is regarded in them they are meritorious [i.e., self-righteous], and all such are iniquitous." But Swedenborg adds: "In this world no one can determine whether works are from the Lord or from man, since in external form the two kinds appear alike, but they can be distinguished by the Lord alone, and after man's life in the world their origin is disclosed."

The Lord saw the hearts and minds of the scribes and Pharisees.

He had the right to utter the condemnation. We have the right to judge the outward acts of other people but not their motives. And as to our own, we can only strive to keep ourselves in a state sensitive to searching and correction by the Lord's truth as it comes to us in the Word. So we pray that the Lord's will may be done in the heavens of our souls and thence in the earth of our outward lives. This is the ideal we set up as our goal.

## 131:THE GREAT SUPPER — Luke 14

## **INTRO**

The teacher will need to review who the Pharisees were, what their attitude toward the Lord was, and why. Then remind them of the lawyer in the lesson the Good Samaritan since the lawyers were the most learned and honored of the scribes, and the scribes and Pharisees are often mentioned together.

## **Adult**

The contrast between the Pharisees' attitude toward the Lord and His attitude toward them makes a good discussion topic, especially in view of the humanistic character of much so-called religion today. The ideas that man is inherently good and that human intelligence is the arbiter of truth are essentially Pharisaic. The three excuses also offer good discussion material.

Eating and drinking play a large part in our daily lives. Our bodies must be nourished regularly, and our food must be varied and wholesome. When we invite guests to a meal, we desire not only to do them good by feeding their bodies, but to enjoy the pleasure of association with them. Our associations with our friends are of the spirit, so that even with us, if we are in good states, eating together performs spiritual uses.

Many times in the Word the Lord spoke of eating and drinking, of feasts, suppers, wedding feasts. We can know that He was talking of spiritual uses. The food and drink which He offers us are His love and wisdom, good and truth to sustain and develop our souls, as natural food and drink nourish the body. But He offers us more than this. He promises to come in and sup with us, to be present with us, associating with us Himself. In the Word He spreads a perpetual feast for us, good and truth in every varied form which we may need and which will add to our happiness, and He is present there Himself ready to speak wise and loving words to us, to answer our questions, to help and encourage us in our problems and temptations, to delight us with new desires and thoughts.

But we are free to accept or to reject the Lord's invitation. In this world we choose the company with which we wish to associate. We can seek those who are wiser and better than we, and learn to become steadily wiser and better ourselves, or, if we like to show off our knowledge and virtues, we can seek those who, we think, know less than we, and so cut ourselves off from making progress and actually go backward. This is what the Lord teaches in our chapter in the parable of the wedding feast, which precedes the parable of the great supper. If we truly "hunger and thirst after righteousness," we will readily accept the Lord's invitation, seek Him in His Word, accept the truth He offers, and try to practice it and so receive its good, we will associate with others who are learning of Him, and unite with them in work for His kingdom. The Lord's Supper, of which we partake occasionally, is the external symbol of our acceptance of His invitation to sup with Him in His kingdom. It has reality and power for us in proportion to our desire to receive the good and truth from the Lord which the bread and wine symbolize, and in proportion to our desire to associate with the Lord and with angels.

The Lord's invitation is given to all. It is repeated again and again. Not only do we hear it in the letter of the Word in its general form but in every truth which impresses itself upon us personally, just as the servant was sent out to each guest. If we do not accept the invitation, it is because we do not wish to. When we read the parable, we wonder that any of the invited guests should have refused so delightful an invitation: but we refuse it ourselves whenever we find other pursuits and

other thoughts so absorbing that we allow them to interfere with our associations with the Lord.

The three excuses symbolize all the types of preoccupations which keep men from looking to the Lord for love and wisdom. The first man had bought a piece of ground and must needs go to see it. The ground, or more properly field, is the mind, intellectual things, in this case leading away from the Lord. When we become so interested in thinking our own thoughts and developing our own theories that we have no time to learn of the Lord, to read the Word, to go to church, we are making this excuse. The second had bought five yoke of oxen and went to try them. The oxen represent our affections for natural usefulness. When these are turned to the Lord's service they are good, but when we are too busy caring for our families and providing for their present and future needs, or even too occupied with the external charities which the world recognizes as good to look to the Lord and seek to know Him better, we are making this second excuse. Both these guests recognized that they ought to accept the invitation and asked to be excused for this time. So we may feel that sometime, when we have completed the study or the work which now absorbs our attention, we shall find time for the Lord and the church. But we cannot put off the building of spiritual character. Before long we shall be saying, as the third man did, "I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come." We shall be so wedded to our own ideas and our own occupations that we shall reject the Lord's invitation outright.

The parable of our lesson was spoken to the Pharisees. The invited guests who made the excuses pictured the church, which had the Scriptures but had become wholly absorbed in worldly ideas and pursuits. The guests who were brought in to take the places of those first invited represented those who did not have the truth but desired it, first those in the streets and lanes of the city, those who had had some contact with the truths of the Word through living among the Jews, and then those in the highways and hedges, altogether outside of the city of doctrine, who must be "compelled," that is, drawn by the power of love rather than reached through the truth. "The poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind,' do not mean such in a natural sense, but such in a spiritual sense, that is such as had not the Word, and were therefore in ignorance of truth and in lack of good, but still desired truths by means of which they might obtain good; such were the Gentiles with whom the church of the Lord was afterwards established." (@AE 652[31]). See also @AC 2336[4] and @AE 223[22].

The last verse of the parable points to the serious nature of the choice offered us in the Lord's invitation: "For I say unto you, that none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper." Our reception of the Lord's love and truth depend upon our desire to obtain them. If we choose to go our own way, we close the door to the Lord and the time comes when even He cannot open it. Our life in this world is our opportunity to choose between self and the Lord, and the choice is made not in a moment but day by day, by putting away wrong thoughts and selfish desires and letting the Lord's truth and love take their places. Whenever we hold back from fully following the Lord, clinging to some idea or enjoyment which we love but know to be from self, we limit our ability to advance in the kingdom of heaven. If we really want the Lord to come in and sup with us, we must open the door to Him and keep it open, by ridding our minds and hearts of the self-esteem and self-love which shut Him out. This is the cost we must count, of which the Lord speaks in the parables which complete our chapter.

# 132:THE PRODIGAL SON — Luke 15

## INTRO

This lesson follows easily upon the lesson of the great supper.

Simply review the parable as a preparation for this lesson.

## Adult

Perhaps the best discussion topic for this class grows out of the quotation from New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrine following their notes. The weak and selfish idea that the Lord is so loving that He will forgive us whenever we ask Him, whatever our life has been and without any real change on our part, has done much harm in our modern world. The prodigal son had to take the long journey back before his father could meet him, even though the father saw him coming "while he was yet a long way off."

Again we have the scribes and Pharisees contrasted with the publicans and sinners. The publicans and sinners "drew near unto him ... for to hear him," and the Pharisees and scribes murmured. The intent of the three parables which follow is to show the nature of the Lord's love, in that it goes forth to all alike with desire to draw them to Him, examining each man to see wherein he has strayed, and seeking by all means to recall and restore what has been lost. In each parable it is made clear that if we will but recognize our departure from the Lord and try to reform, He can save us. The three parables picture this truth on the three planes of life.

In the first parable it is a sheep which is lost, representing loss of one of the innocent affections with which the Lord has endowed us. All our other affections suffer from the loss of the one — they are left in the wilderness, and the Lord Himself, the good shepherd, is pictured as following the lost sheep, finding it, laying it upon His shoulders, and bringing it back with rejoicing. Perhaps this "lost sheep" is the simple trust in the Lord which we had as little children but have lost in the course of acquiring worldly wisdom. The Lord leaves nothing undone to restore this trust. He shows us again and again in our lives that He is caring for us, by opening our way before us, smoothing out difficulties and dangers which we had feared, and delivering us from evils into which we might have fallen. And when the trust is restored, we are conscious of a sphere of relief and joy. The angels "perceive nothing more delightful and happy than to remove evils from a man, and lead him to heaven" (@AC 5992). We are told that "to carry on the shoulder" denotes to preserve with all the power of the divine love, and that the "'sheep that was lost and was found' denotes the good within the man who repents" (@AC 9836[6]).

The parable of the lost piece of silver pictures the loss of some truth which we have known, its loss through failure to live according to it, and the need of searching for it with the light of truth from the Word and sweeping our mental house, that is, examining ourselves thoroughly and rejecting the false ideas which have obscured the truth (@AE 675[10]). Perhaps it is the truth that the real life is the eternal life and that death is an orderly step which opens the gate to that life. Little children accept this teaching readily and have no fear of death, but as they grow older, they are likely to slip into the prevalent attitude toward death, to shake their heads when some friend dies and say, "It seems strange that this should have come to him; it is hard to understand these things." This is the

accumulated dust of worldly ideas and points of view. We need to sweep the house and find our piece of silver. Again there is great rejoicing. The familiar saying, "We never miss the water till the well runs dry" might well be interpreted according to correspondence. It is true that we do not appreciate the goods and truths which the Lord gives us until we have felt real need of them, and sometimes it may be necessary for us to lose them altogether in order to awaken in us this sense of need. Even in our everyday life there is more rejoicing over the restoration of something we have lost than over the possession of many treasures.

The third parable deals more directly with sins of external conduct. The father, of course, is the Lord. The inheritance which the son wishes to have for himself is the goods and truths which come to us from the Lord. When one becomes tired of looking to the Lord for guidance and wishes to lead himself, he is like the prodigal son. Very soon he goes into a far country — far from the Lord - and wastes his inheritance in riotous living. When our good affections and the knowledge we have of the truth are looked upon as our own, the "substance" is gone out of them, for it is the Lord's life in them which makes them good and true. "As the branch can not bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me." (John 15:4) When we look to ourselves for light, we soon adopt worldly standards and come to live for worldly pleasures and satisfactions, and may even descend to "feeding swine" - gratifying the mere lusts of the body. Then famine comes. For man is a spiritual being and can never be satisfied while his spiritual nature is starved. In the parable the prodigal son is brought by this condition to realize his own fault and to determine to confess it and go back to right living under his father's command. So sometimes when we are willful, the Lord must permit us to suffer the penalties which belong to our evil ways, in order that we may see their true nature and be brought back to Him. When we come into a state of genuine repentance, the Lord's love comes out to meet us with forgiveness and rejoicing, restoring us to our place, clothing us again in the garments of true thoughts, and giving us a new love of doing good, represented by the fatted calf.

The elder son who remained at home represented the Pharisees, and pictures the Pharisee in us. When we live an outwardly correct life, doing the good works which community sentiment requires of us — as the elder son was "in the fields" — but are cold and critical toward those who have transgressed the external laws which we keep, and refuse to welcome them when they repent or even to believe in the possibility of their repentance or in the justice of forgiveness for them, then we are like the elder brother, for the Lord's love is not in our hearts and our good conduct is a mere hypocritical shell. See @AC 9391[6] and @AE 279[6].

The lesson in all three parables is that of the necessity of recognizing and repenting of our evils, and of the Lord's tender mercy and forgiveness which helps us all along the way and can make our sins as though they had never been. The elder brother of the parable, like the Pharisees, was not conscious of any fault in himself. As long as one is in that state, there is no possibility of his progressing into a spiritual state of life, no matter how carefully he may keep the letter of the law. The Lord's forgiving spirit is pressing upon us all the time, but it can gain no entrance until we see our need of being forgiven. And our confession must be more than a mere recognition that no man is perfect. We must see definite evils in ourselves and try to correct them. We must miss the particular "lost sheep" and the particular "silver coin," and we must, like the prodigal son, arise and go to our Father — lift our thoughts out of their worldly grooves and seek the Lord in His Word and ask to be helped to do right again. Each time we do this, we shall find the Lord's love waiting for us and experience the heavenly joy which is with the angels over one sinner that repented.

# 133:THE UNJUST STEWARD — Luke 16

## INTRO

Both parables in our chapter are important. We have centered the lesson on the first because its meaning is so often questioned. The lesson of both is the same: "No servant can serve two masters." It is a very important lesson and a hard one to learn, for children and adults alike.

## Adult

The effort has been made in the Adult notes to give a constructive basis for the discussion of the first parable, which bothers many people. There are three current falsities which the chapter exposes clearly: (1) that man is inherently good and can shift the responsibility for his misdeeds to his environment and to other people; (2) that, since man can claim no merit for anything he does, all he can do is acknowledge the Lord as his savior, and therefore that he can throw himself on the divine mercy without living a good life; (3) that the Lord will somehow be able to save everyone eventually no matter how he has used his life in the world.

There are two well-known parables in our chapter for today.

The first is spoken to the disciples and the second to the Pharisees, but both teach the same lesson: "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." The emphasis in the two is different. In the first it is on what we may do while we are still in this world when we find that we have been serving mammon. In the other it is a stern warning that we must make our choice of master here, for the results are eternal. We might note that verse 13 - as well as Matthew 6:24 - should read "two lords" instead of "two masters." The Greek word is the same as that translated "lord" in John 13:13, where both master and lord are used, and Swedenborg tells us (@AC 9167[2]) that master is predicated of truth and lord of good. So the verse really means not "Ye cannot serve truth and falsity" but "Ye cannot serve good and evil."

Good people have often been puzzled and troubled by the parable of the unjust steward. The master in the parable commends what seems to be rank dishonesty, and the Lord advises the "children of light" to take a lesson in this instance from the "children of this world," and to make themselves friends of the "mammon of unrighteousness." Mammon is from an Aramaic word meaning "riches." It is used in the Bible to cover all forms of possessions — money, learning, social position — which men may acquire and which so commonly lead them into self-satisfaction and contempt for others.

In giving this parable the Lord was speaking to all of us who claim to be His disciples. For every one of us is His steward. All our possessions, all our abilities, our knowledge, our responsibilities and opportunities are given us by the Lord to use in His service. And we know that everyone of us is in some degree an unfaithful steward who has wasted his Lord's goods, using them selfishly instead of for the advancement of the Lord's kingdom on earth. From time to time, like the steward in the parable, we are brought up short and faced with our own unworthiness. The steward's words to himself in verse 3 are an interesting condemnation of the two "ways out" — both wrong — upon which Christian people have sometimes relied for salvation. "I cannot dig" — the idea that man is inherently good is false. "To beg I am ashamed" — it is unworthy of our human endowment to fall

back on the Lord's mercy and think there is nothing we need do toward repaying our debt to Him. The steward's decision is — under the circumstances of the misuse we have already made of our Lord's goods — the only wise one. His lord's debtors, whom he called in, represent all our abilities which should serve the Lord. The hundred measures of oil and wheat which they owe represent the full amount of love and goodness which in the beginning might have been produced by their means. The fifty and fourscore (eighty) measures represent all that we now find ourselves able to procure with them. In other words, our duty is to recognize and acknowledge that we owe everything we have to the Lord. and to determine from this time forth to do all we can to correct our past shortcomings and serve the Lord wholly. We cannot go on trying to serve God and mammon.

This is not an easy decision to make, but the second parable teaches us that it is a decision which must not be put off. We have seen that there are various kinds of riches — worldly possessions, natural learning, knowledges of spiritual things. All these may be used in the Lord's service or in the service of self. The Pharisees and scribes had all three kinds and used them all for the service of self. They thought of themselves as rich and better than others because of their knowledge of the Scriptures as well as because of their worldly riches. It was of them and of all like them that the Lord said: "How hard it is for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:24). To these are opposed the "poor in spirit," those who recognize their own lack of knowledge and goodness and look to the Lord for help. In the second parable the rich man represents the Pharisees and all who, like them, feel that they do not need to be forgiven and taught by the Lord. The beggar Lazarus, whose name means "whom God helps," represents all those who feel themselves spiritually poor and weak and who "hunger and thirst after righteousness." The purple and fine linen in which the rich man was clothed picture the knowledges of good and truth which he possessed. The sores of Lazarus are the external evils into which we fall for lack of knowledge of what is right, the dogs which licked his sores the efforts of the merely natural good impulses to correct our outward conduct. There are many passages in the writings which explain these details. See @AC 9231[3], 9467[5]; @HH 365; @TCR 215; @DSS 40.

The rich man did not go to hell because of his material riches, but because his whole enjoyment was in worldly and selfish satisfactions. Lazarus did not go to heaven because of his material poverty, but because he longed for even a little knowledge of how to be good — the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. The great gulf that was fixed between the two in the other world was a spiritual gulf. In @AC 10187 we are told that those in evils cannot stand the sphere of good. The Lord does not fix the great gulf. We fix it ourselves by the kind of life we have cultivated in this world. If we so live here that our whole delight comes to be in the satisfactions which we can get for ourselves, we shall find no more delight in heaven than we found in unselfish goodness here. If we have ever tried to speak of the Lord and the Word or even to give a little friendly advice to one bent upon having his own selfish way in some matter, we know how impossible it would have been for Lazarus to carry even a drop of pure water across the gulf to the rich man in hell. When we tell someone that in the other life people can go where they want to go, the immediate response is, "But then, of course, everyone will go to heaven." But the evil will not want to go to heaven any more there than they do here. They would not enjoy the company of angels any more than they enjoy the company of heavenly people in this world. The gulf is fixed in them. They have formed in themselves no capacity for enjoying the things of heaven. The only delights they enjoy are those they find in hell.

Many people think, as did the rich man in the parable, that we could be shown by miracles the

realities of the other life, and that the Lord should so convince us. Swedenborg tells us very plainly in @AC 7290, as well as in other places, both the reason why miracles were performed in the Lord's time and the reason why they are not orderly today. The Lord has given us the Word. Anyone who goes to it with the sincere desire to be instructed will learn from it the way to heaven. If we do not learn from the Word, it is because we do not choose to have our selfish desires crossed by the Lord's laws, because we want to go our own way. And if this selfish desire is in our hearts, we shall reject everything which opposes it.

## 134:PALM SUNDAY — Luke 19

### INTRO

As the story of Zacchaeus is a very important and helpful one and is told only in Luke, part of the lesson time should be spent on it in all classes. It points up the preparation we should all make for receiving the Lord as our king, just as the cleansing of the temple shows what actually happens as soon as He has entered our hearts and minds to rule there.

### Adult

The story of the actual entry into Jerusalem, while it should not be slighted, is so familiar to all the Adults that it need take up little of the class time, while the story and parable with which it is introduced are given only in Luke and therefore should be developed. The teacher will find plenty of discussion material in them.

In our chapter for today the Lord, on His way to Jerusalem for the last time, came to Jericho, that city near the Jordan which Swedenborg tells us represents instruction in the knowledges of good and truth and consequently the good of life, because no one can be instructed in the truths of doctrine who is not in the good of life (@AE 700[15]). We recall that in the parable of the Good Samaritan to go down from Jerusalem to Jericho meant to try to put spiritual knowledge into practice in outward conduct. The Lord had been teaching and healing in Galilee and in the cross—Jordan country — which represent the outer plane of life — and now He was ascending to Jerusalem for His deepest temptation and His greatest victory. At Jericho He found Zacchaeus the publican. Zacchaeus was rich in this world's goods, but he was "little of stature." Nevertheless, when he heard that the Lord was passing by, he "sought to see Jesus who he was." That is, he had a sincere desire to know the truth in regard to the Lord. The sycamore tree into which he climbed — an inferior type of fig — represents the external kind of truth and good of which the worldly man is capable (@AE 403, 805[10]). So we may think of Zacchaeus as a man lacking in spirituality who yet recognizes that external good works are "on the Lord's way," and determines to practice them, not from selfish motives, but to help him gain a better knowledge of the Lord. When he did see the Lord and heard that the Lord wished to enter his house, he received Him joyfully and immediately recognized and determined to correct his past evils. So the Lord could say to him, "This day is salvation come to this house."

The parable of the pounds is similar to the parable of the talents, but it is not identical. The emphasis here is on equality of opportunity. Each man was given a "pound" [actually a mina, worth about twenty dollars]. In @AE 675[7-9] we have a simple statement of the correspondence of this parable: "The ten servants' whom the nobleman going into a far country called to him, mean all

who are in the world, and in particular, all who are of the church ... 'the ten pounds that he pays to the ten servants to trade with' signify all the knowledges of truth and good from the Word, with the ability to perceive them ... and 'to trade' signifies by means of these to acquire intelligence and wisdom; those who acquire much are meant by the servant who from a pound gained ten pounds; and those who acquire some are meant by him who from a pound gained five pounds ... the 'cities which are said to be given them' signifies intelligence and wisdom, and life and happiness therefrom ... Those who do not acquire spiritual intelligence in the world through the knowledges of truth and good from the Word are evil." This parable is a picture of the way in which the Lord deals with each of us. In @DP 210 the reason for this is given and strikingly illustrated: "Man would not be man except for the appearance to him that he lives from himself, and therefore thinks and wills and speaks and acts as if from himself. From this it follows that unless man, as if from his own prudence, directs all things belonging to his employment and life, he can not be led and directed by the @DP ; for he would be like one standing with relaxed hands, opened mouth, closed eyes, and breath indrawn, awaiting influx. Thus he would divest himself of humanity, which he has from the perception and sensation that he lives, thinks, wills, speaks, and acts as if from himself: he would also divest himself of his two faculties, liberty and rationality, by which he is distinguished from the beasts."

The story of the last week of the Lord's life on earth is told in Luke in considerable detail, and we should all read and meditate upon it during this coming week, which the whole Christian world recognizes as Holy Week, and accepts as a period of special thoughtfulness and self-examination. The week begins today with Palm Sunday, the commemoration of the Lord's triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

The Lord's work on earth was almost finished. There remained the final temptation and then the full glorification or union with the Father. Many of the common people and a few of the leaders accepted Him as the Messiah. On Palm Sunday the Lord permitted His disciples to receive Him as their king, entering Jerusalem upon a donkey — the beast of judges and kings — amid the worship of the people. He knew the dark days ahead of Him and that the shouting throng would desert Him, but His mission was to fulfill the Old Testament Scriptures, and the manner of His entry into Jerusalem had been foretold (Zechariah 9:9). And the letter of the Word was but the outer form of the truth which His life was revealing. Every act and word of His was to serve for the instruction of men for all time. He entered Jerusalem as a king as a symbol that divine truth must enter our hearts and minds as absolute ruler. The acknowledgment of the authority of the Lord's truth is essential to the Christian life.

Swedenborg tells us that the donkey represents the affection for truth in the natural man and her colt rational truth which springs from this affection, or that the donkey and her colt symbolize "the natural man as to good and truth" (@AC 2781[7-9]). The Lord alone completely subjected the natural man; so the donkey was one "whereon yet never man sat," and the Lord's riding into Jerusalem in this way pictures His subordination of all thoughts which came from the natural. The disciples placed their garments under Him and the throng that came out to meet Him cast their garments in His path. So our garments — the thoughts and ideas which are the expression of our individual personalities — should be submitted to the Lord and made to conform to His way. The palm branches which the multitude brought (John 12:13) were symbols of the recognition that divine truth was present in the Lord (@AR 367). And the glorification "Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest" represents the true disciple's acknowledgment that "in Jesus Christ dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily," and that by

His life on earth He brought the heavens and hells into order, fulfilling the promise made by the angels at His birth. The Lord's entry into Jerusalem was significant in every detail.

"And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it." The Lord's deepest grief was because men refused to see the things which belonged to their peace. He came into the world not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. On the cross He said, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." The Lord had no desire to punish the people for their rejection of Him, but even to the last He longed to open their eyes that they might see the precipice on which they were standing. So, even in the last week of His life on earth the Lord cleansed the temple, driving out those who bought and sold, as a symbol of what His truth must do in the temple of our souls.

## 135:EASTER — Luke 24:1-12

### INTRO

This lesson is prepared with a view to covering the events of Holy Week rather than giving the meaning of the resurrection, which will be emphasized in the next lesson. In Sunday school, the story of Holy Week should be covered briefly, and the teacher should be prepared to do more with the resurrection itself.

### Adult

The effort has been made in the Adult notes to cover the major questions which people ask concerning the Lord's crucifixion and resurrection. It is suggested that the teacher ask the class for questions to begin with and take up whatever phase of the story the questions suggest. The teacher should of course be prepared, if there are no immediate questions, to outline briefly the events of Holy Week and then discuss the meaning of the resurrection for the world and for the individual.

We should not pass from the Palm Sunday to the Easter lesson without having clearly in mind the events of the last week of the Lord's earthly life and their general significance. The week began and ended in triumph, but in between — in the space of a few short days — came the culmination of the evil states of the church and the Lord's last and deepest temptation, which was the longing to save men even against their wills.

The first two days of that week the Lord spent teaching in the temple, unhesitatingly exposing the worldliness and hypocrisy of the scribes, Pharisees, and priests. At night He went out to Bethany and lodged with Mary and Martha and their brother Lazarus. On Thursday evening He came into the city again and ate the Passover feast with His twelve apostles. At that feast He laid the ritual basis for the transfer of His presence to the Christian Church by instituting the Holy Supper to take the place of all the sacrifices and feasts, telling His apostles plainly that it was a symbol of His own sacrifice, and that they were to observe it in recognition of the fact that He gave His life for them: "This do in remembrance of me." He also told them that the bread represented His body and the wine His blood. We recall that the paschal lamb represented innocence, which is the good of love to the Lord, and that its blood sprinkled upon the doorposts represented divine truth applied to life. The Lord is love and wisdom, His body representing His love and His blood His wisdom or truth. The bread and wine of the Holy Supper have the same representation. So when we partake of the

Holy Supper we are testifying to the fact that we recognize that all good and truth are the Lord's, and expressing our wish to receive them from Him.

We are told that throughout the period of the ancient Jewish Church the Lord was present in the world through the correspondence of their worship, because the interior life of men was so perverted that He could no longer be conjoined to them in any interior way. But by His life on earth He put in order the spiritual forces which had been perverting man's internal life and so opened the way to genuine conjunction. From that time on, it was no longer necessary for men to observe the detailed rituals of that church, since they could live out the Lord's love and truth in their daily lives in affection, thought, and conduct. But still some formal, periodic recognition and worship are necessary to keep ever in our minds our dependence upon the Lord, to keep us from setting ourselves up as good and wise. So we have our church services, and particularly we have the sacraments of Baptism and the Holy Supper, which the Lord Himself ordained. If we observe these with an understanding of their meaning and a sincere desire to learn about the Lord and to do His will, they become effective means of conjoining us to the Lord. They are necessary to the Lord's closest presence with us. If we sincerely wish to follow the Lord, we shall always look forward to fulfilling this outward symbol of His presence with us. It is a spiritual feast to which the Lord invites us, and He promises to be present with us when we partake of it: "That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom" (@TCR 702-710; @AE 329).

Swedenborg links together the temptation at Gethsemane and the temptation on the cross as constituting the last great temptation of the Lord. The Lord assumed a human in order to meet temptations and overcome them, for the hells could have no possible access to the Divine in itself. Also, the Lord as to His assumed human had to be in freedom just as we are in freedom, if He was to meet and overcome the forces of the hells. So — at times called states of "exinanition" — He was conscious only on the plane of the assumed human, and at such times He prayed to the Father and struggled as a man against the attacks made by the hells upon that human. Such was the final struggle. In the Garden of Gethsemane He prayed that the "cup" - the temptation of the cross — might be removed from Him if it were the Father's will, just as we pray daily, "Lead us not into temptation." He felt, as we feel it, the weakness of the human nature and the strength of evil. But He also prayed, "nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done." "And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven strengthening him." Swedenborg says that the angel was the divine of the Lord, of which He always became conscious again when He was victorious in temptation, every state of exinanition being followed by a state of "glorification." The temptation of the cross and that of Gethsemane were not a shrinking from physical suffering or even from the sorrow of desertion by His followers and misrepresentation before the people, but the temptation to show forth His power and compel the world to see and be saved (@AC 2821, 10528).

To have yielded to this temptation and avoided the cross would have been to defeat the whole purpose of His incarnation. Elsewhere we read, "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour." (John 12:27) The Lord did not come into the world to compel men to believe in Him but by passing through all men's possible states and overcoming all their temptations to enable them to overcome in His strength. He passed through death to show its powerlessness to destroy the real man. He permitted His enemies to do their worst to show how ineffectual that worst was.

The Lord was tried before three tribunals: the Sanhedrin, Herod, and Pilate. The council, composed of the chief priests and elders, actually condemned Him; the others merely consented to His crucifixion. Priests always represent the will side, and the priests in the time of the perverted

church picture evil in the will. This is what really condemns the Lord and rejects Him. The Lord told the priests explicitly that He was the Christ, and they took that very claim as their excuse for condemning Him. The evil will recognizes the claim of the Lord to divine authority and for that very reason rejects Him. Herod, the Jewish ruler, represents the false principle which governs the selfish life. He was anxious to see Jesus, hoping for a miracle, and asked Him many questions, but the Lord gave him no answer. So the rational of an evil man may examine the testimony concerning the Lord out of curiosity, but cannot possibly receive any enlightenment. Pilate, the Roman governor, symbol of worldliness ruling in the outward life, also recognized the Lord's claim to be divine and actually found no fault in Him, but was willing for his own interests to concur in the judgment of the evil will, washing his hands of the whole question.

The passion of the cross was the final temptation necessary to the complete overcoming of the power of evil which attacked the Lord through the assumed human. By it He put off finally all of the finite humanity and united His own Human to the Divine, completing the process of glorification which had been going on throughout His life, as He met and overcame temptations. The earthquake (Matthew 28:2) pictured a complete change in the state of the church which took place at that time (@AE 400). The darkness at the time of the Lord's death represented the falsities of the last time of that church era. The parting of the Lord's garments among the soldiers represented the picking to pieces of the letter of the Word by those who profess to accept it, and the casting of lots for the inner vesture, woven without seam, represents the fact that the internal sense could not be injured. The two thieves on the Lord's right hand and on His left are like the sheep and the goats, those who are saved by genuine acknowledgment of Him and those who are lost because they reject Him. The rending of the veil of the temple represents "that the Lord entered into the Divine Itself by dispersing all appearances; and that He at the same time opened the way to His Divine Itself through His Human made Divine." (@AC 2576[5]) Before the crucifixion, the Lord could reach men only through the mediation of the heavens, always appearing to them in the form of an angel, but after the crucifixion the Lord could come in direct contact with men in His divine human. It is in this sense that Jesus Christ is the mediator. If the Lord had not passed through the states experienced in the death on the cross, there would still have been temptations possible to men through which He had not showed the way, states which He could not reach directly. Now we have direct access to divine power in our every possible need, and in Jesus Christ glorified we can see our heavenly Father face to face.

We know that without the resurrection the founding of the Christian Church would not have taken place. The Gospels show clearly that in spite of the plain statements of the Lord as to His death and resurrection, the crucifixion left the disciples in a state of doubt and discouragement. So doubtful were the apostles that they would not believe the statements of those who first learned that the Lord was risen. They had to be convinced by the evidence of their own eyes. The testimony of the Gospels is quite contrary to the claim of materialistic critics that the apostles made up the story of the resurrection. After the resurrection they were ready to live and die for their faith in the Lord and His teachings. The fact that a small group of men, simple for the most part and not at all remarkable intellectually, could go out into a world of strangers and, in spite of persecution and even the death of some of them convince so many of the truth of their message that the Christian Church was permanently established is a sufficient testimony to their own conviction as well as to the power of the message.

What did the resurrection mean to the disciples? It meant that the Lord was really the Messiah, as they had believed, that all His promises and words were true, that He was master over the grave,

that He was unchanged, still the loving friend and tender Father of His "little children," that He was present with them even when they could not see Him, that death was the gateway to a more glorious life, and that nothing which men could do to them could affect their eternal happiness if they remained true to Him. In the strength of this assurance they went forth. In the strength of this assurance the Christian Church was established and grew. Take away belief in the resurrection with all that it implies, and Christianity becomes a mere man-made philosophy, powerless to transcend the level of civil and moral life, with no strength for the present or power for the future.

Let us examine a little more fully the meaning of this event which we celebrate on Easter Sunday. The Lord had told His disciples that He would pass through death and rise again on the third day. He had said, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father." (John 10:17-18) He had several times shown His power to raise men from the dead, but to lay down His own life and take it again was another thing. The mockers at the cross recognized this when they said, "He saved others; himself he can not save." The disciples recognized it by giving up hope after the crucifixion. When the Lord rose without the help of any outside agency, He proved that He had life in Himself as no finite human being has. Swedenborg in many numbers notes the difference between the Lord's resurrection and the resurrection of men (@DLove 35, @AC 25, 108, 1729, 2083, 5078, and others). Only God has life in Himself (@DLW 4-6), and the Lord's resurrection therefore showed Him to be God. So Thomas, when finally convinced of the reality of the risen Lord, said "My Lord and my God" (John 20:38).

The certainty that the Lord Jesus Christ is God immediately gives all His words and promises final divine authority. If Jesus had been a mere man, no matter how great and good, He might have been mistaken. But the Lord makes no mistakes. We can be perfectly sure, as the apostles were, that if we follow the Lord and trust in Him, all will be well with us, and that, whatever may happen to us in this world, our efforts to do right will bear fruit and will be crowned with eternal life. Some men claim that belief in another life is an "escape mechanism," a fiction invented by men to help them endure the hardship and injustice of life. Rather, it is a reasonable assumption from the general order of the universe, in which struggle is essential to growth and development, and men voluntarily sacrifice lesser things in the present for greater things in the future. The Lord's resurrection makes this belief a certainty instead of an assumption. "Because I live, ye shall live also."

If we genuinely believe in the Lord's resurrection, we shall not only not fear death, but we shall look forward to it as the crown of life. But the resurrection gives us more help than this. It proves to us that the Lord not only came to earth many centuries ago and lived for a few years in a human form similar to ours, but that He still lives among us in His divine humanity, the same wise, strong person whom the apostles knew and followed. They did not see Him again after the ascension, but they knew He was with them. We do not need to think of God as some far-off being or as some impersonal force. We can think of Him as a man, in whose image we are made, a loving Father, always watching over us and standing near ready to help, if we turn to Him. "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matthew 18:20) "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." (Matthew 28:20)

# 136:THE WALK TO EMMAUS — Luke 24:13-53

## INTRO

The teacher will simply need to review briefly the story of the last week of the Lord's life and the Easter story, as an introduction to this lesson.

## Adult

Possible discussion topics are the nature of the Lord's post—resurrection body, the opening of the Scriptures, and the charge to "tarry in Jerusalem." This charge and the promise of the Holy Spirit were literally fulfilled for the apostles. They should be spiritually fulfilled for us.

Our lesson today is a portion of the Gospel of Luke which we all need to study and make part of our equipment as New Churchmen, as well as to ponder for its personal meaning for us. There have been differences of opinion in the church as to the nature of the Lord's post—resurrection body, and our chapter puts this problem squarely before us. The body was gone from the tomb, but the linen cloths in which it had been wrapped were left. The two disciples on the way to Emmaus walked and talked with the Lord for some time without recognizing Him. As soon as they did recognize Him in the breaking of bread, He vanished from their sight. He appeared suddenly standing in the midst of the apostles. The body in which the Lord appeared after the resurrection was obviously not the finite physical body which He had worn before the crucifixion. Yet it was more than the spiritual body in which each of us lives after death. He told the apostles to handle Him, and said, "A spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have." And He also ate in their presence. Swedenborg tells us that the Lord, by the process of glorification, made the very "ultimates" divine and so rose with the whole body. But the divine body is necessarily infinite, and matter is finite. There we have our problem — a challenging one — about which we may and do come to different conclusions in this world. But without solving it we may be sure that the facts by which it is presented are all true, and these facts give us the assurance that the Lord is present in the world actually, as He says in Matthew: "Lo, I am with you always." By His life in the world He not only overcame the hells, but He established a direct, permanent, personal contact with men on earth which He had not had before.

The two on the way to Emmaus did not at first recognize the Lord, but as He explained the Scriptures to them, their hearts burned within them, and later they knew Him in breaking of bread. The fact that they urged Him to abide with them pictures their desire to preserve the truth which they were receiving, and their sitting and eating with Him their desire to apply it to life, and thus they received good from Him and so recognized Him. Swedenborg tells us that to break bread and give it to the disciples signifies "to instruct in the good and truth of faith, by which the Lord appears" (@AC 9412).

The New Church accepts this story and the incidents which follow as the Lord's own testimony to the fact that the Word has an internal meaning, and that the whole of the Word of the Old Testament treats inmost of Him. He said that He came to fulfill the Law and the Prophets, and now we are told that, "Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself," and later: "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses,

and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures." We think what a wonderful privilege it must have been to hear the Lord Himself expound the Scriptures; but today we have that same privilege, if we will make the preparation necessary to enjoy it, for the Lord in His Second Coming has opened the Scriptures so that all who will may understand them.

In Acts 1:3 we are told that forty days elapsed between the resurrection and the ascension. The Gospel of John records several appearances of the Lord not mentioned in the other Gospels. The instruction given the disciples during these days was of a more interior character than before and was designed to strengthen them for their mission. Then the Lord led them out as far as Bethany, and was parted from them and carried up to heaven. The faith of His disciples had now reached a point where His visible presence was no longer necessary to them. Indeed, He did not want them to depend upon His visible presence. He tells Thomas, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." And John adds, "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." (John 20:29-31) The Lord must ascend in our minds. We must not cling to the thought of His earthly life as something that happened long ago, to the thought of His infancy, childhood, miracles, and suffering on the cross as the reason for our loyalty to Him. These all have their place in preparing us for His service, and in the internal sense they describe the stages through which our concept of the Lord must pass if we make orderly progress in the Christian life. But our thought of the Lord should rise above the merely natural phenomena of His life and center in His glorified human, of which we have a correspondential picture in the first chapter of Revelation. The Lord is not only our personal friend and savior; He is our heavenly king. As Isaiah tells us (Isaiah 9:6): "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." The Bible story does not leave the Lord hanging on the cross. It goes on through the resurrection to the ascension. The Christian thought and the Christian appeal should never leave the Lord on the cross. We should not give the Lord pity; we should give Him worship.

The last promise of the Lord to His apostles was the promise of the gift of the Holy Spirit. They were told to tarry in Jerusalem until they should be endued with power from on high. Jerusalem represents doctrine. We must all tarry in the study and practice of doctrine until the Lord's power can come to us through it. Divine love works always in accordance with divine wisdom. We can do no more good than we know how to do. If we go forth with our own ideas, merely using such passages from the Word and from the writings as we think support what we have decided to believe, we may do more harm than good. The truth is not always what we wish to believe, and we do not arrive at the truth by our own observation and reasoning. We too may go forth "in the power of the Spirit," but the spirit comes to us only through the Word, and in this new age through the Word as opened for us with the help of the writings. Some scholars today try to change the Word or discount certain passages in it so that it will mean what they think it ought to mean. And the same destructive method may be used with regard to the writings of Swedenborg. But we should see clearly that these attempts spring from the pride of self-intelligence and are falsifications of the truth.

We may read in Acts 2 of the literal fulfillment of the promise to the apostles made in our chapter. The crown of Christian discipleship is the ability to bring the Lord's truth to others, to bring others to the recognition of the Lord and to acquaintance with the means of learning of Him. To have this power we must put self aside. Our hearts and minds must be "continually in the temple, praising

and blessing God."

# 137:THE WORD MADE FLESH — John 1

## INTRO

Remind the children of Jonah's attitude toward the Ninevites, since it was that attitude among the people which finally necessitated the Lord's coming. The Christmas stories should be mentioned and the fact noted that no actual account of the external circumstances of the Lord's birth is given in the Gospel of John. The first verse of the chapter may be used in all classes as the basis on which to build the lesson.

## Adult

The teacher will decide which part of this lesson will be most helpful for discussion with his particular class. For adults who are familiar with the doctrine of the Lord, a brief treatment of the first fourteen verses would be sufficient, and time could be given to the rest of the chapter. For young adults and especially for newcomers the first part of the lesson is the essential topic.

The Gospels give us three accounts of the Lord's Advent. Matthew and Luke are concerned principally with the external events which attended it and with its reception. John deals with its nature and significance. John's whole Gospel is of a different character from the others. He could be inspired to write in this way because of his personal turn of mind. We can see his difference from the other apostles if we compare the Epistles of John with those of Peter, for example. John's letters are full of love and are exhortations to love and trust. In making this comparison, however, we should also note how evident is the difference between the books with an inner sense and those without it. John's Epistles are written in the first person throughout. It is John who speaks. But the writer of the Gospel is nowhere apparent as John, and although we do find the first person occasionally in the book of Revelation, it is never to give us John's thoughts, but only by way of attesting the genuineness of the visions recorded.

The letter of the Word gives us a good many facts concerning the life of the apostle John. He was the son of Zebedee and Salome, and with his brother James was called by the Lord from fishing, immediately after the calling of Peter and Andrew. He was one of the three chosen to witness the transfiguration of the Lord and the miracle of the raising of the daughter of Jairus. He was the beloved disciple who leaned on the Lord's breast at the Last Supper, and the one to whom the Lord entrusted the future care of Mary at the time of the crucifixion. Other records tell us that he remained at Jerusalem for some years after the ascension and then went forth as a missionary, his work being particularly centered about Ephesus. In his extreme old age he was banished to the island of Patmos, where he was given the visions recorded in the book of Revelation. He is thought to have been about twenty-five when he was called, and to have lived to the age of ninety-five. He was perhaps the most devoted, zealous, and spiritual of the Lord's followers.

Much is said in the writings about the correspondence of the apostle John. Peter, James, and John represent "faith, charity, and the good of charity" (@AC 2135). Elsewhere (@AC 6073[3]) John is said to represent "the goods or works of charity," or (in @AE 821[6]) "the church as to good works," or simply (@AC 3934[e]) "good works." But we should note that by "good works" Swedenborg never

means mere external benevolences. In @AC 10087[2] the "good of charity" pictured by John is defined as "to do good from willing good," and in @AE 45 we are told that John in the highest sense represents "the Lord as to doctrine." Thus it is evident that for works to be "good" they must be prompted by the Lord's love in the heart and directed by His truth in the mind.

The Gospel of John deals with the Lord's life in its divine rather than in its human aspect — with the coming to view in the world of divine love and wisdom in the person of Jesus Christ. It is largely concerned with the Lord's ministry in Judea, which represents the high plane of the will, and it reports in detail the Lord's intimate teaching to His immediate followers, especially during the last week of His earthly life. We note that in John's Gospel the Lord's entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday is described in chapter 12, with six chapters between that and the crucifixion story. The Gospel of John records fewer of the miracles than any other and no formal parables, being for the most part a statement of principles applicable particularly to the inner life in its clear recognition of the Lord.

John's account of the Advent is summed up in the statement that "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." In @AR 200 Swedenborg says: "All thought, speech, and writing, derives its essence and life from him who thinks, speaks, and writes; the man with his quality is therein; but the Lord alone is in the Word." Our chapter first identifies the Word with God as the creator. This is because divine love creates everything by means of divine wisdom, just as we make and do the things we wish by means of our knowledge and thought. "All things have been created from Divine love by means of Divine wisdom." (@DLove 1) The Word is spoken of as a person because it is the very form of God, in which divine love is expressed. We can express our love, our desires, only by means of our thoughts, and we know that we are our affections and thoughts, and that our bodies are merely the clothing we wear in this world and the means by which we act here.

Next we are told: "In him was life; and the life was the light of men." Divine love is life itself, and divine wisdom is the light of that love, just as the light of the natural world is from the natural sun, which is pure fire. So we are taught that the Lord is the source of all genuine enlightenment, that this light is meant for all, and that if people do not see it, it is only because they do not want to see. In John 3:19 the Lord tells Nicodemus: "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." The scribes and Pharisees had overlaid the Scriptures with a body of regulations calculated to exalt themselves, thus making the commandment of God of none effect by their tradition (Matthew 15:6). They rejected the Lord because He swept away these traditions and lived and spoke the Word in its purity, condemning their selfishness, arrogance, and hypocrisy. We become "sons of God" when we receive Him, because He then becomes the source of all our affections and thoughts. If we do not receive Him, we live in darkness and are a part of that world which knew Him not although it was made by Him.

Our chapter carries us on to the witness of John the Baptist and the calling of the first disciples, but again in a different way from the other Gospels. The actual baptism of the Lord by John is not mentioned, but the sign of the dove is part of John's testimony to the deity of the Lord. And in connection with this testimony we are given a fact recorded nowhere else — that Andrew was a disciple of John the Baptist and was brought by him to recognize the Lord and that Peter was led to the Lord by Andrew, and this before they were both called from their nets to devote themselves to His service. Peter represents faith and Andrew obedience. John's message of repentance leads to obedience and this in turn to recognition of the Lord and faith in Him.

The name Nathanael does not appear in any of the lists of the twelve apostles, but it is generally believed to have been the given name of Bartholomew - "the son of Tolmai" — who follows Philip in all the lists.

Note how the last verse of our chapter ties in with the first. It is a reminder of Jacob's ladder, which as we recall is a picture of the Word, by means of which we have conjunction with the Lord. Here again the Lord is identified with the Word. Later the Lord said (John 14:6): "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." This was just before He told Philip: "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?"

## **138:THE MIRACLE AT CANA — John 2:1-11**

### **INTRO**

Because we ought to cover the main facts of the Lord's life each year and the Gospel of John does not give the external story of His birth and the period of His growing up, the teacher should begin with the question, "Who was the Lord?" and then review briefly the incidents of the Lord's birth, the flight into Egypt, the return to Nazareth, the Lord's appearance in the temple at the age of twelve, His baptism, and the forty days of temptation in the wilderness, drawing as much as possible from the pupils' memories. In all classes before taking up today's lesson be sure the class understands what a miracle is and why the Lord performed miracles.

### **Adult**

The lessons suggested for the Seniors are needed by the Adults, too, especially the command to fill our "waterpots" with "water." We have an easygoing tendency to do external good works which our community will applaud rather than to make the effort to grow in understanding of what the Lord means by charity.

The miracle of our lesson is recorded only in the Gospel of John, and John calls it the "beginning of miracles." [KJV] In the other three Gospels we are told that the Lord's active ministry began immediately after His baptism and temptations in the wilderness, and that His baptism was the symbol of His putting off of the evils of the humanity He inherited from Mary. John does not specifically mention His baptism, but he gives more fully and clearly than any of the others the testimony of John the Baptist which was given at that time. And now we find Him, when asked to exert His divine power, first setting Himself apart from Mary. Swedenborg translates the Lord's words in verse 4, "Woman, what [belongs] to me and thee?" [following the Greek literally]. They are not a rebuke to Mary but a question for consideration, implying that His power to help the world was in no way derived from or through Mary. (See the quotation from @AC 2649 below.) Mary, as the Lord's mother, represents the church, by means of which He comes into the world, and it is in this character that she acts in our story as the agent between Him and the people at the feast. The finite humanity which the Lord took on from Mary was merely the instrument by means of which He came in contact with evil and overcame it. The church should perform the same service for us: it should bring the Lord's truth to view and help us to apply it to our evils so that, through His power, we may overcome them.

The result of this putting off of the finite humanity through overcoming its evil tendencies was the gradual union of the Son with the Father, of divine truth with divine love. It is for this reason that the first miracle takes place at a marriage feast, for marriage in its highest sense represents the union of divine love and divine wisdom. In our study of the divided kingdom we saw the evils which result when will and understanding are separated, when our good desires do not seek the truth by means of which they can be carried out, and our knowledge of the truth is not united with any desire to act according to it. In the Lord, love and wisdom are perfectly united. Thus true marriage is the highest possible state of heavenly happiness, and everything in the world is created with the desire for union with its complement. Throughout creation, the things which represent love and truth tend to unite. This is what makes the distinction between the two sexes and inspires both with the desire for marriage, men picturing the intellectual and women the affectional elements. So the highest and deepest joys of life come from marriage love and the greatest evils and disasters from its abuse.

The first two verses of our chapter give us a wonderful setting for the miracle. Three pictures completeness; so "the third day" suggests the fullness of time, the fact that the Lord had now reached a state in which He could be in His active ministry. Galilee pictures the external plane of life, and Cana, which means "reedy," suggests a mere external understanding, for a reed is the symbol of the ultimate (lowest) sense of the Word, which can be easily bent by the winds of fancy. The marriage, however, represents some union of good and truth, Mary's presence the fact that the church is recognized, and the fact that the Lord and His disciples were invited shows a desire for the presence of the Lord and knowledge of Him. So all these details together give us a picture of a person living an external life with a mere external knowledge of the Word, yet having a genuine desire to live rightly, recognizing the church, and desiring to know more of the Lord. This is the state of many in the Christian church today.

What does it lack? The question reminds us of the rich young man who told the Lord that he had kept the commandments from his youth up and asked Him: "What lack I yet?" (Matthew 19:20) What is lacking in this sort of life which the Lord can supply if we call upon Him and fulfill His conditions?

Mary said, "They have no wine." Water and wine both represent truth, but water is truth on the natural plane and wine is truth on the spiritual plane. The commandments, as the rich young man had kept them, were truths on the natural plane; he had recognized them as necessary to orderly social life, to the preservation of his self-respect and of the respect of the community. But when one sees the commandments not only as necessary external laws but as the Lord's laws, given through His mercy for the preservation and development of our souls and to be kept with love and trust in Him, they become spiritual laws, and the keeping of them brings spiritual satisfaction. The water has been changed into wine. The Lord told the rich young man to follow Him. Mary told the servants at the feast, "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it." This is following the Lord. "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." (John 15:14)

Then the Lord made use of the vessels which were at hand — six of them, representing the general knowledges essential to the orderly development of a spiritual life — and bade the servants fill them with water to the brim. He did not send them out for wine, but bade them use the water they had. "For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off ... But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it." (Deuteronomy 30:11-14) Then He said, "Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast." This is the command to use the truth we have to promote the union of good and truth, which is the

Lord's kingdom in the soul. As we do this, the water is changed into wine. We all know that knowledge increases with use. No one realizes this more than a Sunday school teacher. Things become clear to us as we try to give them to a class. When we have made the best preparation we can, and genuinely desire to teach and help our pupils, frequently the right thoughts, the right words seem to come to us by inspiration as we teach. Similarly with all of us when we are facing a difficult problem in our lives, if we use what truth we have, trusting in the Lord, the way opens before us, and what seemed a heavy burden becomes a blessing instead.

In theological terms we are told that influx is in proportion to efflux. (@AC 5828[3]) We are also told that the Lord is in everything in its use. If we recognize the Lord and obey Him, His presence will be in every service we perform, turning the water of our natural knowledge into the wine of spiritual truth, and as the water of truth from the letter of the Word cleanses our external lives, the wine of its internal truth will refresh our souls. We often have the experience described in verse 10 also. When we undertake a new service of some kind from merely external motives, our first enthusiasm often wanes and the wine becomes poorer and poorer, but if we are thinking instead of the Lord's service and the upbuilding of His kingdom, the best wine is saved to the last. In the New Church we all have our "six waterpots of stone," our general doctrines. And we must not neglect to fill these to the brim with "water" — to learn more and more truth, all our minds will hold. But the Lord is the vine. The true wine can come only from Him.

## **139:THE LORD AND NICODEMUS — John 3:1-21**

### **INTRO**

This lesson may be approached through what was said in the lesson on John 1 of the attitude of the religious leaders. Nicodemus was an exception, and yet even he did not quite want to stand openly for the Lord. This is a doctrinal lesson, more important for the older young people and adults but still interesting for young children.

### **Adult**

There are several good discussion topics here: the reason why people accept or reject the Lord, the meaning of reformation and regeneration and the necessity for them, the purpose of the Lord's coming, and the reason why people are saved or condemned.

Nicodemus was a Pharisee and a ruler of the Jews, yet he believed that the Lord came from God, and he came to Him for instruction. The Pharisees were a sect who adhered very strictly to the literal observance of the religious laws. We know from the Lord's own words that they were for the most part hypocrites (Matthew 23:25-28), keeping the law only externally and caring nothing for its spirit. Nicodemus was evidently altogether ignorant of the meaning of the Scriptures, for he did not understand what the Lord is talking about; yet he wanted to learn. His coming by night pictures his state of ignorance, as well as his fear of the judgment of his worldly associates. His recognition of the Lord's authority was based not upon any understanding of the Lord's character but upon the miracles He had performed. The Lord did not immediately call his attention to his cowardice in coming by night, but explained to him with divine patience just what his state was and what was

needful if he was to attain the kingdom of heaven. We should note, however, that His instruction led up to the statement in verse 21, which must have shown Nicodemus his weakness. The Lord did not advise Nicodemus, as He did the rich young man, to leave his wealth and position and follow Him, but He pointed out the necessity of a change in his inner attitudes.

That Nicodemus remained true to the Lord is attested by his attempt to defend Him later (John 7:50) and by the fact that he was one of the two rich men who cared for the Lord's body after the crucifixion (John 19:39). The Lord always recognizes our outward circumstances and the limitations they impose on us. Recall the permission given to Naaman the Syrian by Elisha (2 Kings 5:18-19) and the Lord's prayer for His disciples: "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil." (John 17:15)

We know that throughout the Word natural birth and development are analogous to regeneration, but the Jews had no such knowledge, although more ancient people had had it (@AC 4904[2]). Regeneration, which means rebirth, does not take place suddenly and all at once, but gradually and progressively, like natural conception, birth, and growth. Nothing could be clearer than Swedenborg's explanation of the Lord's teaching in our lesson: "No one can come into the kingdom of God unless he has been born again, for the reason that man by inheritance from his parents is born into evils of every kind, but with an ability to become spiritual by the removal of those evils; and unless he becomes spiritual, he cannot come into heaven. From being natural to become spiritual is to be born again or regenerated." (@DP 83) "Man is not born of his parents into spiritual life, but into natural life. Spiritual life consists in loving God above all things, and in loving his neighbor as himself, and this according to the precepts of faith, which the Lord has taught in the Word. But natural life consists in loving ourselves and the world more than the neighbor, yea, more than God Himself." (@NJHD 174) See also @NJHD 179 below. A detailed explanation of verses 5 to 8 of our chapter is given in @AC 10240.

We are familiar with the teaching concerning reformation and regeneration, for we had it in the stories of the wilderness wanderings and the conquest of the Holy Land. Reformation is the first part, our first duty, the setting in order of our outward lives in accordance with the truths of the Word. Regeneration begins when we begin to try to recognize and fight our inner foes, the evils and falsities in our hearts and minds, enabling the Lord's spirit to enter as we drive out the things which oppose it. This inflow of the Lord's spirit is compared to the wind. We do not see it but we are conscious of its effects. It may be noted that it is the same word in the Greek which is translated "spirit" in most of the chapter and "wind" in verse 8, the context suggesting the change in translation. The Greek word has both meanings. The same lesson is taught in the brief parable in Mark 4:26-29. Reformation and regeneration are also described in the work of John the Baptist and that of the Lord, and John the Baptist uses words similar to those in our chapter in Matthew 3:11. That only the Lord's spirit has power to raise men into heaven is taught in verses 11 to 15. The brazen serpent lifted up in the wilderness for the healing of the people was a symbol of the Lord's sensual nature which He lifted up by conquering all its temptations, thus showing us the way to heaven. The human which He took on in the world was in the inverted order described above, but in His life in the world He progressively glorified it, that we might see what the true order is and form our lives according to it. By the second birth, the birth of a new character from the Lord's spirit working within us, we become children of our heavenly Father. "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

Naturally we think of those teachings of the Word which oppose our selfish impulses as hard. The

Lord seems to condemn. Yet we have intelligence enough to see that this is not so. In Deuteronomy 6:24 we are told that the Lord commands us to keep His statutes and to fear Him "for our good always." The Lord came into the world in a human which He calls His Son to show us the nature of His love, to show us that He is always ready to give us His love if we will only open the way for it in our souls by putting aside the evils which shut Him out. He wants us to be happy, and He knows that happiness can never come through self-seeking. He teaches us this by every means in His power, by plain instruction, by parable, by miracle, by personal experience, by His own life in the world. If we believe in Him — really believe in Him so that we take His advice — we shall without fail be happy; we shall have "everlasting life." But if we do not believe in Him, we are "condemned," not by Him but by our own choice of worldliness and self-seeking, which are bound to lead us to unhappiness.

To believe in the Lord's "name" is to believe in His character, to believe that the love, humility, meekness, and gentleness which He manifested are truly divine characteristics, virtues to be cultivated. If we do not believe this, we are, as He says, "condemned already." For the love of self and the world which we cultivate instead of His virtues is in itself the fire of hell. Verses 19 to 21 are easily understood. We know that when we are bent upon having our own way, we will not listen to advice; we do not want the light of truth to show us that our way is wrong. This is the fundamental reason for disbelief in the Lord — unwillingness to recognize our evils and to correct our lives according to His teachings. Whenever we are anxious to cover up our deeds, or our thoughts, or our feelings, we may recognize it as a danger signal, for "he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God."

## **140:THE LORD AT JACOB'S WELL — John 4:1-42**

### **INTRO**

This story ties in with several of our earlier lessons, especially the deaths of Jacob and Joseph and the lesson on the conquest of Israel by Assyria. The teachers should read for background Genesis 33:18-20; 48:21-22; 50:24-26; Exodus 13:19; Joshua 24:32; and 2 Kings 17:24-41. These links connecting our chapter with the Old Testament story should be touched on in all classes but not at such length as to leave insufficient time to develop the lesson of the chapter.

### **Adult**

There are two especially important discussion topics for the Adults in this chapter: the necessity of recognizing the sole deity of Jesus Christ if we are to find the living water in the Word, and the receptiveness of the Samaritans in contrast to the closed minds of those of the established church. Both points have an immediate bearing upon our thought of our own church and of our responsibility in our relations with people of other churches.

When the kingdom of Israel was conquered by Assyria, all its people were carried away captive, never to return. To take their place in the land the king of Assyria sent in people from the East. We read this story in 2 Kings 17, which tells also how, when these foreigners were troubled by lions and believed it was because they did not know the manner of worship of the gods of this new land, a

priest of Israel was sent back to teach them, after which they worshiped Jehovah, but continued also to worship their own gods. Now we read in John 4 that after seven hundred years their descendants were still regarded as aliens and shunned with Pharisaic fanaticism. Yet Samaria was the central one of the three great divisions of the Holy Land, the link between Judea and Galilee. Judea pictures the inmost plane of our life — the will or motives — and Galilee the outmost — the conduct. Between these two is Samaria, the thought plane. When the Lord went from Judea to Galilee, "he must needs go through Samaria." Before we can carry out our desires in external conduct, we must think about them. We know how far astray we often go through trying to carry out our desires without thought. When we think of the Holy Land as picturing the church in us, Judea pictures the celestial church, worship of the Lord in the heart; Samaria the spiritual church, worship of the Lord in the mind; and Galilee the external church, worship of the Lord in the outward life. The spiritual church is the church which is in the affection of truth, and its associated good is the good of charity toward the neighbor (@AC 2702[5]; @AE 375[42]). When Israel was carried away captive, spiritual truth was lost, and the people who replaced the Israelites remained Gentiles, ignorant of the truth, although they had some knowledge of the letter of the Scriptures.

In the Lord's time the Samaritans were symbols of "the gentiles who were in the good of charity toward the neighbor" (@AE 375[42]). The parable of the Good Samaritan embodies this significance. So, too, the woman in our lesson today had been married five times and was now living with one not her husband. This pictures one who wishes to do good and who has tried one religious faith after another, and whose idea of truth still is not adequate to her desire. Her water jar pictures her limited doctrine. It is evident from the story that the Samaritans heard the Lord gladly and accepted Him as the Messiah; so they picture all Gentiles "that were to receive Divine truths from Him" (@AE 483[12]). Because of their humility and desire to be instructed they received the Lord much more readily than the Jews, and we know that the Christian Church grew up among the Gentiles, although it was begun among the Jews. The Lord told the woman of Samaria that the Jews had the knowledge which was necessary to salvation, but He also told her that worship at Jerusalem as well as worship on the mountain in Samaria would shortly be superseded by a different and more spiritual type of worship. Swedenborg tells us that every new dispensation, although it begins with the good remnant of the former one, develops principally among the well-disposed Gentiles, and he says that this will be true of the New Church.\*

[\*See the footnote to the Senior notes. -Editor]

The region around Sychar was hallowed ground. It was the "parcel" bought by Jacob from Hamor the Hivite, the father of Shechem, and given to Joseph as an extra portion (Genesis 48:22). Joseph's bones, brought up out of Egypt at the time of the Exodus, were buried there. Jacob's well, the "fountain of Jacob," is also mentioned in Deuteronomy 33:28. Jacob's well is a picture of the Word (@AC 2702[5]). The Samaritans possessed and used this well, picturing those who possess and use the Scriptures. But the well was deep. The fact that they drew their water from the well in small quantities and with great effort symbolizes the way many draw their truth from the Word. And, as the Lord said, "Whoever drinks of this water shall thirst again." Mere external knowledge, even of the Scriptures, does not satisfy. The Lord must "sit on the well" and give us "living" water. The truth must be made living by our consciousness of His loving presence in the Word. So long as we see only the external sense of the Word, its harsh commands, its condemnation of evil, its stories of wars and destruction, we draw refreshing truth from it only in small amounts and with great labor. But when we see the Lord within it, showing us the hideousness and destructiveness of evil only so that we may avoid it, and accommodating His truth to us in all our states, however far away from

Him we have willfully gone, so that we may be led back to the way of peace, then the truth becomes to us "a well of water springing up into everlasting life," satisfying us at every turn with knowledge of the Lord's loving purpose and guidance and of His providence over us.

In Revelation 22:17 the Lord's invitation to the woman of Samaria is given to all: "And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." The Christian Church, springing from the Lord's living presence with men, was to be an internal church, observing the external forms of worship not as religion itself, but as symbolic expressions of the true worship in the heart and mind. God is Spirit, dwelling within the good works of those who look to Him for guidance and power. He is with us just as really today as He was with the woman of Samaria, ready to give us living water if we ask Him.

It is interesting to consider the fact that, while the Lord talked of water to the Samaritan woman, who pictures goodness desiring truth, He talked to His disciples, who picture those instructed in truth, of living food. The food which they went away to the city to buy and which they offered Him on their return is a symbol of natural goodness, just as the water the woman drew for herself from Jacob's well was the symbol of natural truth. The Lord contrasted it with His food, just as He contrasted natural water with living water. The woman had charity and needed faith. The disciples had faith and needed charity. The Lord's food, the food which nourished His real life, was "to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." To do the Lord's will instead of our own is what nourishes and strengthens our spiritual bodies, our heavenly character. To forget self in doing the Lord's work is what brings happiness. The same lesson is taught in John 4:35-38. In @AE 911[16] Swedenborg tells us that these verses treat of the establishment of a new church, and that the one who labors is the Lord, and we enter into His labors. He, as we learn from the familiar parable, is the Lord, and we enter into His labors. He, as we learn from the familiar parable, is the sower.

Then, as if to give us a concrete example of the working of His Spirit, we are told how the Samaritans came to Him and urged Him to stay with them, and how they accepted Him as the Christ, the savior of the world. At first they believed because of the testimony of the woman, but afterward because they had heard Him themselves. Our first acceptance of the Lord should be from an impulse of the heart, but this must be followed by acceptance by the reason. John 4:26 is an important verse for us to remember, for people who do not wish to acknowledge the Lord as God sometimes claim that He never Himself said He was the Messiah. Only recognition of the Lord as the one God of heaven and earth harmonizes all the Scripture and enables us to go to the Word with confidence for guidance and strength and to receive it with joy.

## 141:THE POOL OF BETHESDA — John 5:1-16

### INTRO

The teachers should read the account of the Lord's second miracle in Galilee in John 4:43-54 and tell the classes about it after the review of the last lesson. There is a suggestion in John 2:23 that the Lord may have performed miracles in Jerusalem when He went down for the Passover, and this is borne out by John 4:45. John also tells of a cleansing of the temple in that first visit (John 2:13-16). These first chapters of John show us that the Lord went back and forth between Judea and Galilee frequently.

## Adult

By way of introduction the Adults may be interested in the presumed identification of the Pool of Bethesda given most fully in the Junior notes, and in the difference between the KJV translation and the original in John 5:2. (The Revised Standard Version says "sheep gate.") There are several obvious discussion topics in the lesson — notably the recognition of discouragement as a personal evil to be overcome. John 5:14 is also important for Adults. Read here @DP 231 on the seventh kind of profanation.

Again we have a lesson about water, but this time it is about water gathered into a pool, truth gathered in the memory, our knowledge of the Word. This pool of Bethesda is in Jerusalem near the sheep market, or sheep's gate. Spiritually, it is in the holy city of our minds and associated with our affections for innocence. Is not this true of our knowledge of the Word, stored up throughout our childhood when our minds are in innocent and open states? The same is suggested by the five "porches," five being the number which signifies both "a little" and "remains." Divine providence provides that every mind shall have such a "pool," such a body of truth from the Word, even though such knowledge may not have come by direct contact with the Word itself.

In these porches — at every point of access to the pool — lay a great multitude of impotent folk. How clearly this pictures the spiritual state of each one of us: a multitude of diseased affections and thoughts, blind, lame, and helpless, gathered around the little pool of truth which the Lord has stored up deep within us for their healing. For, we are told, "an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water." Most of the time the pool of divine truth lies quiet in our minds, but now and then, when our state and circumstances make it profitable for us, an angel, a messenger of the Lord, the Lord's spirit working in us for our regeneration, comes down and stirs the pool, quickening our consciousness of the truth. Swedenborg tells us that the troubling of the waters represents "vivification through acknowledgment and faith, thus also purification through truths" (@AC 10083[4]).

Then some one fault in us may be healed. The invalid who was most alert, who was watching most keenly for the moving of the waters, was the fortunate one; that is, the fault of which we are most keenly conscious and which we are most anxious to correct is the one which will be touched and healed by our quickened understanding of the truth. We cannot fight all our faults at once. The writings tell us that genuine repentance must go further than a general confession that we are sinners: it must single out one particular sin after another and fight it (@TCR 525). Our regeneration advances step by step. For "precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little" (Isaiah 28:10).

But there was one man at the pool who had been helpless for thirty-eight years and who had never been able to get to the water in time. He pictures some deeper evil in us which we feel helpless to fight. Each one of us has some such deep evil which we attack only halfheartedly, feeling that it is so much a part of us that we can never get rid of it. "I can't help it; I was born that way," we say. The thirty-eighth year suggests that we have enough remains of good and truth to overcome this evil if we will — represented by thirty - and that it is time for a new state to begin in us — represented by eight. It is at this point that the Lord Himself comes to us and says, "Wilt thou be made whole?" Do we really wish to get rid of our deeper evils? Do we wish to make a thorough job of our regeneration? Or are we content to attack the more obvious, superficial faults and to let our really serious shortcomings remain, excusing ourselves by pleading helplessness?

The Lord answered the man's excuses with a challenge: "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk." Does not this remind us of the Lord's words to Joshua, after his defeat at Ai: "Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face?" From the writings we learn that "to rise" signifies elevation, as from evil to good or from ignorance to intelligence (@AC 2401; 4481). We must lift up our hearts and minds out of the obscurity of worldly fears and doubts, and trust in the Lord's promises and power. Then we must raise what we know of the truth — the bed on which we lie — and take it with us actively in our effort to overcome our evils, just as David, confident that the Lord was on his side, used one smooth stone from the brook to slay Goliath. The Lord said to the disciples, when they asked why they could not cast out a certain devil: "Because of your unbelief; for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you." The mountain in this passage pictures our satisfaction with ourselves as we are, with our own qualities and our own ideas. We are often even secretly pleased with our deeper faults because we think of them as part of ourselves, as making us different from other people. This self-satisfaction is a great mountain in the way of our spiritual progress. So we must first be sure that we sincerely want to be made "whole," and then, looking confidently to the Lord for help, go forward actively with all the truth we have.

In this miracle we have one of the numerous instances in which the religious leaders found fault with the Lord for His use of the sabbath. They had added to the commandment in regard to the sabbath many traditions, which they had come to consider binding. The Lord disregarded these traditions and went about teaching and healing on the sabbath. In one argument with the scribes and Pharisees on the subject the Lord told them, "The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath." (Mark 2:27-28) The sabbath was indeed made for man. Men who do not observe the sabbath inevitably sink into a state of absorption in self and the world, which is the death promised to the sabbath-breaker, the death of all spiritual life. While we are in this world, the greater part of our time must necessarily be spent in taking care of ourselves and our families. We need one day in seven when we lay aside our concern with worldly affairs and think about the Lord and His kingdom. This is the purpose of the sabbath. The Lord performed so many miracles on the sabbath as a picture of the fact that the sabbath is a day peculiarly set aside for the healing of our souls.

The practical question of what we should or should not do on Sunday is a perennial one, everywhere complicated by custom and tradition. Every nation, every community, every family has its own ideas on the subject. When we adhere to these traditional ideas to the hindering of the Lord's work in our souls or in the souls of others we are doing as the people in Gospel days did. On the other hand, we must not use the Lord's statements about the sabbath as an excuse for doing anything we happen to want to do on Sunday. Nothing in the Lord's example gives us warrant for laziness, for selfish indulgence, for neglect of worship. "As his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day" (Luke 4:16). The sabbath should be a day of rest from worldly thoughts and activities, and a day of active approach to the Lord. We should welcome it as an opportunity to think and to learn of Him, to take stock of our souls, to cultivate our affections for the neighbor, and to strengthen our good resolutions in preparing for the coming week. It is the day of all days to "take up our bed and walk" spiritually.

## 142:THE MAN BORN BLIND — John 9

## INTRO

In this lesson not only the miracle itself but the argument to which it led give us important instruction. The teacher should read all the notes and try to give his pupils as much as possible and to impress the chapter as a whole upon their minds.

## Adult

The teacher will probably have to choose which of the topics covered in this chapter will be most helpful to his particular class for discussion. They are all vital questions: the spiritual meaning of blindness, the cause of afflictions, the necessity of belief in the Lord, and our responsibility for our choice.

The fact that this miracle and its consequences are described in so much detail suggests that the lessons it teaches are complex and far-reaching. We realize the truth of this even in reading the first three verses of the chapter. Here was a man born blind. Why? People are always asking why afflictions are permitted, especially to those apparently innocent. Many, contemplating the evils and the sorrows of the world, are tempted to deny the existence of a loving God. Others, like the disciples in the story, believing in God, can find no other explanation for afflictions than that they are the direct or indirect punishment for sin; they are merely in doubt as to whether the blame belongs to the individual or to his environment. But the Lord tells us: "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him." In the letter this points to the fact that the history of this man, as of all the people of that day, had been so guided by divine providence that the account of his healing might serve as a lesson to all future generations. But there is a deeper and more universal meaning than this. No one is held responsible for the evil tendencies which he inherits or for the falsities in which he is brought up. The conditions in which he is born, the circumstances by which he is surrounded are but the setting of his life work. Afflictions, like any other circumstances, are opportunities for the development of character - "that the works of God should be made manifest." We are individually responsible for what we do with the opportunities given us, for acknowledging and struggling against the evil tendencies in our hearts and for accepting the truth and following it as fast as we see it.

The character of the man of our story appears clearly to us as we read the chapter, but the Lord knew it before He performed the miracle. The very first verse reads, "And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth." Whenever we read that the Lord "saw," we know that it means that He saw the heart and mind as well as the outward condition. He saw in the blind man the humility and goodness and the desire for truth which would make it possible for him to see. His affliction had made him humble and gentle instead of proud and stiff-necked like the Pharisees. In John 6:29 we read: "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." The heart of the blind man was in a state open to belief; so the "works of God" could be made manifest in him. This is the object of everything which the Lord permits to come into our lives. Divine providence watches over us at every turn, seeking to check us when we are going in the wrong way, to show us our evils and our weakness, and to open our hearts and minds to Christ's way as the only way of happiness.

Blindness represents ignorance. We use the word in this way today — it is one of the simplest correspondences to illustrate. For example, we say "I see," when we mean, "I understand." We say "How blind I have been!" when we have been ignorant of the course of events leading up to a given

circumstance. We call a person "short-sighted" when he is ignorant of the consequences which are likely to follow a particular course of action. The man of our story had been blind from birth. This makes him a picture of one ignorant of spiritual truth, not from any unwillingness or laziness of his own, but because he has never had an opportunity to learn. In performing this miracle the Lord made use of three things: clay representing good — the "good ground" of the parable of the sower - which the Lord saw in the man's heart; saliva, water from the Lord's own mouth, representing a divine truth expressed in a form adapted to the external states of men, "truths from the sense of the letter of the Word" (@AE 239[19]); and the pool of Siloam in which the man washed off the clay representing the removal of false ideas by means of truth from the letter of the Word. This pool, like the pool of Bethesda, pictures the knowledge of the letter of the Word which we have stored up in our minds. It was at that time pure, fresh spring water and part of the water supply of Jerusalem, a symbol of the knowledge of the letter of the Word cleansing and satisfying the Holy City of the soul. Such knowledge, as we have seen before, is stored up by the Lord in each one of us, but one who has not had true spiritual instruction may not recognize its use and value; he may think of it as mere man-made morality and not connect it with the Lord and heaven. Until we make a living contact with the Lord and begin to set our lives in order according to the Word because He commands it, we remain spiritually blind. But once we begin to see, our experience leads to certainty.

The rest of the story shows in a wonderful way this development of belief. In the first place nothing that the Pharisees could say could outweigh the man's experience. They sought first to deny the fact of the miracle. Then they tried to discredit the means by which it was performed. And finally they called the man an ignorant sinner, and cast him out. The modern Pharisee is equally impervious to truth. When he comes in contact with one who has had a deep spiritual experience, he first tries to disprove it, then to "explain" it by natural or by unworthy causes, and finally he dismisses it altogether by calling the person a fool. He refuses to see the truth simply because he does not want to see it. But the man in our story was not to be shaken. He had his experience. He knew what he had been and what he was now: "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see." When one's eyes have been opened by experience to see spiritual truth, one knows its reality, and this knowledge gives him the power to penetrate the shallowness of the arguments which would reduce his experience to a mere natural occurrence.

Moreover, opposition served to clarify the man's own understanding of his experience and finally led him to recognize its true source. We find that he first spoke of the Lord as "a man that is called Jesus." But the questions of the Pharisees made him consider seriously who this man was, and presently he said of Him, "He is a prophet." Then as the Pharisees tried to discredit the Lord, the man saw more and more clearly that He was from heaven, and finally, when He again appeared, the man needed only His own assurance that He was the Son of God, "And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him."

The same can be true with us, once we have had a real experience of the illuminating power of the Word. Opposition — whether from other people or from worldly reasonings in our own minds, which are also "Pharisees" — merely serves to stimulate and to clarify our thought about our experiences, and ultimately we accept the Lord as God with us. People today often start with the idea that Jesus was a man like other men, but if they continue to study His teachings with a desire to learn how to live, they are inevitably led to recognize Him first as a prophet, then as in some way divine, and finally as God Himself. Men today who, like the Pharisees, are unwilling at heart to recognize any authority higher than themselves treat the record of the Lord's life and teachings just

as the Pharisees themselves treated the Lord and His work, although many of them claim to be followers of truth, just as the Pharisees claimed to be disciples of Moses. Of all such professed followers of the truth who reject the Lord from pride and self-will He says: "If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth."

## 143:THE GOOD SHEPHERD — John 10

### INTRO

All but the youngest classes are probably already familiar with this story. But even the best-known parts of the Word are inexhaustible in their meaning and yield new thoughts every time they are read.

### Adult

The teacher of this class should read also the Senior notes, for many adults are prone to be over-impressed with modern worldly reasoning and with Bible studies based on disbelief in the divine inspiration of the Word. The quotation on innocence at the end of the lesson notes may also be used as discussion material.

In the writings sheep are variously interpreted as "celestial things," "those in charity and thence in faith," "the good of the will," or simply "those in good." Lambs picture especially the good of innocence, that inmost affection which must be in everyone who enters heaven, and which especially reigns with the angels in the celestial heavens (@AE 314; @HH 276-283), the tender, gentle, loving spirit which does not trust in self but looks to the Lord alone for guidance. It has no selfish wish, and because this is the inmost quality of the Lord's love, He is so often called a lamb (John 1:29, 36; Isaiah 53:7; Revelation 5:6, 7:17). Because we must never forget that this quality is an essential part of true worship of the Lord, the people in Old Testament days were commanded to offer every day "two lambs of the first year without spot," one in the morning and one in the evening (Numbers 28:3-4). We keep this statute in spirit when we pray morning and evening, "Deliver us from evil," desiring to be kept from thinking or acting in any way which would injure the Lord or the neighbor. It is this love that saves us from bondage to evil and falsity; it was for the same reason that lamb was the meat of the feast of the Passover (Exodus 12:3-10). Because infants are the external embodiment of this love, a lamb was the appropriate offering for the birth of a child (Leviticus 12:6).

Those who guard and cherish this innocent love are called shepherds. The Lord is primarily the Good Shepherd, as we learn in our chapter for today, and in many other places in the Word He is called a shepherd (Psalm 23; Isaiah 40:11). We likewise know that the beautiful parable in Luke 15:3-7 teaches of His loving care. He sent the apostles forth as lambs among wolves (Luke 10:3), but we are promised that a time shall come when the wolf shall dwell with the lamb (Isaiah 11:6; 65:25), picturing the time when our evil affections will be completely restrained by the power of the Lord's love in our hearts. When we read of the Lord asking Peter if he loved Him, telling him three times to feed His sheep and His lambs (John 21:15-17), it is a solemn reminder that if we do not cherish tender and gentle affections in ourselves and others, we do not truly love the Lord. When He came into the world, those to whom His advent was first made known were shepherds keeping their flocks by night around Bethlehem. This means that those who in the midst of ignorance and

evil guard and cherish the good of innocence are prepared to recognize the Lord. Another interesting story in the Word is the coming of Joseph's brethren before Pharaoh, when they concealed their true calling of shepherds and said their trade had been keepers of cattle, because "every shepherd is an abomination to the Egyptians" (Genesis 56:34). This pictures the fact that the natural mind can recognize value in affections for useful work — represented by cattle — but has no use for the inner qualities of the heart. Throughout the Word the Lord's providence is pictured as feeding and cherishing the inmost affections for goodness, and as protecting and leading those in whom these affections are found.

In Jeremiah 23:1-4 we read a condemnation of false pastors or shepherds who neglect their duty and destroy and scatter the Lord's sheep, and we have there the promise of the Lord's coming to gather the sheep again into their folds. In our chapter for today the Lord presents Himself as the fulfillment of this prophecy. We have seen that He is the lamb, in that His inmost love is innocence. Now we find that He is also the Good Shepherd and the door of the sheepfold. He is the Good Shepherd in that He cares for and feeds the things that are His own in us; and He is the door in that He is the truth by which alone we can find the way into His fold, which is heaven. Those who seek to enter heaven without recognizing the Lord are thieves and robbers, claiming as their own what belongs solely to the Lord. His sheep hear His voice; those whose hearts are innocent recognize the Lord as God and obey Him. And "he calleth his own sheep by name"; i.e., He recognizes the true quality of each one. "To call the sheep by name" means to teach and to lead everyone who is in the good of charity according to the state of his love and wisdom." (@DP 230) "By me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." This means to draw close to the Lord in our hearts and to follow Him in our outward life; it reminds us of the familiar benediction: "The Lord keep our going out and our coming in from this time forth, and even forevermore." Those who would be true shepherds are, like the Lord, ready to give their life for the sheep, to sacrifice selfish desires when they threaten heavenly innocence. But the hireling, he who does good only for what he can get out of it, deserts the sheep in time of danger, cares for them only while it is obviously to his advantage to do so. The "other sheep ... which are not of this fold" refer to those whose minds must be satisfied, who are pictured in the advent stories by the Wise Men from the East who saw the star (@AC 3969). This whole chapter, like the twenty-third Psalm, is one of the most universally known and loved in the Word, because, whether we understand it or not, it appeals to the innocent states which the Lord has stored up in everyone from infancy, and which are the first to recognize Him.

The Pharisees were not of the Lord's sheep. They were evil shepherds and hirelings. When they questioned Him, it was not for the sake of learning the truth, but to draw from Him statements which they could condemn. So He often answered them in such a way as to point out their insincerity and if possible to make them judge their own conduct and motives. In one conversation He asked them to study and judge the works which He had done, and challenged them to find fault with His works. But He also declared plainly His oneness with the Father. Although this is exactly what they had asked Him to say, they immediately accused Him of blasphemy "because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God." People today who do not wish to accept the Lord's teachings as divine truth pretend to investigate His claim, but like the Pharisees they have their minds made up to start with, and as soon as they come upon a direct statement of His deity they say, "Impossible; no man could make such a claim; this must be a fiction of the apostles." They refuse, as the Pharisees did, to consider His works as evidence of the source of His power. They are not of His sheep; that is, they do not have in their hearts the humility and the innocent and trustful affection which open the mind to His voice. Here again we have the lesson that belief is primarily of the will.

"My sheep hear my voice." Those who really desire the Lord's guidance can find ample proof of His claim, but those who wish to guide themselves cannot be convinced by any type of proof.

# 144:THE RAISING OF LAZARUS — John 11:1-46

## INTRO

For all classes this story offers one of our best opportunities to give the doctrine of the future life. In our chapter the Lord shows clearly that He raised Lazarus in order to teach that we never die and that it is He alone who determines when our consciousness should be transferred from this world to the spiritual world.

## Adult

The Adult notes suggest several common questions which this story helps us to answer. These make good discussion topics. The teacher should also call attention to the connection of the story with the events which immediately followed it, especially in its bearing upon the attitude of the multitude on Palm Sunday and upon the determination of the chief priests to dispose of the Lord. Help will be found here in the Senior notes.

Three instances of the Lord's power to raise the dead are recorded in the Gospels: the raising of the widow's son at Nain (Luke 7:11-16); the raising of the daughter of Jairus (Matthew 9:18-26; Mark 5:22-43; Luke 8:41-56); and the raising of Lazarus, which is recorded only in John. The first two were performed in Galilee, and picture the Lord's power to restore to life the dead thoughts and affections of the external plane of our lives. But Lazarus lived in Bethany, close to Jerusalem, and was a beloved friend of the Lord, the brother of Mary and Martha, at whose house the Lord was often entertained, and this miracle pictures a more internal and spiritual work. In our reading of the story we should note that the scene is laid close to Jerusalem, that the time is near the end of the Lord's earthly life, that those concerned are believers and close friends of the Lord, and that throughout the story the Lord discloses to us the purpose governing the events. We should also note that, although many believed because of this miracle, those who opposed the Lord became even more violent against Him as a result of it. This illustrates the truth of Abraham's statement to the rich man in hell (Luke 16:31): "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." The same parable is further linked to our story by the fact that the beggar is called Lazarus, and Swedenborg tells us that the Lord chose the name for the beggar in the parable because of the Lazarus of our story, whom He loved (@AC 9231[3]; @AE 137[2]; @DSS 40[3]).

Throughout the story it is evident that the miracle was performed not in order that Lazarus might enjoy a few more years in this world, but that the disciples might see the Lord's power over death. This is the most obvious and external lesson which we may draw from the miracle. It is a fact that all life is from the Lord, that our times are in His hand (Psalm 31:15), that not a sparrow falls to the ground without our Father (Matthew 10:29). But the life of the body is of relative unimportance in relation to the life of the soul. In fact, the life of the soul scarcely becomes apparent until after the death of the body. So the angels, reading the Word, understand resurrection where we read "death,"

and death in a good sense always signifies resurrection. There is another kind of death, which is sometimes called in the Word the "second death." This is spiritual death, death to goodness and truth, resulting when evil in the will becomes conjoined to falsity in the understanding. From this death also the Lord wishes to raise us, and has power to raise us if we will believe in Him and obey Him. "For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye." (Ezekiel 18:32)

When the Lord came into the world, His truth had been so perverted by the religious leaders that even those who wished to do right were threatened with this spiritual death, because they could not find the truth by which to live. This state is pictured in our story. Martha and Mary represent the desire to serve the Lord — Martha an external type and Mary a more internal, spiritual type of affection. Their brother Lazarus pictures such truth as they had, and the fact that he fell sick and died means that even that truth failed and was lost. They sent for the Lord, but He tarried until they thought Lazarus was gone beyond recall. There are many people today brought up in beliefs so mingled with falsity that their beliefs cannot survive the questions of their adult minds. When these people see their faith threatened, they often pray that it may not be taken from them, and feel that somehow the Lord might save it for them if He would, as Martha and Mary both cried, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." But the Lord tarries purposely. He knows our condition, but He waits the fullness of time, until we are convinced that our old beliefs have no life in them. Then, if we continue to look to Him and believe in Him, as Martha and Mary did, He can perform the greater miracle of raising up our faith to new life and freeing it from the prejudices and habits of thought — the grave clothes — which had bound it in the sepulcher. Swedenborg tells us (@AC 2916[4]) that the raising of Lazarus "involves the raising up of a new church from the Gentiles." The ancient Jewish Church era had to be consummated before the first Christian Church could be raised up. The first Christian dispensation had to be consummated before the New Church could be raised up. Each new church has developed among those who realized the deadness of the old but still believed in the Lord and turned to Him with trust and obedience.

In connection with the story of Lazarus we are taught why the Lord often does not answer our petitions immediately. It is because He has higher things in store for us than the particular thing we want. He said to the disciples, "And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe." The disciples, as well as Martha and Mary, felt that the Lord could have kept Lazarus from dying, but the Lord wanted to show them that He had even greater power. We must all learn to "rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him" (Psalm 37:7), and we must learn that there is no bitterness of loss or depth of despair in which He cannot teach us and save us if we will let Him.

Then we have the Lord's answer to those who believe that all are to remain in their graves until some final resurrection day. For He told Martha, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." We know that this does not refer to the death of the body, for everyone must lay aside the material body before he can become really conscious of the life of heaven, but that it refers to spiritual death, the shutting out from the soul of the Lord's life, that life which alone can give eternal happiness. Those who live and believe in the Lord, whose hearts and minds are ordered according to His laws, are conscious of no interruption of that heavenly life when they lay aside the material body. For "this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." (John 17:3)

Again, our story suggests the answer to the question, "If Jesus was God, why did He pray to the Father, and why did He appear to suffer?" Our story tells us that Jesus "groaned in the spirit, and

was troubled," and that "Jesus wept," and in John 11:41 we are told that he "lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me." But He goes on immediately: "And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me." We know that the Lord, while He was in the world, was clothed with a finite humanity like ours. Bruce\* suggests that such manifestations as His groaning and weeping were the natural reactions of the finite humanity to the working of the Divine within, just as our efforts to live according to what we know of divine love and truth produce struggle and grief in our lower, selfish natures. The Lord, while He was in the world, did humanly grieve over the waywardness and faithlessness and blindness of those He sought to save - this was one of His most severe temptations — and in this story we are allowed to see it outwardly manifested, because we need to understand and recognize that the Lord underwent such a temptation and overcame it, refusing to tamper with the free will which His wisdom had implanted in man. We sometimes feel this temptation to bring people to our way of thinking by force. The Lord shows us His struggle and then immediately the victory and its source by His thanksgiving to the Father.

[\*Rev. William Bruce, Commentary on the Gospel of John, pp. 264-265. -Editor]

## **145:PALM SUNDAY — John 12:12-50**

### **INTRO**

The familiar Palm Sunday story is told very briefly in John. We should be sure all the classes are familiar with it and then go on to the rest of our chapter, which teaches more general spiritual lessons. All the teachers should read the Junior, Intermediate, and Senior notes for today, as a different portion of the chapter has been singled out for development in each, although the general lessons are the same.

### **Adult**

What is involved in being a Christian is perhaps the chief topic which this chapter presents to the Adults — what is meant by receiving the Lord as king, and our individual responsibility in the decisions which follow.

The Lord's triumphal entry into Jerusalem is recorded in all four Gospels, some giving more detail than others. John links it closely with the miracle of the raising of Lazarus, saying that many people hailed the Lord as the Messiah because He had performed this miracle. When we realize the Lord's power to bring us back from spiritual death, we are prepared to welcome Him into the "holy city" of our minds as king and savior. He comes riding upon a young donkey as a symbol of His subordination of natural reason, which the donkey represents, and is greeted with joy. Palm branches picture divine truth in the sense of the letter of the Word, and the waving of the palm branches suggests the joy which comes from the realization that the Lord's truth does bring life and happiness (@AC 8369; @AR 367). Hosanna means "save now."

The people, even the disciples, were still thinking of the Lord as a temporal king, one who would save them from their enemies and lead them to victory. Our first recognition of the Lord's power is often of this character. We are thinking of our own welfare, our own salvation. The Lord's entry into Jerusalem was "the beginning of the end." Our first full acceptance of the Lord is followed

immediately by temptations more severe than any we have known before. This is because we must be purified of natural thoughts and selfish motives. The first three Gospels emphasize the more external consequences of the entry into Jerusalem, the cleansing of the temple, which pictures the examination of our thoughts for selfish and worldly things which may be polluting them, the incident of the barren fig tree, which points to the necessity of bringing forth fruit, and the Lord's weeping over Jerusalem, the realization of the extent of our departure from the Lord, which comes to us as soon as we begin genuinely to try to bring ourselves under His rule. But John characteristically teaches us the depth of the change which must take place in us if we are really to follow the Lord.

First we have the reaction of the Pharisees (John 12:19), the immediate stirring up of the Pharisee in us — our vanity and self-satisfaction — against this new, deep allegiance to the Lord. The good Gentiles always represent our good impulses which have no truth to guide them, and the Greeks perhaps especially intellectual need for the truth, for a rational understanding of the Lord. They appealed first to Philip, the Jew with the Greek name which means "lover of horses," thus representing the quality of intelligence, and sought introduction to the Lord through him, with the help of Andrew, who represents obedience. It requires both intelligence and obedience to bring us into a state in which the Lord can really teach us concerning Himself and the requirements of true discipleship. The Lord's discourse from John 12:23 on is an answer to this desire to understand rationally the earthly life of the Lord.

There can be no simpler explanation of the Lord's whole life and purpose than the parable of the "grain of wheat." The living kernel in each of us is the soul. Until the soul is developed, it needs the external coverings of mind and body which envelop it in this world, but these are of value only as they minister to its proper growth. It cannot produce its final fruits until the material wrappings have been cast off, as they are by the death of the body. With the Lord the inner living kernel was the Divine Itself, the outer wrappings the finite humanity. This finite had to be put off completely before His divine humanity could exercise its full power. So the Lord had to pass through death. But death is only the last act in the putting off of the outer coverings. As we have seen before, the Lord throughout His life was putting off the finite through temptations, and replacing it with the Divine.

We can perform a similar work with His help. So far as we persistently subordinate worldly considerations to spiritual ones, by doing the Lord's will instead of our own, we become spiritual men and women instead of natural ones even while we are living in this world. The life which we are to hate is the selfish nature into which we are born. The life which we should seek to keep "unto life eternal" is the regenerate life which we receive from the Lord as we learn and do His will. In every situation which we face from day to day we feel the pull of both natures, the lower or worldly and the higher or heavenly; we are free to yield to either, but so far as we choose either we reject the other. That the Lord, to the very end, felt these two appeals just as we do is evidenced in our chapter, for He says: "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour; but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name." The first alternative came from His finite nature, the second from His divine nature, and His soul was troubled because of the conflict. The fact that our choice is free and not enforced by any authority or fate is shown in the rest of the chapter, in which it is evident that some believed and others did not. Those who wished to follow the Lord found conviction in His miracles and in His teachings: they believed in the light. But those who did not wish to follow Him were blind to the truth, and were permitted to remain blind because if they had acknowledged His divinity and then had not followed Him, their sin would have been greater.

In John 12:47-48 the Lord shows us plainly that the responsibility rests with us. He came into the world that all men who wished the truth might have it and be saved. The Lord condemns no one. His love and truth are free to all. "He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." (Matthew 5:45) Those who choose to open their hearts to His love also see His truth when it is presented to them. "He that is of God heareth God's words." (John 8:47) Thus the truth, the Lord's Word, is our judge, for if we do not hear and obey it, it is only because we voluntarily choose self-love, which is the life of the hells. That is, our choice of the Lord or of self while we are in this world builds our souls into forms of heaven or hell, and when the outer covering of this world is laid off at death, the form which we ourselves have made determines our final home.

So the entry of the Lord into Jerusalem, our recognition of the Lord as the true king of our souls, ushers in the real conflict between heaven and the world in our hearts and minds, which is a conflict to the death, the death of heaven or the death of the world, as we choose.

## **146:THE PARABLE OF THE VINE — John 15**

### **INTRO**

It will be helpful in all classes to link this lesson with the miracle at Cana. Even the youngest classes can be told that we bear fruit when we do good. And all classes should get the lesson that all life and all goodness are from the Lord alone.

### **Adult**

In preparation for this lesson the teacher should read carefully the Senior as well as the Adult notes, as his particular class may be much interested in a discussion of the departure from the Lord's teaching and the turning to human intelligence instead which has caused the downfall of each succeeding church on earth, including the first Christian Church.

Recall the Lord's miracle at Cana, when He turned water into wine. There the wine, in contrast to the water, signified spiritual truth, truth about the Lord and our relation to Him, truth effective for our regeneration, the rebirth of which the Lord told Nicodemus. Now the Lord calls Himself the true vine, the source of all spiritual truth, apart from which we can do no genuine good.

In discussing the meaning of the vineyard and the vine Swedenborg tells us that we cannot understand it unless we know that there is a celestial church and a spiritual church, the one made up of those who receive the Lord primarily in their wills, and the other of those who receive Him primarily in their understandings; the olive yard is the symbol of the one, the vineyard of the other. The Most Ancient Church was of the celestial type and the Ancient Church of the spiritual. That is why it is said that Noah, the symbolic founder of the Ancient Church, "planted a vineyard" (Genesis 9:20). We remember also that Israel, the name given to Jacob after he returned to the Holy Land from Haran, is used in the Word to signify the spiritual church, of which the Jewish Church was representative. So throughout the Old Testament the vineyard and the vine are mentioned in connection with the name Israel (Jeremiah 2:14, 21; Hosea 10:1). The Lord came as the truth, "a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel" (Luke 2:32). He came to restore to the world knowledge of spiritual truth, because Israel had become indeed an "empty vine." The

perversion of the truth which had been entrusted to them is described in Isaiah 5:1-7 under the symbolism of a carefully prepared and planted vineyard which brought forth wild grapes instead of its intended fruit, and the character of those who were responsible for this perversion is pictured in Isaiah 5:20-23. In Psalm 80 the figure of a vineyard is again used to describe the state of the good and innocent and their need of a savior.

So the Word made flesh, divine truth clothed in a form adapted to the comprehension of men, is indeed the true vine. The New Testament treats of the spiritual church in the beautiful parables of the vineyard (Matthew 20:1-16, 21:33-45; Mark 12:1-12; Luke 20:9-16), as well as in Revelation 14:17-20, where judgment is described as the harvesting of the fruit of the vine. The vineyard, the vine, the grapes, the wine are so frequently mentioned throughout the Word that there are many references to them in the writings (see particularly @AC 1069, 5113, and 9139). In our lesson the Lord speaks of Himself as the vine and of the Father as the husbandman. It is "the Father," divine love, which plants, sustains, and tends the vineyard, but "the Son," divine truth, is the vine by whose means the grapes and wine are produced. If we are to produce any good fruit we must be branches of this vine, we must draw spiritual truth from the life and teaching of the Lord, our minds must be formed according to the truth which He gives us — not according to any ideas of our own or of other men.

But there is more to abiding in the vine than merely to know the Lord's teachings. In John 15:10 the Lord tells us what it is to abide in Him: "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love." Swedenborg explains the "mechanics" of this statement in @TCR 70, as follows: "From the Divine omnipresence man is in God to the extent that he lives in accordance with order, for the reason that God is omnipresent; and where God is in His Divine order, there He is in Himself, because He is order, as has been shown above. Since, then, man was created a form of Divine order, God is in him — fully in him to the extent that he is living in accordance with Divine order. Nevertheless, God is in him if he is not living in accordance with Divine order, but only in the highest regions in him, thereby giving him the ability to understand what is true and to will what is good; that is, giving him the faculty of understanding and the inclination to love. But so far as man lives contrary to order he shuts up the lower regions of his mind or spirit, and thus prevents God's descending and filling those lower regions with His presence; consequently, while God is in him, he is not in God." So the Lord says, "He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit." No matter how much we may know of the Lord's teachings, if we do not live according to them, we are spiritually barren branches, our souls wither, and our evils cut us off from the Lord and consume us. "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." It is only when we act according to the truth which we receive from the Lord that we bring forth spiritual fruit. And this bearing of fruit is the whole purpose of our life in this world: "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain."

However, as we have noticed in other lessons, the Lord does not permit us to imagine that a mere external keeping of the law is sufficient. He says, "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you." "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." The Lord literally laid down His life for us at the crucifixion, but this was only the symbol of the work which He had been doing all along, laying down every selfish impulse and thought day by day: "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he [the Father, divine love] taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." When He tells us to love one another as He loved us, He is telling us to lay down our life, our selfish

desires and ambitions, day by day. So we become His friends by understanding His loving ways, instead of servants who merely obey from fear or from a sense of duty. It is by obeying His commandments inwardly as well as outwardly that we can overcome the world, even as He overcame it. He does not tell us that our way will be easy, but that the victory is sure. "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

The lesson should be emphasized that nothing is genuinely good which does not include recognition of the Lord and obedience to Him within it. We are to abide in the vine. It is the Lord's truth we are to seek, the Lord's commandments we are to follow, not the standards of the world or our own ideas of what is right. We hear people praising themselves for their kindness to others; we all do it inwardly at least part of the time; and when we do, we may be sure that our kindness is to some extent inwardly selfish and not done from the Lord. Even charity done in the name of the church is not free from this taint. The Lord says: "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." How can one who goes to church, keeps the laws, is honest and industrious, and kind and generous to his neighbors "work iniquity"? He may be doing all these things for the sake of self, for his reputation and his self-satisfaction. Good works must be inwardly good. In @DP 215 Swedenborg compares good works done for worldly ends with the same works done from love to the Lord and the neighbor: "One is like artificial fruit, which in external form appears like fruit from a tree, although it is colored wax containing within it dust or bitumen; while the other is like excellent fruit, pleasing in taste and smell, and containing seeds within."

## 147:THE RESURRECTION — John 20

### INTRO

The distinctive incidents in the Easter story in the Gospel of John are Mary's recognition of the risen Lord and Thomas' doubt and its resolution. But the teachers should be sure that all the classes have a knowledge of the general Easter story, as well as of its background in the states of the disciples.

### Adult

The Adults will doubtless be familiar with the usual lessons drawn from the resurrection story. These should of course be touched upon, and the summary of the post—resurrection appearances of the Lord should be mentioned. A good discussion topic is found in the last two verses of the chapter. Even New Church people are sometimes fascinated and confused by stories and moving pictures which add imagined detail to the Bible story. Another good discussion topic is the effect of false ideas of the Lord as compared with that of a true idea. Suggestions on this topic will be found in the Senior notes.

In our study of the Easter lesson from the Gospel of Luke, we considered especially the effect of the resurrection upon the apostles, and through them upon the world. This should be recalled, because we all need to feel the force of the external evidence of the access of divine power which came into the world with the resurrection. But the Gospel of John characteristically suggests rather the deep personal application of the story of the resurrection to the regenerating individual.

Many Christians cling to the finite humanity of the Lord, trying to picture Him as He was in the world, stimulating their imaginations with the study of the racial and historical and geographical background of His finite humanity, believing that in this way they are drawing closer to Him and understanding Him better. This effort is unconsciously epitomized in the phrase "Back to Jesus," as if the real Jesus were somewhere in the past. They feel that the historic Christ is the whole Christ. The apostles were in this belief. In spite of all that the Lord had told them, they felt that they had lost Him when His material body was laid in the tomb. In the resurrection He taught them that they were wrong, and He wishes us to see that we are wrong when we confine Him in our thoughts to the humanity which He put off.

Early in the morning, while it was yet dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and discovered that the stone had been removed from the entrance. Morning always pictures the dawn of a new state, but the ignorance still in her mind is represented by the fact that it was yet dark. Mary, out of whom seven devils had been cast (Luke 8:2), represents the heart which has been deeply purified through temptations. It is a deep and loving desire for the Lord which first discovers that He cannot be confined to the sepulcher, the mere letter of the Word; but it is the faculties of the mind — pictured by Peter and John (who was almost certainly the other disciple in our chapter) - which explore the sepulcher. They saw the linen cloths which were left in the sepulcher, the truths concerning the Lord in the letter, but it was Mary again, the loving heart, who perceived the angels, the living truths within the letter. Also it was Mary who first saw the Lord Himself after His resurrection. It is the loving heart which can first be given to feel the reality of the ever-present savior, even though it does not at first recognize Him. The Lord must rise in our hearts and minds. We begin our discipleship by studying His life in the world and trying to follow His example, but if we are faithful, the time will come when we shall no longer think of Him as someone who lived nearly twenty centuries ago, but as someone who is present in the world today, walking with us and speaking to us in the Word.

The Lord rose differently from any finite man. We leave something behind us when we die; we rise as spirits with full consciousness in the spiritual world, but we have left behind us the instruments by which we saw and heard in this world. The Lord glorified even His sensuous, replacing the material substance with divine substance,\* so that He left nothing in the tomb, but rose a complete man even to ultimates. "For a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have." (Luke 24:39) (@AC 10252[7], 6135; @HH 316). Through the divine humanity He sees and hears in this world, and could even eat with His disciples and be handled by them. His humanity, being divine, is infinite; so He is present with all men at all times instead of being confined in a finite body which is subject to the limitations of space and time. But His presence is not imaginary; it is the most real fact there is: "Lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age."

[\*Cf., however, Athanasian Creed, nos. 161-162 (London, 1954 ed.) or @AE Vol. 6, p.519 (New York, Standard Edition, 1949). -Editor]

The Gospels record several appearances of the Lord after the resurrection. The first was to Mary Magdalene, and Matthew records that He was also seen by the other women at the tomb. That same afternoon He appeared to the two on the way to Emmaus, as recorded in Luke and mentioned in Mark. An appearance to Peter is also mentioned in Luke 24:34. Mark, Luke, and John all record the appearance to the apostles as they sat at meat on the evening of the first day, and John tells us that although Thomas was not present on that occasion, the Lord appeared to them eight days later when Thomas was present. Matthew tells of an appearance in Galilee upon a mountain where the Lord had told them to meet Him, and John gives the story of the meeting by the sea of Tiberias (or

Galilee) (John 21). In Acts 1:3 we learn that the Lord was seen over a period of forty days after the resurrection, and Paul says (1 Corinthians 15:6-7) that He appeared to five hundred brethren, and also to James. Evidently the Lord provided that there should be ample evidence of His living presence in the world after the crucifixion, and that the testimony of many should be recorded. But He told Thomas, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." There is a higher sight than that of the eye, and a deeper hearing than that of the ear. If our minds accept the Lord's truth and our hearts receive His life, we have a far deeper conviction of His presence than if we were to see Him with the physical eye. Most of those who saw Him in the flesh rejected Him. Many things which we see and hear in the world make little impression on us because we are not interested in them. Those who do not wish to recognize and obey the Lord simply refuse to believe the testimony of those who saw Him after the resurrection. If they had a vision of Him themselves, they would soon explain it away. Belief is of the will. We are free to choose the Lord or self.

John tells us (John 20:30-31) that the testimony which he has just recorded is not the only evidence of the Lord's deity, but that He did many other signs, and in the last verse of his Gospel (John 21:25) he says that if all the acts of the Lord were written, the world itself would not contain the books.

The Lord's earthly life was one of constant active service. We are told that He went about all Galilee teaching and preaching in the synagogues and healing the sick. Only a very few of His words and deeds are recorded, but these few are so chosen through divine providence that, in the letter, they illustrate all phases of His work, and in the spirit they contain the fullness of divine life. We should be willing to accept the wisdom of divine providence in this selection. In the early part of our lesson we spoke of the tendency to cling to the finite humanity of the Lord as the whole Christ. It is this tendency which causes many to waste time and effort - however sincere and reverent the intention — in trying to reconstruct by means of imagination plus historical studies, portions of the Lord's life which are not recorded in the letter; for example, to picture the Lord as a boy among other boys in Nazareth or as a young man working in Joseph's carpenter shop. Had there been any spiritual value in such thoughts of the Lord, the facts would have been recorded in the Word. Let us rather learn the facts which the Lord Himself considered it necessary for us to know about His earthly life, and not confuse His own picture of Himself with human imaginings, which tend to tie Him down in our minds to the plane of finite humanity. Then the Lord will gradually rise in our minds until we come to see Him as our living, present savior, God with us.

## 148:JOHN'S VISION — Revelation 1

### INTRO

With all the older classes the historical connection with the Gospels should be made. In A.D. 70, some forty years after the resurrection and ascension of the Lord, Jerusalem and the temple were finally destroyed by the Romans under Titus, and the Christians were dispersed and driven into Asia Minor and beyond. So the early churches developed in Asia Minor. Be sure the children make the distinction between John the Baptist and the Apostle John. Also call their attention to the other name for the book of Revelation — the Apocalypse, the Greek word meaning unveiling or revelation — as they will hear it used frequently.

## **Adult**

The outline of the general content of the book of Revelation will be helpful to the Adults. It is hard to see the outline for oneself amid the multiplicity of details. The opening vision should be discussed as teaching the primary doctrine on which the New Church is founded.

Under divine providence the apostle John was permitted to live out a long life, and in his old age the wonderful vision recorded in the book of Revelation was given through him to the world. It was given on the island of Patmos, to which John had been exiled — possibly during the persecution of the Christians under Emperor Domitian in A.D. 95, John being about ninety years old at that time. We are told plainly in the first chapter that it is a vision seen in the spiritual world - "I was in the spirit on the Lord's day" — and that it is a vision of the state of the church and of what was to come in the future. Swedenborg says (@AE 5) that it treats of the state of the church "in the last times" just before the Last Judgment rather than of the history of the church from its beginning.

Although theologians and others throughout the history of the Christian Church have attempted to interpret and to explain and to apply these visions, the law of correspondence revealed through Swedenborg is the only key to a consistent interpretation. Reverent readers of the Word have always felt their power, and young children love to hear them read, but no one before the Second Coming was able to make any intelligent use of them. We should clearly recognize and be thankful for the fact that "now it is permitted to enter intellectually into the mysteries of faith." We may think of these visions of John, as of those of the Old Testament prophets, as dramas, vast symbolic living pictures enacted in the spiritual world for the instruction and enlightenment of angels and men. The particular prophet is a chosen witness by means of whom the essential features of the drama may be recorded and transmitted to men on earth and preserved in the ultimates of earthly language. The literal details of these visions are powerful and striking, and when we attempt to visualize them for ourselves, they deeply affect the mind. But their ultimate value is in their symbolic meaning. And the Lord in these latter days has made it possible for us to know surely that meaning.

The book of Revelation is a picture of the spiritual forces which were at work even from the beginning of the Christian Church, of the conflict between good and evil, truth and falsity, angels and devils, of the Lord's permission of the evil until its consequences should be plainly seen — as the tares in the parable were allowed to grow along with the wheat until the harvest — and of the final triumph of good and truth and the descent of the holy city New Jerusalem upon the earth. After the opening vision we have the messages to the seven churches in Asia Minor, of which John was doubtless the recognized head. Under the names of these churches all types of acceptance and rejection of the Lord's truth are described, the specific rewards of each type of acceptance shown, and the specific dangers of each type of rejection. Then under the symbols of the throne, the sealed book, and the Lamb, we are shown how the Lord's providence directs the spiritual course of the world through the Word, at first closed and then gradually opened. Then we see how the opening of the Word searches the hearts and minds of men, revealing deeper and deeper evils, how the forces of falsity and evil — under the representation of the dragon and the beast — war against the Lord and the angels for the possession of men's souls, how they are permitted to appear to triumph, but how the good, who in the Lord's strength fight against and overcome their temptations, are preserved, and the New Church, which is born in the midst of the conflict, is saved, and the Lord's kingdom finally prevails throughout the earth.

The book of Revelation has been called "the charter of the New Church" because it prophesies its establishment. Coming to it, as we do, at the close of our study of the whole course of the Word, we should be able to recognize it as the crown of the Word, the culmination of human history, the final act in the great drama of man's spiritual development both as a race and as an individual. Very little can be done with it in the time allotted to it in our course. We can study it for ourselves with the help of Swedenborg's *Apocalypse Revealed* and *Apocalypse Explained* and draw more and more illumination and inspiration from it.

This first chapter gives us the wonderful picture of the Lord Jesus Christ reigning. John recognizes Him as the "Son of man," the master he knew in the world, and the Lord declares Himself to be "he that liveth and was dead," but also says plainly, "I am the first and the last." Thus the book opens with the identification of the Lord Jesus Christ as the eternal God of heaven and earth.

Many before John had had visions of the Lord beginning, we recall, with Moses and the seventy elders (Exodus 24:9-10). All these visions are characterized by the appearance of brightness or fire and usually by the specific mention of the human form of the Lord (Ezekiel 1:26-28). The fire and the brightness are symbols of divine love and wisdom. The Lord has always made it clear that we are to think of Him as a divine man. Swedenborg says He is actually the only man, that He is "Very Man" [ipse homo]. But it was not until after the Lord's life on earth that, because He had ultimated His divine human, a vision could be granted whose details could be recorded more specifically. This is the picture of the Lord which He wishes us to hold in our minds. We should study and think about this picture instead of any of the imaginary and strictly finite representations which the artists of various periods have conceived. People often say, "How shall I think of the Lord? What picture of Him shall I have in my mind when I pray to Him?" John's vision is the Lord's answer to this question. If we have any less definite picture, He will not seem to us a real person; if we have any more ordinary picture we shall have no feeling of His glory and power.

The very fact that there are some details in the picture which we find it difficult to imagine and which would be impossible to put on canvas helps to lift our thought of the Lord above His finite humanity to the glorified divine humanity. To understand the meaning of the vision each of us must study it for himself, recalling correspondences already familiar: garments symbolize truth, gold love, the head the directing intelligence which extends to the hairs, its outmost applications; white signifies purity, the eyes understanding, fire love, the feet the outward conduct, brass or bronze natural good, the voice like the sound of many waters "the Divine truth in ultimates" or divine truth as it comes to us, the stars knowledges of spiritual things, the two-edged sword divine truth attacking evil and falsity and defending goodness, the countenance the expression of the interior character, the sun divine love and wisdom, the lampstands the church on earth, whose office it is to receive and transmit divine truth to mankind. Swedenborg in both the *Apocalypse Explained* and the *Apocalypse Revealed* gives pages to the interpretation of these few verses. Yet the vision itself may be read in a minute and memorized in a short time, and one will then have in his mind a true concept of the Lord, given by the Lord Himself, which will direct and enlighten all His thoughts about the Lord and fill his everyday life with meaning and purpose.

## **149:THE MESSAGES TO THE CHURCHES — Revelation 2; 3**

## INTRO

There are some general facts concerning John's messages to the seven churches which can be presented to all but the youngest children. These have to do with the similarities of all the messages: (1) Each picks out a particular feature of the vision of the Lord; (2) Each commends the church for what it is doing that is good; (3) Each rebukes the church for its particular evil and shows what the resulting punishment will be if the evil persists; (4) Each offers a special promise if the evil is put away; (5) Each closes with the words, "He that hath an ear, etc., " leaving the church free to choose whether it will obey or not.

## Adult

This is a lesson in which the teacher may well use the passages from the writings quoted in the Adult notes as the basis for discussion. Call attention to the fact that, although the seven types are discussed with reference to the beginning and mission of the New Church, they already existed before the end of the first century A.D. To find the truth for the Christian Church we must go to the Gospels, not to the decisions of later church leaders.

In the first chapter of Revelation we are given the clue to the meaning of our lesson for today: "The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches." In numbers 65 and 66 of the @AR Swedenborg says: "The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, signifies the New Church in the heavens, which is the New Heaven. The church is in the heavens equally as on the earth; for the Word is in the heavens equally as it is on the earth, and there are doctrines from it, and preachings from it ... In the spiritual world there appears an expanse full of stars, as in the natural world, and this appearance is from the angelic societies in heaven. Each society there shines like a star before those who are below; hence they know in what situation the angelic societies are ... by 'angels of the seven churches,' is meant the entire church in the heavens, consequently the New Heaven in the aggregate. And the seven lampstands which thou sawest are the seven churches, signifies the New Church on earth, which is the New Jerusalem descending from the Lord out of the New Heaven ... by 'the seven lampstands' are not meant seven churches, but the church in the aggregate, which in itself is one, but various according to reception. Those varieties may be compared to the various jewels in the crown of a king; and they may also be compared to the various members and organs in a perfect body, which yet make one. The perfection of every form exists from various things being suitably arranged in their order. Hence it is, that the whole New Church is described as to its varieties by 'the seven churches.'"

This is the ideal picture, and we note that although the church is one, there are varieties within it which are distinct, as are the societies in the heaven with which they are associated. We should keep this in mind today when we are considering the ecumenical movement. Also we should note that it is not said that the churches on earth were ideal in themselves, for the messages actually point out how far each had fallen from the ideal. And although it was undoubtedly true that the Christian organizations which by the end of the first century after the Advent had developed in the seven cities of Asia Minor were actually in the various states described in the letter of the Word, in the internal historical sense our attention is directed to the states existing in the various branches of the first Christian Church as it was at the time of the Second Coming and the conditions on which the people of these branches might be expected to respond to the invitation to the New Church. And in the spiritual sense we are to think of the various types of Christians today to whom the message

of the New Church is offered and to the same types as we find them also in the organized New Church.

We should note the similarity in pattern of all seven messages: (1) the presentation of the Lord in the particular aspect which would appeal most strongly to the type of person addressed; (2) the Lord's commendation of the good characteristics of that type; (3) the pointing out of the evils to which that type is most subject, and the command to recognize these and repent; (4) the promise to each of that particular "place in the sun" which it is possible for him to attain if he does repent and regenerate; (5) the reminder that our reception or rejection of the message will be of our own free choice: "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

Swedenborg's own words — from the contents at the beginning of chapters 2 and 3 of the *Apocalypse Revealed* — are the clearest and briefest possible statement of the distinct meaning of the seven churches: "To the churches in the Christian world: To those there who primarily regard truths of doctrine and not good of life, who are meant by the church of Ephesus. To those there who are in goods as to life and in falsities as to the doctrine, who are meant by the church of Smyrna. To those there who place the all of the church in good works, and not anything in truths, who are meant by the church in Pergamos. To those there who are in faith from charity, as also to those who are in faith separated from charity, who are meant by the church in Thyatira. ... (Chapter 3) This chapter treats of those in the Christian world who are in dead worship, which is without charity and faith; who are described by the church in Sardis. Those who are in truths from good from the Lord; who are described by the church in Philadelphia. Those who alternately believe from themselves, and from the Word, and thus profane holy things; who are described by the church in Laodicea. All of these likewise are called to the New Church of the Lord."

The last sentence points to the fact that each of the seven emphases can be useful in the New Church, indeed is necessary to the perfection of the church. It is only when one aspect is emphasized at the expense of the others that condemnation is pronounced. It is useful to any church to have within it some whose primary interest is in doctrine, some who emphasize good will, some who insist on good works, some who wish to define the relation between faith and charity, some who love the ritual of the church, some who are well—balanced Christians, and some whose shortcomings keep the church reminded of the necessity of self-dedication and sincere, steady devotion. But if the church is to work together in harmony and perform its full use each of these types must recognize and applaud the contribution of all the others. None must assume that his own emphasis is sufficient in itself. One of the most noticeable characteristics of both the Word and the writings is the constant insistence on the balanced life. For example, the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37), which can so easily be interpreted to mean that external good works are the all-important thing, is immediately followed in the Word by the incident of Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38-42) in which Martha, who was "cumbered about much serving," is told that Mary, in sitting at the Lord's feet hearing His words, has chosen "the better part." And in the writings statements on the importance of truth and those on the importance of good works are so constantly alternated that one cannot exalt one at the expense of the other except by lifting sentences or parts of sentences entirely out of their context.

The most scathing condemnation of all is meted out to the church of Laodicea which is "lukewarm." And yet to him who overcometh in Laodicea is promised the highest reward of all, "to sit with me in my throne." Does not this point to the fact that the most universal and persistent of our temptations and the most difficult to overcome is the temptation to take the easy way, to refuse to take up wholeheartedly and courageously the Lord's cause, to see how little responsibility we can assume

instead of how much, how small a contribution we can "get by with" instead of how much we can give, to travel the path of religion with our ear to the ground! It is to this church that the Lord says, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock." To look for the easy and popular way closes the door against the Lord's truth. Read what Jeremiah says of Moab (Jeremiah 48:11). The heavenly character is not attained by "settling on our lees," by taking the easy way. The Lord gives each of us special abilities, particular opportunities, an individual use to serve, and a particular crown to attain — if we will. He has for each one of us a direct, personal message, searching and challenging — if we have ears to hear.

## **150:JOHN'S VISION OF THE THRONE — Revelation 4**

### **INTRO**

Review briefly what is known about the apostle John and his situation at the time the visions of the book of Revelation were given.

### **Adult**

The relation of the Acts and Epistles to the Word is important for all adults because we hear so much emphasis placed on the Epistles by non—New Church people. Many interesting points are suggested in the sections from the @AR , which may be read and discussed one by one.

In our study of the Gospel we saw how little the apostles, devoted though they were, understood the Lord's teaching, and how prone they were to forget things that He told them, and also at the end how weak was the flesh, however willing the spirit may have been. Only their contact with Him after the resurrection and their witness of His ascension (Mark 16:19) could have inspired in them the courage and perseverance with which they afterward accomplished their assigned task of preaching the Gospel to all the world (Mark 16:15). The record of their accomplishment is preserved for us in the book of the Acts of the Apostles, which is the basis of our knowledge of the beginnings of the Christian Church. Although the book of Acts — written by Luke — does not have an inner sense, and for this reason we do not study it in Sunday school, it gives us a certain background for our approach to the book of Revelation. It shows the bitterness of the opposition to the early Christians both by the Jews and by the Romans, and it also shows that the apostles did not always agree as to just what the teachings of the Lord were and how they should be applied in the daily life. The Epistles are further evidence of this, and while they contain many fine and helpful statements and much valuable information, we must still for our doctrine go to the Word itself.\*

[\*But several New Church doctrines are succinctly stated in the Epistles. -Editor]

Tradition says that all of the eleven apostles except John were martyred. John, the youngest of them, was the only one who lived to very old age. No doubt he was providentially protected that he might be the instrument through whom the great prophetic vision might be recorded which concludes our Word. This vision is thought to have been given him in the year A.D. 95, when he was about ninety years of age. Although he was living in exile on the island of Patmos, he was still looked to as the head of seven churches in Asia Minor. From the messages given him for these

churches (chapters 2 and 3) we learn that even at that early date the different groups of Christians had developed different characteristics and ideas. Although we recognize these messages as applying in their inner meaning to the different types of Christian discipleship in all times, still they should show us how foolish it is for anyone to imagine that unanimity of belief and practice is possible today. One of the lessons of our chapter for today is that the Lord provides in the letter of the Word a guard over its inner truths for the very purpose of permitting differences of interpretation. In @AR 239 Swedenborg says: "The sense of the letter of the Word serves as a guard for the genuine truths which lie within; and the guard consists in this, that the literal sense can be turned hither and thither, that is, can be explained according to everyone's understanding, without its internal being hurt or violated; for no harm ensues from the literal sense being understood differently by different people; but it does harm when the Divine truths which are within are perverted, for it is by this that the Word suffers violence. To prevent this, the literal sense guards, and it guards with those who are in falsities from religion, but yet do not confirm them, for from these the Word suffers no violence. This guard is signified by 'cherubim,' and is also described by them in the Word."

The whole vision is a vision of judgment, a picture of how divine providence by means of the truths of the Word protects the good and separates them from the evil. This judgment goes on in each individual, but we know that the book of Revelation particularly describes the judgment which was to take place at the end of the first Christian dispensation, and the beginning of a new dispensation through the opening of the Word. Chapter 4, Swedenborg says, "treats of the arrangement and preparation of all things in heaven for the judgment, to be executed from the Word, and according to it; likewise concerning the acknowledgment that the Lord is the only judge" (Apocalypse Revealed introduction to chapter 4).

In studying this chapter we should begin by comparing it with earlier visions of very similar nature: Exodus 19:16, 24:9-10; Ezekiel 1 and 10; Isaiah 6:1-3; and Daniel 7:9-10. If we wish to study it in greater detail we should go to the @AE , but we shall find a condensed explanation, including a very brief summary interpretation, in the @AR Here we shall note that the voice of the trumpet always pictures the power of truth speaking, the throne judgment, and the four "beasts" or cherubim the guard the Lord provides against profanation.

In @AR 233 we read: "He who does not know the spiritual sense of the Word, and at the same time the genuine truths of the church, may believe, that when the Last Judgment shall come, the Lord will sit upon a throne, and that there will be other judges also upon thrones around Him. But he who knows the spiritual sense of the Word, and at the same time the genuine truths of the church, knows that the Lord will not then sit upon a throne, and that neither will there be other judges about Him; and further, that neither will the Lord judge anyone to hell, but that the Word will judge everyone, the Lord moderating that all things may be done according to justice ... 'Twelve' signifies all, and is predicated of the truths and goods of heaven and the church (n. 348); the same is signified by 'twenty-four'; therefore 'the twelve apostles' and the 'twenty-four elders' signify all things of the church; and 'twelve,' as also 'twenty-four thrones,' signify the all of judgment."

We are told in @AR 237 that by the seven lamps are signified "the New Church in heaven and on earth from the Lord through the Divine truth proceeding from Him," just as by the seven stars and the seven lampstands in Revelation 1:20, and in @AR 238 that "Before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal, signifies the New Heaven from Christians who are in general truths from the literal sense of the Word." The New Heaven referred to in the last quotation is the heaven which was formed at the time of the Second Coming from all the good souls of the first Christian Church

who are described in Revelation 6:9-11.

We recognize in Revelation 4:8 one of the familiar responses which is sung in some of our churches, and another in Revelation 4:11 which appears in some of our responsive services. When we sing these, it will be helpful to remember that they are sung in heaven also and especially that if we sing them with sincere hearts, the Lord can make them a bulwark for us against many temptations.

## 151:THE SEALED BOOK — Revelation 5

### INTRO

As the vision in this chapter goes right on from that of our last lesson, simple questions on the review are the best possible introduction.

### Adult

The reason for the sealing of the Word and for the time chosen by the Lord for its opening should be discussed, and also the reason why it is often so difficult and even impossible to interest others in the truths which mean so much to us.

At the beginning of the explanation of this chapter in the @AR Swedenborg says that its general meaning is "that the Lord in the Divine Human will execute judgment from the Word and according to it, because He Himself is the Word; and that this is acknowledged by all in the three heavens."

The Word itself contains many references to a "book of life."

There are also statements as to the actual writing of the Word in its letter, such as Deuteronomy 31:9 and Jeremiah 36:1-4. Nor is our chapter for today the only place where we are told that the Word has been a sealed book. Isaiah 29:9-12 is a clear picture of the inability of men to understand the Word by means of their own unenlightened reason. And Daniel (Daniel 12:4) is told to "shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end." That the prophets themselves did not understand the meaning of the words which were given them to write appears from the same chapter (Daniel 12:8-9): "And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things? And he said, go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end." It is evidence from these verses in the letter that the Word was purposely sealed by the Lord, and that it could not be opened except by the Lord, and not until men had reached a particular stage of development. From the very letter of Scripture, therefore, we should see that there is something written within the Word which can never be read without some divinely revealed key. Our chapter for today gives us this truth in unmistakable terms.

The New Church is the church of the opened Word. It believes that the inspired portions of the Scriptures are divine truth spoken by the Lord but necessarily — in order to reach men — clothed with corresponding forms of angelic and earthly thought and expression, just as light, coming to earth from the sun, is modified by the atmosphere and broken up and reflected in various ways by the natural forms which receive and transmit it. The letter of the Word is the outmost expression of divine truth. Being given through the minds of men in both good and evil states, it shows the truth as it appears both to the good and to the evil. Thus often the real truth takes on a directly opposite

expression. That is why, for example, the Lord is sometimes spoken of as being angry, jealous, and vengeful, and as punishing and destroying. We can easily understand this if we will think how arbitrary and hard our parents' loving admonitions seemed to us as children, when we were bent on disobeying. Or we may hear critics of the Word find fault with the commandments because they are in the negative form; but we may answer that to be told not to steal, for instance, is no hardship except to one who wants to steal. Truth inevitably seems hard to those whose desires are evil, and the only way in which the Lord can reach them is by showing the consequences of their evils, just as genuine love of parents for their children must express itself in checking their evils as well as in encouraging their good deeds. The letter of the Word is written for all sorts and conditions of men in all times, and there is enough genuine truth in the surface meaning to show any sincere person the way to salvation.

And the letter of the Word is absolutely necessary. As Swedenborg says in the Doctrine of the @DSS, n. 30, the sense of the letter of the Word "is the basis, the containant, and the support of the spiritual sense and of its celestial sense." Without the letter of the Word divine truth would be dissipated just as the contents of a pitcher is spilled and wasted if the pitcher is broken.

The book was "sealed." But it was promised that it should be opened at "the time of the end" and it was said, "many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased." (Daniel 12:4) The New Church believes that "the time of the end" when the book should be opened came in the middle of the eighteenth century, when people had mentally "run to and fro" and had increased in worldly knowledge to the point where good people with a sincere desire to know the Lord could no longer believe all the letter of the Word to be literal fact. At that time, through the prepared mind of Emanuel Swedenborg, the Lord Himself opened the Scriptures, by revealing once more the knowledge of correspondences. This involved not only verse—by—verse explanations of portions of the Word, but the revelation of detailed realities of the spiritual world and its relation to this world, and also doctrines which, drawn from the letter of the Word itself, enable us to read it with enlightenment and to understand the Lord and His purposes and our relation to Him. This was the promised Second Coming of the Lord, a coming not in the flesh, but in His Word — in the "clouds of heaven" - opening its inner meaning and so fulfilling His promise to His disciples: "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." (John 16:12)

Our chapter tells us that "no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book," and Swedenborg claims no credit to himself: he says that the spiritual sense was revealed to him by the Lord alone as he read the Word (@TCR 779-780). In @DSS 25-26 he tells us that no one can see the spiritual sense "except from the Lord alone, nor unless from Him he is in genuine truths," and he also tells us that "for a long time the spiritual sense will not be recognized, and that this is entirely owing to those who are in falsities of doctrine, especially concerning the Lord, and who therefore do not admit truths," and that the conflicts described in the book of Revelation picture the opposition in the world to the spiritual sense. All those who have received with delight the teachings of the New Church with regard to the Word and have endeavored to share this delight with relatives and friends attached to the doctrines of other churches have had personal experience of this opposition. Both Ezekiel (Ezekiel 2:9-10; 3:1-3) and John (Revelation 10:8-10) in vision were told to eat a little book, and both found it sweet as honey in the mouth. But as the angel told John and he proved by experience, "It shall make thy belly bitter." Our first taste of the opened Word is full of delight and promise, but if we "eat it up," if we sincerely try to live it out, we must be prepared to take the bitter with the sweet. This is the challenge to our sincerity and courage. And most people shrink from anything which promises to make drastic changes in their

ways of thought and life.

Our chapter presents a beautiful picture of the power of the Lord through the Word and of the worship of the Lord in the heavens. The "Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David" pictures the Lord as to the power of His love. "A Lamb as it had been slain" is "the Lord as to His Human, not acknowledged in the church to be Divine" (@AR 269). The seven horns picture His omnipotence and the seven eyes His omniscience. The harps in the hands of the beasts and elders represent "confession of the Lord's Divine Human from spiritual goods" (@AR 277). The new song "signifies the acknowledgment and glorification of the Lord, that He alone is Judge, Redeemer, and Saviour, thus the God of heaven and earth" (@AR 279). "And the four beasts said, Amen" signifies "Divine confirmation from the Word" (@AR 292). We recall that the beasts or cherubim picture the Lord's protection of inner truth by the letter of the Word and the twenty-four elders all who are in the Lord's church in the heavens and on earth.

## 152:THE FOUR HORSEMEN — Revelation 6

### INTRO

In all the classes the teacher should summarize briefly the first five chapters, stressing the throne, the four beasts, the sealed book, and the lamb, as a preparation for the visions which followed.

### Adult

The meaning of the four horsemen emerges so clearly in the light of correspondence that a consecutive study of the opening of the six seals seems indicated for this class rather than the usual topical discussion. If possible, the teacher should take time to read the whole chapter in @AR , noting the cross—references in the Word, which are of particular interest.

The "four horsemen of the Apocalypse" have caught the imagination of the Christian world for centuries. They have always been recognized as symbols of a progressive judgment, and many attempts have been made to interpret them in terms of one or another world crisis.

But the fact is that their application is spiritual, not material, and that they have to do with the inner states of all of us who live in this age of the Second Coming. For the judgment which followed the opening of the seals is the final judgment made possible by the opening of the inner meaning of the Word.

In the @AR Swedenborg gives us this very brief summary of the meaning of this part of our chapter: "The exploration of those upon whom the final judgment is about to come, is treated of; and what their understanding of the Word had been is discovered and hence what was the state of their life: that there were those who were in truths from good (verses 1-2); who were without good (verses 3-4); who were in contempt for the truth (verses 5-6); and who were altogether vastated as to good and truth (verses 7-8)."

The first type are those who will live in the heavens. They accept the truths of the Word and use them in combat against their evils. See Revelation 19:11-13.

The second type understand the truth but have no desire to live according to it.

The third type have no interest in or understanding of the truth, but wish to appear good and so, like the Pharisees, keep the letter of the law and argue about it.

The fourth type are wholly given over to self-love and the falsities which favor it.

All the last three types are destructive, and the forms of destruction are pictured in the powers given to the three riders.

In sharp contrast to them, the rider on the white horse had a bow in his hand, which is a symbol of doctrine. It is often called to our attention in the writings that the Word cannot be understood without doctrine. It is also stated that doctrine must be drawn from the letter of the Word and confirmed thereby. People have sometimes interpreted this to mean that we do not need the spiritual sense in order to understand the Word. But it is also pointed out in the writings that all the various Christian sects, like the Israelitish Church before them, have based their beliefs on the letter of the Word. So the question arises, "How are we to know what is the true doctrine?" The writings give us the basis of the answer in n. 91 of the Doctrine of the @DSS: "It has been shown above that the Word cannot be understood without doctrine, and that doctrine is like a lamp that enables genuine truths to be seen, the reason of which is that the Word has been written entirely by correspondences, and consequently many things in it are appearances of truth and not naked truths; and many things also have been written in adaptation to the apprehension of the natural and even of the sensuous man, yet so that the simple may understand it in that the appearances of truth in the Word, which are truths clothed, may be caught at as naked truths, and when they are confirmed they become falsities. But this is done by those who believe themselves wise above others, although they are not wise, for being wise consists in seeing whether a thing is true before it is confirmed, and not in confirming whatever one pleases. The last is done by those who excel in a genius for confirming and are in the conceit of self-intelligence, but the former is done by those who love truths and are affected by them because they are truths, and who make them uses of the life, for these persons are enlightened by the Lord, and see truths by the light of the truths; whereas the others are enlightened by themselves and see falsities by the light of the falsities."

We do not come at the truth without effort on our part. We must continually study the Word and the writings. But our study must be carried on with the mind humble and open to the Lord, and with the desire to learn the truth — even if it does not support our preconceived opinion — so that we may direct our lives by it. The rider on the white horse was given a crown, which is the symbol of victorious combat. The combat is against evil and falsity primarily in ourselves.

The rider on the red horse has no desire to see or to correct his own evils. His sword is truth falsified by being used for self-advantage. He uses this sword against others, and so destroys peace, and kills. Read Zechariah 1:8-15.

We know that darkness always pictures ignorance. The rider on the black horse had a pair of balances, which signify the "estimation of truth and good," and the value he placed on the wheat and barley was very small. The wheat and barley here represent exterior good and truth. He is not allowed to "hurt" the oil and wine because they represent interior good and truth which are hidden from him so that they will not be profaned. For an interesting and illuminating comparison read @AC 7601 concerning the plague of hail in Egypt which destroyed the flax and barley but was not allowed to destroy the wheat and spelt (KJV: rie).

Finally compare the rider on the pale horse with the third excuse in the parable of the Great Supper

(Luke 14): "I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come."

In thinking of the correspondences involved in this story, it is also interesting to remember that the four creatures, or cherubim, are mentioned in order with the appearance of the horses, and that the creatures are described in order in chapter 5 as being like a lion, a calf, a man, and a flying eagle. The lion is the symbol of power, and the rider on the white horse went forth conquering and to conquer. The calf is the symbol of natural goodness, which the rider on the red horse is able to destroy. The man is the symbol of the intellectual, for which the rider on the black horse has no use. And the eagle is the symbol of spiritual knowledges which are killed out of the mind by the rider on the pale horse.

In the last part of our chapter the opening of the fifth and sixth seals reveals the effect of the opening of the Word upon the good and the evil gathered in the spiritual world during the centuries of the first Christian Church. Swedenborg tells us that the permanent Christian heavens could not be formed until the Second Coming of the Lord had taken place and that until that time all the good from the Christian world were kept, guarded by the Lord, in a part of the spiritual world called "the lower earth." These are the "souls under the altar" (Revelation 6:9). The evil who had called themselves Christians and expected to be saved were kept in "imaginary heavens." These were the heavens which "departed as a scroll when it is rolled together" at the opening of the sixth seal. The evil then saw themselves as they really were and sought a place to hide from the face of the Lord.

## 153:THE SEVENTH SEAL — Revelation 8; 9

### INTRO

This is a rather difficult lesson to teach, because the interest is almost entirely in the details of the correspondence. It is suggested that in each of the three younger classes the teacher, after taking up the review, read from the Word at least chapter 8 and let questions and comments help to determine the direction of the discussion for the rest of the period.

### Adult

The comparison of the gradual development of man into a church, as pictured in the Creation story, with the gradual judgment upon the man who has destroyed the church in himself is an interesting discussion topic. Another is Swedenborg's treatment of the Reformed Church, which we call Protestant. We all need to face this subject frankly, realizing that in talking about the first Christian Church we are speaking of it as an organization founded on certain doctrines and that we are not pronouncing judgment on any of its present members. We should hold the same thought in speaking of the Church of the New Jerusalem in the world. It is an organization founded on certain specific doctrines. If we profess to belong to it, we have the responsibility of studying and trying to live those doctrines. Our souls take their form from what we really believe, and it is this form which is revealed in the light of divine truth when we pass into the spiritual world.

We might begin our study of this lesson by noting some of the striking parallels it presents with other parts of the Word. We are familiar with the fact that the Bible begins and ends with accounts of the great river of water of life and the tree of life. We also realize that the great dragon of

Revelation 12 is "that old serpent" which we first meet when he tempts Eve in the Garden of Eden. But we do not often carry our comparison further. Consider, then, the six days of creation, picturing the stages of the development of man into a true church, with the seventh day marking the completion of the process: then think of the opening of the six seals and the blowing of the six trumpets — with the seventh in each case set off by itself and signifying completeness — and realize that these mark the stages in the judgment upon those who reject the Lord and so refuse to be built into a church. Again, note that in the first chapter of the Bible we read that the sun, moon, and stars were created on the fourth day and that in our chapter on the judgment it was the sounding of the fourth trumpet which heralded the destruction of the sun, moon, and stars. Remember the "voice of the trumpet exceeding loud" which was heard from the mount just before the giving of the ten commandments from Sinai. Then there is the familiar story of the capture of Jericho, when the children of Israel marched around the city once each day for six days and seven times on the seventh day following the priests who bore the ark, and the walls fell when the priests sounded their trumpets. And there were seven priests — seven trumpets. In the story of Gideon, the Midianites were thrown into confusion by the sounding of the trumpets and the sudden flashing out of the lights as the pitchers which had hidden them were broken. And in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew — the so-called "little Apocalypse" - Matthew 24:31 tells us that at the Second Coming of the Lord — when He is to come "in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" - "he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." Compare this with Revelation 7:1-3. There are also many verses in the Prophets in which the sounding of a trumpet spells victory for the righteous and doom for the evil.

Even without a knowledge of correspondence it should be evident that these parallels are too many to be accidental, and that there is some meaning behind the letter, but in the light of the New Age we can see this meaning clearly. The sounding of a trumpet, we are told, represents "Divine truth manifested and revealed out of heaven" (@AE 262). It is in the light of truth that evils and falsities are recognized in all their destructive and deadly character. We all tend to go along blithely believing what we want to believe, what is convenient for us to believe. This tendency in the Christian Church was evident as early as the time of the giving of the book of Revelation, as we learn from the Lord's messages to the seven churches in Asia Minor. The Second Coming took place — had to take place — when the perversion of the Lord's teachings had become so widespread and so entrenched that the simple good in the Christian Church could no longer find out the truth. The same situation existed, we remember, at the end of the Israelitish Church when the Lord made His first Advent. So while our chapters, like all the Word, have their application to the judgment on the life of every individual when he comes into the spiritual world, they refer specifically to what is called "the last judgment," the judgment which was executed in the spiritual world at the time of the Second Coming upon all who had been gathered into that world from the Christian Church since its beginning. We are told in the writings that the permanent Christian heavens could not be formed until the Word had been opened, and that the good who entered the spiritual world from the first Christian Church were in the meantime kept in the part of the intermediate world which is called the "lower earth," while the evil were gathered in "imaginary heavens." The Last Judgment, made on the basis of the opened Word, was executed upon these; the imaginary heavens were dispersed; the evil, given to see their own actual states, found their places in the hells; and the good were raised from the lower earth and formed into permanent Christian heavens. The dispersion of the imaginary heavens is what is pictured by Revelation 6:14. The condition of the good and their protection by the Lord until the completion of the judgment is described in Revelation 6:9-11 and 7:1-3.

A very brief statement of the general meaning of our two chapters for today is given at the beginning of these chapters in the Apocalypse Revealed and is quoted here to help in our study of these chapters:

On chapter 8: "The church of the Reformed is here treated of, as to the quality of those therein who are in faith alone: the preparation of the spiritual heaven for communication with them (vers. 1-6). The exploration and manifestation of those therein, who are in the interiors of that faith (ver. 7). Of those who are in its exteriors (vers. 8, 9). What they are as to the understanding of the Word (vers. 10, 11). That they are in falsities and thence in evils (vers. 12, 13)."

On chapter 9: "Of the exploration and manifestation of the states of life of those in the church of the Reformed, who are called learned and wise from the confirmation of faith separated from charity, and of justification and salvation by it alone (these are treated of from verses 1-12).

"Of the exploration and manifestation of those therein, who are not so learned and wise, and are in faith alone, and who live as they please (from verses 13-19).

"Lastly, of those therein, who know nothing but that faith is the all by which man is saved, and not anything besides (verses 20, 21)."

From this we see that in this first part of John's vision the judgment is upon those who have confirmed themselves in the doctrine of "faith alone," the doctrine on which the Reformed, or Protestant, Church is founded. Some of the later visions deal with the Roman Catholic Church. We need to keep clearly in mind that Swedenborg is talking of the first Christian Church in its various divisions according to the doctrinal basis on which these divisions were made and developed. We sometimes choose to ignore such doctrinal foundations and to assume that "nobody believes those things anymore." But this is mere wishful thinking, growing, perhaps, out of our inclination to seem broad-minded and ecumenical. When people refuse to think about the teachings on which their church technically stands and continue to belong to it, believing anything they please, their allegiance is mere lip—service to a name and has no effect on their lives. There are plenty of people today who believe very firmly in the doctrine of faith alone although many of them do not live it. But any one of us may indeed be living in faith alone if we ride along on the assumption that we do not need to study the Lord's truth and live according to it — that the Lord is so kind that He will save us no matter what we think or do. We need to read our two chapters very thoughtfully in this light, for the destruction pictured in them is very real. It is the gradual destruction of all genuine goodness and truth in the soul of the person who chooses to lead himself instead of to be led by the Lord.

## **154:THE WOMAN AND THE DRAGON — Revelation 12**

### **INTRO**

The powerful picture presented in this chapter contains very important lessons for our young people as well as for adults. To the younger children it may be given as one of the visions of John, the meaning of which they will study when they are older. They should be impressed with the details of the figure of the woman and of that of the dragon and led to look forward to the time

when they can understand their meaning. The identity of the dragon with the serpent in the Garden of Eden should be stressed.

## Adult

The whole question of our attitude toward the ecumenical movement is involved in this lesson. We need to see the difference between cooperation with others on the natural level and trying to pattern our own church activities and attitudes on those prevailing in other churches whose fundamental concept of religion is quite different from ours.

Our lessons from the book of Revelation thus far have shown us the picture of the early states of the first Christian Church, the various ways in which its members began to depart from their first faith and life, and the prophetic vision of the condition of that church at the time when the opening of the seven seals would bring upon it the final judgment. We know from the writings that this judgment took place in the spiritual world in the year 1757. After this judgment the permanent Christian heavens were established, the good being brought into those heavens and the evil consigned to the hells. On June 19, 1770, the twelve apostles were sent forth throughout the spiritual world to proclaim the true Christian doctrine, and the New Church was begun in heaven, from which it was to descend to earth (@TCR 791).

Our chapter for today is a prophetic vision of the preparation for this descent and of the opposition which would face the New Church on earth. Swedenborg's interpretation of these visions brings us face-to-face with the necessity for serious thought and important decisions concerning the nature and mission of our church, and its relation to other churches. The Rev. William Worcester's characterization of the book of Revelation as the "charter of the New Church" is not an idle epigram. Some time ago a Jewish rabbi who had been reading the writings of Swedenborg told a group of New Church ministers that when he first read what Swedenborg said about Jews, he threw the book aside, but later he took it up again and when he found that Swedenborg said even worse things about Protestants and Roman Catholics, he felt better about it. As New Churchmen we cannot ignore these statements of Swedenborg or doubt their validity.

The writings tell us that the woman clothed with the sun symbolizes "the Lord's New Church in the heavens, which is the New Heaven." She is clothed with the sun because "the church is in love to the Lord, for it acknowledges Him and does His commandments." The moon is seen under her feet "because the church on earth, which is not yet conjoined with the church in the heavens, is meant" and the moon signifies "intelligence in the natural man, and faith." Her crown of twelve stars signifies the New Church's "wisdom and intelligence from knowledges of Divine good and Divine truth from the Word." Throughout the Word a woman is often used as a symbol of the church — the bride and wife whose husband is the Lord. Read Isaiah 54:5, John 3:29, and Revelation 21:2, 9-10.

The child which the woman was to bear represents the doctrine of the New Church, and we should note that it was the child rather than the woman which the dragon really wanted to destroy. This is important for our later thought, for it means that the strength of the New Church will be in its doctrine. The child was saved by being caught up to God, and His throne. This, we are told, signifies that the doctrine is protected by the Lord and guarded by the angels of heaven.

Swedenborg identifies the great red dragon specifically as "those in the Church of the Reformed who make God three, and the Lord two, and separate charity from faith, and who make faith

saving, but not charity together with it." The Church of the Reformed is the church afterward called Protestant. To make the Lord two is to "separate the Lord's Human from His Divine." Read here @AR 537 ff. The dragon is red because red in this case signifies "falsity from the evils of lusts." His seven heads signify "insanity from the truths of the Word falsified and profaned." His ten horns signify "much power," and the seven crowns "all the truths of the word falsified and profaned." We profane the Word when we quote it in support of arguments which permit or excuse selfishness and worldliness in us or in others. That the dragon's tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and cast them to the earth signifies "that by falsifications of the truths of the Word they have alienated all spiritual knowledges of good and truth from the church, and, by application to falsities, have entirely destroyed them."

@AR 548 tells us that by Michael is not meant any archangel but the ministry in heaven performed by "those who confirm from the Word, that the Lord is the God of heaven and earth, and that God the Father and He are one, as the soul and body are one; also that men ought to live according to the commandments of the Decalogue, and that then men have charity and faith." Michael and his angels cast the dragon down out of heaven. So far as we are in truly heavenly states the falsities of the "faith alone" doctrine on which Protestantism was founded — the flood which pours out of the dragon's mouth — have no power over us, for the earth, which represents "the church as to doctrine," makes them "fall to nothing."

But the woman is still "in the wilderness." In @AR 547 Swedenborg says: "It is of the Lord's Divine providence, that the church should at first be among a few, and that it should successively increase among many, because the falsities of the former church must first be removed; for before this, truths cannot be received, since truths which are received and implanted before falsities are removed, do not remain, and they are also dissipated by the dragonists."

This is where our lesson most closely touches our contemporary situation, and where honest thinking is most important. We are told sometimes that no Protestant Church any longer believes or preaches the doctrine of faith alone. This is simply not true. We know, of course, that there are many in Protestant churches who do not confirm this doctrine in their lives although they may still hold it intellectually and even rely upon it for comfort when they are thinking about their own evils and those of their friends and loved ones. But the whole "modern" attitude toward religion is an outgrowth of the faith alone doctrine: the idea that one church is as good as another, that we cannot really know anything about God or the life after death and so if there is a God and a life after death, that our eternal happiness will be taken care of; that it is God's responsibility, not ours, etc.

The fact that emphasis today is often placed on charity rather than on faith does not contradict this, for the "charity" meant is identified with what Swedenborg calls "benefactions," which may have no charity in them whatever, and "faith" is still identified with mere lip acknowledgment that Christ died to pay the penalty for our sins, which is essentially the doctrine of faith alone.

The New Church will grow on earth only as its members recognize and resist the temptation to identify charity with external works and the temptation to succumb to a weak acceptance of popular trends of thought. We face the dragon every day. Swedenborg tells us that good receives all its quality from truth and that truth cannot live with falsity.

# 155:THE BEAST OVERCOME — Revelation 13; 19:11-21

## INTRO

This lesson should be tied in with chapter 12 to show how evil in the heart and falsity in the mind unite to oppose the development of the church in the individual and in the world. With the three younger classes the individual should be stressed rather than the world.

## Adult

The quotation at the end of the lesson may offer additional material for discussion. The teacher should read all the notes from the Intermediate up in order to be able to answer questions on the correspondence of details of the vision, as some have not been repeated in the Adult notes. We need to define clearly the basis of our church and our own responsibility.

In the vision we considered from chapter 12, the principal action was on the plane of the heavens rather than of the earth. The vision of our lesson today shows the effect on earth of the dragon's presence and subtlety. The two beasts of chapter 13 picture those of the laity and those of the clergy in the Protestant Church who have confirmed in their lives the doctrine of faith alone. The first beast rises out of the sea and the second out of the earth because the laity are "in the externals of the doctrine of the church, and the clergy are in its internals." The various animals which form parts of the first beast are different manifestations of affections of falsity, the leopard "heresy destructive of the church," the bear "fallacies from the sense of the letter of the Word read but not understood," and the lion "falsity in its power appearing like truth by reasonings." The "two horns like a lamb" in the second beast signify that the clergy "speak, teach, and write from the Word, as if it were from the Lord's Divine truth, and yet it is truth falsified." It is the dragon which gives the first beast its power, and we read that the second beast speaks "as a dragon."

The interpretation of the deadly wound suffered by one of the seven heads of the dragon and its healing is particularly enlightening. In @AR 576 and 577 we read: "And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded unto death, signifies that this point of doctrine, which is the head of the rest, that man is justified and saved by faith alone without the works of the law, does not agree with the Word, where works are so often commanded. ... And the stroke of his death was healed, signifies the healing of that head of the doctrine by this reasoning, that no one can do a good work of himself, and fulfil the law, and that there is on that account provided another means of salvation instead, which is faith in the justice and merit of Christ, who suffered for man, and thereby took away the condemnation of the law."

The last verse of chapter 13 should be taken to heart by all of us. If we are New Churchmen we believe that the opening of the inner meaning of the Word was the Second Coming of the Lord, in which Swedenborg was merely an instrument, the true "servant of the Lord Jesus Christ." The interpretation of these visions in Revelation is not Swedenborg's therefore, but the Lord's. The conditions and states of thinking here attributed directly to the Reformed or Protestant Church are not merely conditions as Swedenborg perhaps saw them. They are conditions which the Lord saw and which are still evident today if we do not close our eyes to them. The same is true in regard to

the interpretation of the visions recorded in chapters 17 and 18, in which the evils of the Roman Catholic Church are exposed and judged. If the New Church is to grow upon earth, its members must face facts, even when these facts are as unpleasant and threatening as the dragon and the beasts. Swedenborg says many times that falsities must be exposed and rejected before the truth will be generally accepted. Read @AR 547.

If we are wise, we shall "count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is six hundred threescore and six." This number, we are told, "signifies this quality, that all the truth of the Word is falsified by them." We meet this falsification of the Word in some of the works of modern scholarship, in theological magazines, in sermons, and in the arguments of fanatics. If we are wise, we shall recognize and face it, not try to close our eyes to its existence under the pretense of charity. We do neither the Lord nor the neighbor, nor yet the New Church, service by compromising with falsity.

The overcoming of the beasts is the work of the Lord in His Word. The opening of heaven (Revelation 19:11) is the opening of the internal sense of the Word and the white horse is the interior understanding of it. The details of the description of the horse's rider are all familiar to us. His eyes as a flame of fire "signifies the Divine wisdom of the Lord's Divine love." The diadems upon His head are "the Divine truths of the Word." The "name written" is the quality of the Word in its interiors, which only the Lord knows and is able to reveal. The garment dipped in blood is "Divine truth in its ultimate sense, or the Word in the letter, to which violence has been offered." The sharp sword going out of His mouth "signifies the dispersion of falsities, by doctrine from the Lord." The whole picture should impress upon us the fact that the New Church is founded on the truth that the Lord Jesus Christ is the only God of heaven and earth, that He conjoins Himself to man by means of the Word, and that the opening of the Word is His doing and necessary to the salvation of mankind. The church on earth has power only as it looks to the Lord in His Word for all its direction. The Lord has indeed spread a feast before us, food which our souls need if they are to have strength and wisdom to meet the demands of our age and to accomplish the work which the Lord has given us to do. Let us not be among those who "beg to be excused" from this feast.

## **156:THE JUDGMENT AND THE HOLY CITY — Revelation 20:11-15; 21:1-7**

### **INTRO**

In all classes mention should be made of why the Bible is called the Book of Life. It is easy to introduce this by reading the first verse of Genesis and then the first verse of Revelation 21, and finally Revelation 21:6. The teacher of each class — even the youngest — may well base his preparation of the lesson on a study of these three verses. All classes should learn that our church takes its name from Revelation 21:2.

### **Adult**

Here also the best discussion material is in the nature and mission of the New Church, although some of the younger and newer members may need to be given a clear understanding of how judgment takes place.

The middle chapters in the book of Revelation are a symbolic description of what happens in the church and in individual lives when the seals which have closed the inner meaning of the Word are opened one by one, bringing deeper and deeper truths to bear in the examination of the state of the church and of the individual heart. In this process the conflict between good and evil — between the forces of the Lord and the powers of the hells — increases, and the devastation becomes more and more extensive. If we are really examining ourselves in the light of the Word, we must go the whole way; we cannot take just the instruction we are willing to obey and ignore the rest.

The more one learns of the internal meaning of the Word, the more deeply it searches the mind and heart. It holds up high standards of spiritual thought and life, often diametrically opposed to common precept and practice. It never allows us to rest satisfied with ourselves, because when one temptation is overcome, a deeper one is always revealed to us. This is what is pictured by the fact that with the opening of each seal the devastation increased.

But the whole scene of conflict in the Apocalypse leads to final victory. Self-satisfaction is the badge of spiritual failure. Only those evils which we see and struggle against are overcome; the rest remain in us and limit our uses to eternity. We admire a person who wants to "die in harness." We cannot always succeed in this desire in our material occupations; physical age and weakness may prevent. But the soul does not grow old and weak with the body; it passes — if we are regenerating - "from strength to strength." We should wish to die in spiritual harness, to fight to the end against the evils and falsities within us, and against evil and falsity in the world. So long as the Lord permits us to remain in this world, we may be sure that there is still something for us to do in the way of spiritual progress, and we shall find the way to that something if we continue to read and study the opened Word, which will lead us daily to new conflicts, new victories, and fuller life.

But there can be no reservations, no halfhearted allegiance. The forces which oppose the work of the opened Word in the church and in us are pictured as the dragon — "that old serpent" who tempted Eve in the garden — and the beast, selfish and sensual desires in the heart and false ideas in the mind. These must be recognized and rejected little by little, day by day to the very end of life. The book of Revelation is given to show us these forces in their true aspect.

The last verses of the twentieth chapter sum up in brief and simple form the final judgment. Many people over the centuries have taken them literally, expecting to remain in their graves until some final day and then to be raised up and brought before a throne on which the Lord would be seated to judge them. And they have thought of the books as a record kept in heaven of all their acts, which would then be opened and read out. The Writings give us a very different understanding of this scene. There is no need for anyone else to keep a record of our acts. We keep that record ourselves. For everything we do or think or feel affects us and goes into the formation of our character, and everything we choose freely, of good or evil, is written on our hearts. The character which we ourselves have formed by our free choices from day to day in this world is our "book" which will be opened when we pass into the spiritual world, not in any single judgment scene, but gradually, as we put off the external considerations which have restrained us in this world from giving full expression to what we really feel and think.

We shall judge ourselves by choosing in perfect freedom the kind of life which we have formed in our inner selves. Read Revelation 13:8, 3:4-5, and 2:17. We know that in the Word the name of anything always signifies its quality. Our names will be found written in the book of life if our inmost quality is found to be in accord with the divine truth of the Word. In that case our sphere will be the sphere of heaven where all live in love to the Lord and in mutual love for each other and

no one wishes to exalt himself or to be served. If we are not so written in the book of life, if our final quality proves to be centered in self, our chosen sphere will be the sphere of hell, where all burn with the desire to exalt themselves and to be served by others. This is the "lake of fire."

We are all very familiar with chapters 21 and 22. The book of Revelation has well been called "the charter of the New Church." The formation of the new heaven and new earth and the descent of the holy city, New Jerusalem, are described as immediately following the opening of the books and the final judgment. The first verse of Genesis declares, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." The ultimate result of this creation, desired and foreseen by the Lord from the beginning, is "a new heaven and a new earth." All the history of man as a race and as an individual lies between. In Revelation 21:6 we read, "And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end." In @TCR 791, at the end of the section on the New Heaven and the New Church, we read: "After this work was finished the Lord called together His twelve disciples who followed Him in the world; and the next day sent them all forth throughout the whole spiritual world to preach the Gospel that the Lord God Jesus Christ reigns, whose kingdom shall be for ages and ages, according to the prediction in Daniel (7:13, 14) and in the Apocalypse (9:15) ... This took place on the nineteenth day of June, 1770." This is the only specific date so mentioned in the Writings and we have every reason to observe June 19 as "New Church Day."

In @AR 879 we read: "And I John saw the holy city New Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven, signifies the New Church to be established by the Lord at the end of the former church, which will be consociated with the New Heaven in Divine truths as to doctrine and as to life." This should make us think very seriously about the basis of our New Church organization and its mission in the world. The new heaven is established in the spiritual world. It is the only Christian heaven there is and it is the eventual home of all the good — whatever their religion may have been in this world — but all the good people are not by virtue of their goodness members of the Lord's New Church on earth, because the New Church on earth must be "consociated with the New Heaven in Divine truths as to doctrine and as to life." Without good of life there is no church, but without true doctrine also there is no New Church.

The Lord said to His disciples (John 15:16): "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you." He says the same to us in this new age. Is this an excuse for self-exaltation? Peter denied the Lord. Judas betrayed Him. Any one of us may and frequently does do the same. We deny and betray Him when we turn our backs on the truths which He has entrusted to us for the world's enlightenment — the Gospel He has given us to preach — and by all our failures to live these truths. "I have chosen you," He says, "and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain."

## 157:THE HOLY CITY — Revelation 21:9-27

### INTRO

In all classes above the Primary, a few minutes should be spent reviewing the Word as a whole. Some questions may also be asked, especially in the Junior class, but the review should be kept carefully within limits so that there will be time for the lesson proper, as it is very important for all the pupils to be impressed with the picture of the New Jerusalem as the culmination of the whole Bible story.

## Adult

Our lesson is more than a beautiful picture of an intangible heavenly vision. It is a searching and challenging statement of what we of the New Church may and should be and do. The teacher of the Adult class should be well versed in the details of the vision and their spiritual meaning and should make this lesson an especially thought—provoking and inspiring one. In preparation read, if possible, all of chapter 21 in the @AR , but at least read the full five—page summary at the beginning of the chapter.

The Word in its letter begins with the account of the stages by which a truly human being is created, and it ends with a picture of the ideal form which it is possible for him to attain if he remains faithful to the Lord through all the temptations which are permitted to come to him. This form is pictured as the "holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." It is a beautiful picture in the letter, one which children love to hear read for the very sound of the words, which set their imaginations to work and form a basis in their minds for the influx of the Lord's enlightening spirit. If with the years we have lost our love for this picture, there is something radically wrong in our souls, for the Lord says, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven."

We in the New Church should love this picture above others, because under divine providence we have been brought in contact with the revelation of its meaning given to the world by the Lord in His Second Coming. Our study now is centered on the details of the description of the holy city. It is a description of our church as it should be and of the soul of each individual one of us as it should be. In his brief summary of the contents of chapter 21 in the @AR Swedenborg says: "In this chapter it treats of the state of heaven and the church after the Last Judgment; that after this, through the New Heaven, the New Church will exist on the earth, which will worship the Lord alone (vers. 1-8). Its conjunction with the Lord (vers. 9, 10). The description of it as to intelligence from the Word (ver. 11); as to doctrine thence (vers. 12-21); and as to all its quality (vers. 22-26)."

Our church organization was founded by a group of men and women who had found in the doctrines revealed by the Lord in His Second Coming the answers to their spiritual questions and the true plan of heavenly living. They named their organization the "Church of the New Jerusalem" because its purpose was to make known these doctrines, which are the holy city, new Jerusalem. Throughout the Word a city is the symbol of doctrine. "A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid." The founders set their city on a hill and the church grew. Today we ask ourselves why our organization is not growing and we run about studying the methods of other churches and trying to copy them, soft—pedaling our doctrines for fear of seeming narrow and bigoted, trying to appear as much like everyone else as possible. We say, "After all, our organization is not the New Church — the New Church is coming down everywhere." If our organization is not the New Church, it has no excuse for existence, and it is the New Church exactly to the extent that we, its members, learn, live, and proclaim its doctrines. If we try to dodge this necessity, we are like ostriches, hiding our heads in the sand of current opinion. Because of our natural inheritance it is always easier to believe that if our intentions are good, what we do will be right without any effort on our part to study the truth which the Lord has given us. We really know better. We see all about us the disastrous effects of misguided good intentions. But we persist in believing that our own are different.

True, the holy city in John's vision is made of gold and its street is of gold. The essential quality of the New Church in heaven and on earth is the good of love — but it is the good of love from the

Lord, not natural goodness — and its ways are ways of loving service to the Lord and the neighbor and the city has a wall "great and high" and the wall — of jasper — is the symbol of truth from the sense of the letter of the Word "pellucid" [transparent], as Swedenborg says, from the understanding of the spiritual sense. The wall protects the city but it also imposes limits. We remember that the word religion means literally a "tying back." We cannot give free rein to our natural ideas and inclinations and dwell within the holy city.

True again, the city has twelve gates, three on each side, and they are always open. The gates represent introductory truths. People are different. Each one has a different inheritance, a different background, different problems. We need to remember this in all our missionary efforts. One may approach the city from any one of several directions and find a gate — a particular truth — which attracts him and affords access. But an angel or messenger of the Lord stands at each gate and a particular quality — expressed by the name of one of the twelve tribes — is written on the gate. The interest in the particular truth must be accompanied by a genuine recognition of the Lord and desire to be taught by Him. Though the gates of the city are always open, "there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life." We have seen that judgment consists in the comparison of the books of our lives, as we have written them by our day-to-day choices in this world, with the book of life, which is the Word. And we cannot pattern our lives on the Word without studying what the Word teaches.

The foundations of the wall represent great basic truths, and because the new permanent heavens are Christian heavens, the names of the twelve apostles are written on the foundations. Of the jasper wall Swedenborg says, "that all the Divine truth in the sense of the letter of the Word, with the men of that church, is translucent from the Divine truth in the spiritual sense." Unless we are willing to make the effort to study the spiritual sense by means of the writings, our wall is not of jasper. And the same is true of the precious stones which garnish the wall, of which Swedenborg says that "all things of the doctrine of the New Jerusalem taken from the sense of the letter of the Word, with those who are in it, will appear in the light according to reception." Each of us knows certain particular verses from the Word which have been lighted up for us by our doctrines so that we really treasure them as precious stones. The more we study the Word in the light of the writings the more of these beautiful, varied precious stones we have.

The angel measured the city with a golden reed — the measuring stick of love from the Lord — and it was found to be foursquare:

"The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal." In the Word length is the measure of love or goodness and breadth of truth, and height is the extent to which good and truth acting together govern all three planes of our lives from our outer conduct up through our thinking to our inmost will. The only way that the Lord's spirit can come down to us is as we form all the planes of our lives according to His Word.

This is the city which is "the measure of a man, that is, of the angel." We do not build the New Church. The Lord builds it in and through us as we deny ourselves and follow Him. The holy city, new Jerusalem, can descend to earth only as those who have been called to its service by the Lord are faithful and diligent stewards of the great riches entrusted to them. He says to each one of us, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you."

"Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the

watchman waketh but in vain."

## 158:THE HOLY CITY — Revelation 21, 22

### INTRO

In this closing picture from John's vision the first thing to note in all classes is the fact that our church takes its name from the holy city coming down from God out of heaven. This should be an inspiration and a joy to all of us. After discussing the main features of the vision, the relation between the beginning of the Word and these closing chapters should be pointed out. It is very important that the pupils see the Word as one book, a complete picture of life and its development for good or evil as we choose to be led by the Lord or by self.

### Adult

The identification of the holy city with the New Church and what this should mean to us is the especial lesson for the Adult class. We should recognize clearly that a city represents a system of doctrine and that, although we may not all enter the city by the same gate or be delighted with the same precious stone in its foundations, we do not enter it at all unless we see it as a city that is foursquare and compact together and wish to establish our lives within its walls.

Swedenborg tells us (@AE 879) that "'a city' in the spiritual sense signifies doctrine." We have seen that our house is the house of our character. We build it within the city of certain doctrines or teachings through which we are associated with other men and women and can help them and be helped by them. Jerusalem is the city of the Lord's teachings, "the church as to doctrine." The temple was there, and there the worship of the Lord was carried on. We know that the actual city of Jerusalem was merely a representative and that when the inhabitants had perverted even the externals of their worship, Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed. So it has been with every church: when most of its adherents became selfish and worldly and no longer carried on their worship from a desire to serve the Lord and the neighbor, its city of doctrine was broken up and its people dispersed. Yet throughout the Word the Lord promises that in the fullness of time a church will be raised up which shall not perish, a system of truth will be revealed which shall not perish, a system of truth will be revealed which shall be adequate for all time. This is the stone which smote Nebuchadnezzar's image and then grew into a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

It is also pictured as the holy city New Jerusalem which John saw descending from God out of heaven "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." Swedenborg (@AE 881) beautifully explains this verse. He says that by Jerusalem is meant the church, and continues: "he [John] saw it first as a city, and afterwards as a Virgin Bride; as a city representatively, and as a Virgin Bride spiritually, thus in a twofold idea, one within or above the other; just as the angels do, who when they see or hear or read in the Word of a 'city,' in the idea of the lower thought perceive a city, but in the idea of higher thought perceive the church as to doctrine; and the latter, if they desire it and pray to the Lord, they see as a virgin in beauty and clothing according to the quality of the church. Thus also it has been granted me to see the church ... The church is no otherwise attired for her betrothal, and afterwards for conjunction or marriage, than by the Word; for this is the only means of conjunction or marriage ... From these things it may appear, that by 'Jerusalem prepared as a bride for her husband,' is signified that church conjoined with the Lord through the Word." The walls of the city,

like the garments of the bride, picture the truths of the Word, which make of the holy Jerusalem "a city that is compact together" (Psalm 122:3). We build our house within the walls of the holy city New Jerusalem when we choose to allow the truths of the Word revealed for the New Age to define, circumscribe, and guard our thought and conduct.

This thought brings us to the consideration of the third of the fundamental doctrines of the New Church, the doctrine of life. Perhaps the most popular and most frequently quoted sentence ever written by Swedenborg is, "All religion is of the life, and the life of religion is to do good." (Life 1) This is a beautiful and true statement, but like all statements it can be falsified if it is taken out of the system of truth to which it belongs and used to support and defend ideas contrary to that system — like a single stone taken from the wall of Jerusalem and built into the wall of Babylon. This particular statement has been used sometimes to excuse lack of interest in "doctrine," and sometimes even to support the position that it is not necessary to go to church, to know about and worship the Lord, or even to keep the commandments, if only one is kind and charitable to his neighbors and active in so-called "good works." We need to know what Swedenborg means by "the life" and what by "to do good." "The life" is not outward conduct. Of the Pharisees the Lord said, "Ye are like unto whitened sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones." (Matthew 23:27) And at another time He said, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." (John 6:53) "The life" is the inmost or heart of man. Religion must be primarily in the heart. And the Lord tells us what it is to do good in Micah 6:8: "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good: and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" "Good works" are not measured by the amount of money we give to charity or by our activity in social reforms, but by our personal righteousness, the justice, mercy, and humility before God which we show in every relation of life. "To do good" is to do not what I think is good or what my neighbors think is good but what the Lord says is good, and this involves a thorough and ever-growing knowledge of the Scriptures and their meaning, a constant effort to learn the Lord's will and do it and to avoid evils as sins against God. If a person's life lacks this inner quality of humility and obedience to the Lord, he cannot do good, whatever his outward acts may be. "If he does them from God they are good, if from self they are not good." (@DLove 9) And the only way to acquire this inner quality is to keep the commandments, to shun as sins against God the things which the Lord says we must not do. As long as we refuse to recognize our evils, as long as we excuse and defend them, we are not really looking to the Lord for guidance at all, and there is no life in anything we do.

The holy city New Jerusalem is the picture of a heavenly society, the New Church teaching lived. It exists in heaven, but also it is descending to earth to the extent that individual men and women learn and live these teachings. It is "foursquare," "the length, and the breadth, and the height of it are equal," and its measurements are those of a man, "that is of the angel." This is the full life with its three dimensions — love, wisdom, and act — perfectly equal: no good desire which is thwarted by ignorance, no knowledge of the truth which is not put into practice, no deeds which are not the expression of love and wisdom. All the good affections which men may have, represented by the twelve apostles and by the heads of the twelve tribes of Israel, are there as means of entrance and supports. The gates are not shut at all; all who wish may enter. And yet it is said, "And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth": those who do not wish to obey and serve the Lord see no beauty in the city and have no desire to enter it. For its beauties are all representative: the precious stones are beautiful truths seen in variety by different minds and translucent from the spiritual meaning. The golden streets are paths of loving service. The river of water of life is the truth proceeding from the Lord, the same living water which He promised to the woman of

Samaria, and the fruits of the tree of life are all form of heavenly use. These things are beautiful only to those who love goodness for its own sake, thus who love the Lord, who is Good. The worship in the city is directed to the Lord alone, and all the light and glory of it are from Him. This is the picture of the crown and reward of a truly good life; and only a truly good life, lived according to the commandments in loving service of the Lord and the neighbor, can see its beauty and glory.

We should all recognize in this last book of the Bible a stirring picture of the life of the true New Churchman, beginning with the beautiful vision of the Lord Jesus Christ reigning, and going on through the lifelong battle against the falsities and evils in oneself as they are gradually uncovered through deeper and deeper understanding of the Word, to the final victory of the established heavenly character with its enjoyments of the Lord's great gifts of love, truth, and heavenly usefulness. "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."

## **159:THE END OF JOHN'S VISION — Revelation 22:8-21**

### **INTRO**

Certain great simple lessons are grouped together in the closing verses of the Bible and should be impressed upon all classes: (1) It is possible to all of us to become angels. (2) The Lord's truth is offered freely to all. (3) We must not from our own will and intelligence tamper with the Word as the Lord has given it. (4) To study the Word and obey its commandments is the way to heavenly happiness. (5) The choice is ours, but it must be made here and it is not changed after death. (6) Jesus Christ, risen and glorified, is the only God, the God who speaks to us in the Word, the alpha and omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.

### **Adult**

Several distinct discussion topics are outlined in the notes, any of which may be developed according to the interest of the class. The teaching of these last verses of the Bible is impressive and should be of deep concern to us all.

In the twenty-first chapter of Revelation we are told of the vision of the holy city New Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." We have already had the New Church pictured as a "woman clothed with the sun." In @AR 533 we read that by this woman the church is signified "because the church is called the Bride and Wife of the Lord" and further that she was seen clothed with the sun "because the church is in love to the Lord, for it acknowledges Him and does His commandments, and this is to love Him." But we are told many times in the Writings that love gets all its "quality" from truth. So the final picture of the church is of a city, for a city signifies doctrine. And in the beginning of the twenty-second chapter John sees the "pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." This river, like the river which watered the Garden of Eden, is divine truth from the Lord. On its banks grows the tree of life, the same tree which in the beginning was in the center of the Garden of Eden, "the Lord as to the Divine love," whose fruits are "the goods of love and charity," and whose leaves, which were "for the healing of the nations," are "rational truths therefrom, by

which they who are in evils and thence in falsities are led to think soundly, and to live becomingly."  
(@AR 926)

The final verses of chapter 22, which are the subject of our lesson for today, should be carefully studied and fixed in mind by all of us who profess to belong to the New Church, for they summarize the fundamental teachings of the Word, which are the basis on which the New Church rests, and also show us clearly certain important implications of these teachings which we are prone to forget.

First there is the incident of John's impulse to worship his angel guide and the angel's rejection of this worship. A similar incident is recorded in Revelation 19:10. We know that we have angel associates from whom many of our thoughts come and we know that we can all help each other spiritually in many ways, but angels and men are all finite, and make mistakes, and each of us must himself study the Word constantly for his guidance in life.

In @AC 5432 we read: "They who have arrived at maturity, and still more they who have arrived at old age, and have not viewed with their own eyes the truths of the church, which are called doctrinal things, and seen whether they are true, and then been willing to live according to them, retain them merely as they do all other memory knowledges; they are in their natural memory only, and thence on their lips; and when they utter them, they utter them not from their interior man or from the heart, but only from the exterior man and from the mouth. When a man is in this state he cannot possibly believe that the truths of the church are true, although it seems to him that he so believes. The reason why it seems to him that he believes them to be true, is that he relies on others, and has confirmed in himself the teachings of others. It is very easy to confirm things taken from others, whether true or false; for this needs nothing but ingenuity." For the New Churchman the sole authority is the Lord speaking in His Word.

This leads to another interesting and important lesson presented by our assignment. When one attends churches other than the New Church, one is struck by the frequent use of the Epistles sometimes rather than the Gospels, and when one examines the basic doctrines of these churches, one finds that they rest on the Epistles and on the decisions of men at the Council of Nicea in A.D. 325. The apostles and early leaders of the Christian Church had a feeling that the Lord was God, which came out occasionally in their writings, as in Paul's statement in Colossians 2:9 that "in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." There are those in churches dating back to the first Christian Church today who have and occasionally express the same "feeling." But without the rational basis provided by the opening of the Word — the leaves of the tree of life — their minds remain clouded by natural concepts. Read the Epistles of John. John was the beloved disciple, apparently closest of all to the Lord. Yet from his own letters there is constant evidence that he habitually thought of God as other than Christ. In his Gospel — under inspiration — he recorded the words of the Lord to Philip: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father," but when he wrote from himself, the thought of the Messiah as the Son of God — the mediator in the sense of a go-between — persisted. When one looks to the ideas of men — seven of the apostles — for doctrine, one is not looking to the Lord. But in the book of Revelation under inspiration John recorded (Revelation 21:5-6) that he that sat upon the throne said, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end," and in our chapter these words are repeated by the same speaker who says, "I Jesus," and the response to the promise in Revelation 22:20 is: "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

Another thing which is told us clearly in our chapter is that man has freedom to choose whether he will believe and follow the Lord or not, and that no presentation of the truth in this world or the next will reverse his choice. All do not enter the holy city, though its gates are open and its living

water is offered to all.

Finally we have the solemn warning against adding to or taking from the book. This warning is spoken specifically to those who acknowledge the truth as coming from the Lord — those who profess to belong to the church — and it applies most of all to those who have accepted the Lord in His Second Coming. "Blessed are they who do His commandments." For those of the New Church "His commandments" include all that He has revealed of the way of life by the opening of the Word. Yet our selfishness and worldliness are constantly prompting us to misinterpret what we read in the Word and the Writings so that it may teach what we want to believe. We are told that Revelation 22:18 signifies "that they who read and know the truths of doctrine of this book, now opened by the Lord, and yet acknowledge any other God than the Lord, and any other faith than in Him, by adding anything whereby they may destroy these two things, cannot do otherwise than perish from the falsities and evils, which are signified by the plagues described in this book." And essentially the same is said of those who "take away" from the words of the book. We should realize that worldly success and public approval may be "other gods" and must not be sought for ourselves or for our church organization at the cost of spiritual compromise and disobedience. When we begin to look to men instead of to the Lord for direction, we turn our steps away from the holy city. As the angel said to John: "See thou do it not ... worship God."

## **160:APPENDIX 1 - SPECIAL "NEW CHURCH DAY" LESSONS**

### **INTRO**

The five lessons that follow — never previously published — are intended for school or home use on the Sunday closest to June 19, New Church Day. The first four were written by the author of this set of lessons, the fifth (which is not complete) by the editor. This latter lesson is included because it bears the "stamp of approval" of Mrs. Dole. See below the photo—reprint of her note which was written on the original typescript. "This lesson was written by Rev. Wm. R. Woofenden in 1967. O.K. if I pass away. Anita S. Dole"

### **NEW CHURCH DAY - Revelation 22:13-21**

### **161:NEW CHURCH DAY - Revelation 22:13-21**

### **INTRO**

The emphasis in this lesson should be on the fact that the Second Coming of the Lord has been made and that this is His final revelation to mankind. The Lord has always given man sufficient knowledge of Himself and His will so that man has remained free to choose. Our opportunity is greater than ever, but the price of rejecting the Lord remains the same.

## **Adult**

A brief verse-by-verse study of the lesson should be made in this class, after speaking of the reason for the name of this special day. Then ask for questions, and discuss whatever they bring out.

In our lessons from the book of Revelation, we have studied the nature and purpose of John's vision, the different types of reaction to the Lord and His Word which appear in the Lord's Church on earth and in each one of us individually, the nature of the final Church in heaven and on earth pictured as the holy city New Jerusalem, and what is required of each of us who wishes to live within that holy city.

In @TCR 791 Swedenborg tells us the basis for celebrating "New Church Day." See the quotation below.

Our lesson for today, the last nine verses of the Word, gives us really a summary of the whole teaching of the Word and of our duty as members of the Lord's New Church. First (Revelation 22:13), we must recognize the Lord Jesus Christ as the one God of heaven and earth, our creator and our guide forever. Second (Revelation 22:14), if we wish to dwell in peace and happiness in the holy city both here and when we pass from this world, we must keep His commandments. Third (Revelation 22:15), we must be aware of the many temptations to evil which surround us in this world. Fourth (Revelation 22:16), the Lord has made available to us all the truth we need now and for all future time. Fifth (Revelation 22:17), the Lord offers us this truth freely to understand and to use from day to day. Sixth (Revelation 22:18), He tells us plainly that if we try to add our own ideas of what is true and right to what the Lord has said, we shall get into serious trouble. Seventh (Revelation 22:19), if we try to change and reject what the Lord says in order to make it suit our finite desires, we shall not be able to live in the holy city at all. Eighth (Revelation 22:20), we should accept gladly the fact that the Lord has made His Second and final Coming. And ninth (Revelation 22:21), we should all recognize our own weakness, and look to the Lord for forgiveness and love.

You will find very interesting statements in regard to the Second Coming in @TCR 768-790, 846-847, and in @AR 875.

## **162:NEW CHURCH DAY — Revelation 22:1-14**

### **INTRO**

Start in all classes by asking the pupils if they know what we mean by New Church Day. If they do not know, remind those who should remember and tell those who have not been told before. In all classes, in addition to taking up the actual assignment, do as much as you can with the doctrinal basis on which the New Church is founded, and emphasize the feeling of gratitude and obligation to the Lord which we should have because He has given us this new knowledge.

## **Adult**

Be sure that all in this class know the facts concerning New Church Day and the Second Coming of the Lord. Then take up the correspondence of the Bible lesson, emphasizing Revelation 22:7 and 14

and their specific meaning for every member of the New Church.

As an adult each of us has his or her own life to live from day to day, his own background and abilities, his own tastes and temptations, his own education, his own daily work, his own friends, his own opportunities. Only the Lord knows just what each of us is and how far he is doing the best he can with his life. But wherever we go there are rules which we must observe if we wish to be accepted and liked, rules for the care and conduct of our homes, rules for our offices, jobs, schools, and laboratories, rules for our social activities, rules of the road. Rules are what make all our activities orderly and safe and enjoyable. Should we not expect to have rules for our inner spiritual life which will make our thinking and feeling as well as our actions orderly and safe and enjoyable?

The word "church" has several connotations: a building, a small group of people, a local organization, a national or world organization, religious thought in general, or a particular system of doctrine. But in every connotation the word "church" implies and assumes recognition of God, and churches differ primarily according to the concept of God to which they are dedicated, and this concept is a matter of doctrine, of specific belief. If we have no specific belief about God, about who and what He is and what belief in Him involves we are not really members of any church.

We know from the Word and from history in general as well as from the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg which, as members of the New Church, we professedly accept as authoritative, that every dispensation of the Lord's Church on earth has declined and come to its end because its own people refused to trust and obey the Lord as He had revealed Himself to them, and chose instead to worship "the gods of the nations round about."

Our New Church is still in its beginnings. It is small and not too widely known in the world. How sincere are we? Have we studied its teachings and accepted them freely and intelligently? Do they inspire us? Are we trying daily to live better lives by their help? When we come to church on Sunday, do we come willingly and eagerly to worship the Lord the Savior Jesus Christ as God, the one only God of heaven and earth? When we have a problem to solve, do we study it in the light of the teachings of the Lord in His Second Coming? Do we accept our difficulties and trials as opportunities to learn? Do we listen sympathetically to the troubles of our friends and neighbors and try to find and bring them thoughts from our doctrines which will really apply to their specific problems and help them? Do we refrain from criticizing and condemning others because they do not agree with us or do just as we do? It is the Lord who builds the Church, the church universal, which He sees as one man, and also the church specific, which He declares to be the "heart and lungs" of that man, a specific organ with a specific function. Our Church is the church specific for the new age. We help the Lord build it only as each of us tries continually and steadily to learn and live its teachings.

The New Jerusalem is the city of doctrine in which, as our chapter tells us, is the "pure river of the water of life" and the tree of life whose leaves are "for the healing of the nations." "And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads." (Revelation 22:3-4)

## 163:NEW CHURCH DAY — Revelation 21:1-12

## **INTRO**

This lesson is to be used only if you have Sunday school the third Sunday in June. Most of our Sunday schools close earlier. You will find the reason for this name for June nineteenth in the quotation at the end of the lesson. In all classes be sure the class knows the true name of our church and why it was given that name.

## **Adult**

The need of the New Church teachings in our modern world and the responsibility of each member to study and live these teachings is the important lesson for the Adults. The teacher should ask for questions and answer them as clearly and fully as possible. The Church should be the center of life for all of us and the study of the Word our most important study.

John's vision of the holy city coming down from God out of heaven is the culmination of the Word of God. We have seen that the whole Word is the gradual revelation to mankind of the nature and will of God, as man developed from his first childlike state to his present state of expanding worldly knowledge. Just as a child cannot be taught everything at once, so man has developed from stage to stage and had to be instructed progressively until he reached his full adult capacity.

Man is different from the animals because he has rationality and freedom of choice. These qualities are what are meant by his being made in the image and likeness of God. The writings tell us that the one thing the Lord must preserve in man at all costs is his freedom of choice; the Lord could not have prevented the development of evils in the world without destroying man. Love which is not freely given is not love.

The final revelation needed by man was made when he reached his fullest mental development, about two hundred years ago. It was the Second Coming of the Lord — not an earthly reappearance, but a coming, as He Himself had prophesied, "in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory." That is, a coming in the internal meaning shining through the clouds of the letter of the Word! Swedenborg tells us that this new understanding from the Word of the rule of the Lord Jesus Christ alone was proclaimed in the heavens on June 19, 1770. This is why we observe the nineteenth of June as "New Church Day."

We have only to read the philosophies of our day based on men's pride in their own scientific development, and to observe the progressive weakening of the doctrinal bases of Protestant sects and even of Roman Catholic claims to realize how essential the new revelation is to the preservation of knowledge and worship of the Lord in our new age. The mission of the New Church is a very important one and the responsibility of each one of its members is very great. Let us all make every effort to study and live the teachings of the holy city and to lead others to a knowledge of them wherever the Lord has seen fit to place us. The Church on earth is the bride, the lamb's wife. Let us all cleave to the Lord and serve Him first of all.

## **164:NEW CHURCH DAY — Revelation 22:1-14**

# INTRO

"New Church Day" presents a good opportunity to emphasize man's fundamental need of recognition and worship of the Lord, constant study of the Word in the light of the Writings, and the daily effort to live as the Lord teaches us to live instead of from our own selfish ideas of what is best. Try to keep this major objective in mind as you teach the various classes. None are too young to have it impressed upon them.

## Adult

The best lesson for the Adults is to help them to realize that the most important use they can serve — not only to their Church but to the world — is to study steadily and seriously the Word of God in the light of the internal meaning, to which the writings of Swedenborg are the key, and to try to live their daily lives in this light and be ready to help others from it as opportunity offers.

In our world today we face many frightening conditions: wars and rumors of wars, race hatreds, poverty and disease, lust for power, rebellious youth, drug addiction and insanity, business and political dishonesty, sex offenses and murder, decline of the churches. Many good people are staggered by these facts, completely discouraged, even sure the end of the world must be at hand. Many who believe in God fall into the temptation to blame Him, saying, "Why does God permit such things?" Others are drawn into so many kinds of external "good works" that they have no time to read and think, and fall into the habit of blaming everyone who does not do just the same things they do.

Yet the answer has been given us from the beginning: "And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Man from his beginning was man, not an animal, because from his beginning he was given rationality and freedom of choice, the power to think above the level of this earth and so to recognize God, and freedom to choose on which level he would live.

If we study the history of mankind in the light of the Word of God, we can see that the decline of mankind from the first happy state to their present state has been the result of man's choice of self-intelligence and love of dominion in place of love to the Lord and the effort to learn of Him and do His will. Our reading for today repeats the fact of our freedom and points out the consequences of the selfish choice. But it also points out to us clearly that in this new age of ours the pure river of truth is still available to quench the thirst of all who really seek it, and the tree of life still grows in the holy city New Jerusalem, yielding fruit to satisfy the needs of every hungry person; and we are told plainly in the vision that "the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations."

The gates of the holy city are open. Let each of us honestly examine himself and face up to his own individual responsibility in the place where the Lord has seen fit to put him, remembering always the last verse of our lesson: "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."

# **165:NEW CHURCH DAY — Revelation 21:1-10**

## **INTRO**

(@TCR 791, 846-847)

This lesson is an additional special lesson to be used following the regular season, on June 19, or the nearest Sunday to that date. It is based on Swedenborg's statement in @TCR 791 that "after this work [the book @TCR ] was completed, the Lord called together His twelve disciples who followed Him in the world; and the next day He sent them all forth throughout the whole spiritual world to preach the Gospel that the Lord God Jesus Christ reigns ... This took place on the nineteenth of June, 1770 ... "

## **Adult**