

Noah's Ark and Covenant

6.—The Deluge.

1. The descendants of Adam were divided into two classes—the *good* and the *bad*. To console Adam for the death of Abel, God gave him the pious Seth. Seth's posterity were known as the children of God, while the descendants of Cain were very wicked.

2. By degrees mankind became corrupt, Noah alone remaining just. God bade Noah build an Ark, for in a hundred years He would destroy by a deluge every living creature on the face of the earth. The following are the dimensions and construction of the Ark: its length, three hundred cubits; its breadth, fifty; and its height, thirty cubits. In the upper part was a window, and in the side a door.

3. For a hundred years Noah labored on the construction of the Ark. During this time he preached penance to the wicked, and warned them of the evils that were to come; but they heeded him not. Then God commanded him to go into the Ark and to take with him his wife, and his three sons and their wives; moreover to take with him of every animal two of a sort, and food sufficient.

4. After seven days the deluge came. The fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the floodgates of heaven were opened, but the Ark floated peacefully upon the waters. Overwhelmed with despair, men began to climb the trees, and in vain to ascend the hills. The waters continued to increase, until they had risen fifteen cubits above the tops of the highest mountains.

5. Thus perished every living thing that then moved upon the earth: from man to the beasts of the earth; from the birds in the air to the reptiles on the ground. Noah and all that were in the Ark alone remained.

Noah is a figure of Jesus Christ, as the Ark is a figure of the Catholic Church.

7.—The Sacrifice of Noah.

1. When the waters had covered the earth for a hundred and fifty days, God remembered Noah and sent a warm wind, that by degrees abated the waters. Soon the mountains began to appear, and in the seventh month the Ark rested on the top of Mount Ararat, in Armenia.

2. Noah, eager to learn if the waters had subsided, opened the window of the Ark and sent forth a raven, which did not return; then he sent forth a dove, which, not finding where her foot might rest, returned to the Ark. After seven days, Noah again sent forth the dove, which returned in the evening, carrying in its beak an olive branch. By this, Noah knew that the waters were abated upon the earth. At the command of God, Noah and his wife, and his sons and his sons' wives, and every living creature that was with them, went forth from the Ark, after having been shut up in it for a whole year.

3. Filled with gratitude, Noah built an altar, and, taking of the animals that were pure, offered sacrifice to the Lord. God was pleased with him for this, and set His rainbow in the heavens. Then God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them: "Behold, I will establish my covenant with you and with your posterity. There shall be no more a deluge to destroy all flesh. While the earth exists, seed-time and harvest, summer and winter, day and night shall not cease. And the arc that I have placed in the clouds shall be the sign of my covenant with you."

4. The impenitent sinner is like the raven that returned not to the Ark, while the dove is like the faithful soul that finds its rest only in Jesus Christ and His Church.

8.—The Sons of Noah.

1. Noah had three sons—Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Together with them he tilled the ground and planted the vine. When the vintage came, not knowing the strength of wine, he drank too freely, and, becoming drunk, lay in his tent. Ham, finding him in this condition, laughed, and, going, told his brothers what he had seen.

2. But they, filled with reverence, and moved with filial love, took a cloak, and, putting it upon their shoulders, turned away their eyes, and, going backward, covered their father. When Noah awoke, and learned what had taken place, he cursed Ham, in his descendants, but blessed Shem and Japheth.

The Tower of Babel

3. Soon the descendants of Noah began so to multiply that they could no longer dwell together in the same place. In their pride, before separating, they resolved to build a city and a tower that would reach to heaven. But God easily confounded them in their foolish project. On a sudden their language was confused, and they could not understand one another. Before this there had been but one language; but now there were many. The city and the tower were abandoned, and the people dispersed.

4. The posterity of Shem was spread over the greater part of Asia. From him are descended the Israelites, the chosen people of God. The descendants of Ham went to Africa, while the children of Japheth passed over to Europe.

5. The pride of Babel led to the confusion of languages; while, on Pentecost, the humility of the apostles led to their union.

What the Bible Tells Us About the Early History of Mankind

This first age of the world comprises creation and the early history of mankind. The record in the Bible of these many, many centuries is very brief. It gives us only some of the traditions about these times that have important religious lessons for us. For God in His book, the Bible, is concerned mainly in telling us about *His constant interest in men*, how in those far-off days as today He blessed and encouraged the good, forgave the repentant, and punished the wicked. God is not interested in telling us in His book about *men's* doings in the beginning of history, about how they lived or how they discovered new parts of the world or new things about nature. For this reason we find there very little about such things.

No dates are given for these early events, because the Bible itself gives none. In those early days no fixed point or great event, like the birth of our Lord, had been selected by people to date other events from.

End of the First Age