

# The Flood (I.253-312)



*The Flood - Nicolas Poussin 1660-1664*

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Ovid's tale of the Flood is much the same as is found in the stories told in civilizations around the world; the story almost always involves a divine being offended by the evil behavior of the human race, usually involving one particularly malevolent human or a city sunk in debauchery. With Ovid, the story of Lycaon (I.163-252) provides Jupiter's justification for destroying humanity and replacing it with a new humanity. For the first forty lines Ovid describes how Jupiter works with his brother Neptune to wreak havoc and to make the world disappear under the surface of the sea. The poet then uses a long run of details to show the effect of the disaster on all nature; as is typical of Ovid's desire to see humor in the grimmest of situations, he describes boats floating over the fields where the rowers once plowed, the fish swimming among the trees, and playful goats being replaced by frolicking seals. He concludes with sad details as the exhausted birds fall into the sea, people drown, and the few survivors die of a long, wasting hunger.

### Outline:

253-261 Jupiter considers how to destroy the world and chooses water over fire.

262-273 Jupiter lets out the storm winds and starts to flood the world.

274-284 Neptune helps his brother by commanding the rivers to open their springs.

285-292 Crops and buildings are submerged, everything is covered by water.

293-312 Men row over their fields, fish swim in trees; the world is destroyed by drowning and hunger.