

"The Brightness of the Firmament"

The Present Truth – August 25, 1898

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"The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork."

[Psalm 19:1] You have learned that on the second day "God made the firmament" by the power of His Word, saying, "Let there be a firmament." And He "divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament."

"And God called the firmament, Heaven." [Gen. 1:6-8]

Last week we were thinking about God's power in the firmament; to-day we will talk about His glory, which the heavens declare,—the beauty of the Lord which we may see in "the waters which are above the firmament." For you know that the clouds which float [up] in the blue sky are large masses of water in the form of vapour, which has been drawn up there by the power of God, working through the sun.

God draws up to Himself the drops of water, and holds them up in the sky, and stretches them like a curtain over the earth, sending them down where they are needed in refreshing showers, to water the thirsty ground, and "make it bring forth and bud."

Of the cloud that rested over the tabernacle that was with the children of Israel in the wilderness, we are told that "the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud." [Exod. 16:10] This is true, not of that particular cloud only, but of all the clouds that are in the sky. Have you ever watched with delight the glorious sunrise? when

"Far eastward in the heaven
You see at last the sign,—
Along the far horizon
A single silver line.

"It broadens and it deepens
To a sea of red and gold,
With clouds of rosy amber
Around its glory rolled."

Or, more glorious still, the splendour of the sunset sky, when the ruler of the day "seems to lay down his head upon a pillow of crimson and gold," and

"Bright clouds are gathering one by one,
And sweeping in pomp round the setting sun,
With crimson banner and golden pall,
Like a host to their chieftain's funeral."

Where does all this brightness in beauty come from,—the delicate soft tints of pink and amber, and the magnificent glowing crimson and gold?—It is the glory of the Lord appearing in the clouds. His glory which the sun reveals is reflected by the clouds before

the sun rises and after it sets. The glory would be there just the same if there were no clouds reflect it to us; but through the clouds it is made visible so that we are able to see in "the brightness of the firmament," the glory of the Lord.

And then, you will remember, that after the flood of waters which destroyed the earth, God said, "I do put My bow in the cloud." [Gen. 9:13] The rainbow simply shows us all the beautiful colours that are in the light, which is the glory of God shining from the face of Jesus Christ. But this glory is the shining forth of His love and goodness, so we may really see in the rainbow, when His Holy Spirit opens our eyes, the beauty of God's character.

A little while ago, while walking one morning in a large park, I watched one of the gardeners watering the plants with a large hose. As the water shot from the hose in a cloud of fine spray which fell gently to the earth, I saw reflected in it a beautiful rainbow. And I knew that this beauty of the Lord was all about me in the light, although unseen, and that like the cloud of spray I might reflect it so that others could see it, by revealing His character, His grace and loveliness.

And this is just what God has promised that His children shall do, for He says that they "shall shine as the brightness of the firmament." [Dan. 12:3] Think of this whenever you see the beauty of the heavens come and ask God to let His glory shine into your heart, so that you may reveal the beauty of His love, that when He comes its beauty may "shine forth" from you for ever in "the kingdom of your Father."