

“The Dividing of the Waters”

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Perhaps when you saw our picture last week, the waters divided by the power of God to make a path for His people to pass through, some of our little readers wished that they could have been there to see the wonder, to march through the midst of the sea on dry land with the host of Israel, and to stand on the shore and see the meeting of the divided waters sweep away the proud legions of Pharaoh.

You may be surprised when I tell you that God is now doing for you just what He did for the Israelites, dividing the waters and holding them back by His power, that you may have a place to dwell on the dry land. If it were not for this, if His power should for one moment fail, if He who “holds the waters in the hollow of His hand” should faint or grow weary, we should all be overwhelmed with a mightier flood than the returning waters of the Red Sea, like that which swept everything from the face of the earth in the days of Noah.

This was what God was teaching the Israelites when He led them through the divided waters. He wanted them to know of the constant working of His power to preserve them. And in the perishing of the Egyptians when the waters met, He was showing them what would be the result if He should forget them for one moment.

In order that you may see that this is so, read what God said on the second day of creation: “Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.” And the third day “God said, Let the waters under the firmament be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so.”

That which divided the waters in the beginning was the firmament that God spread out between them. The Hebrew word that is used means something spread out, an expanse, or space. We call the firmament the sky, but you know that when you look up into the sky, the blue heavens, you are but gazing into the blue depths, or heights, of the air. This, then, is what God called the firmament, by which He divided the waters. You will remember that God said the birds were to fly in “the open firmament of heaven,” but you know that they fly in the air, so you see that the firmament is the air.

But what is the air?—It is the life-giving breath of God, which carries His life to all His creatures. So you see how God divided the waters and how He still holds them apart: He breathed between the waters, and they were divided, and a space was thus spread out for us to dwell in, filled with His life-giving breath. “He stretcheth out the heavens like a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in.”

Away up in the air, in what we call the sky, float the great masses of watery vapour that we call the clouds. They seem to sail so lightly in the great ocean of air, that

we hardly realise their great weight. But sometimes there is what is called a "cloud-burst," when one of the clouds is rent, and pours its flood of waters upon the earth, sweeping away houses and trees and rocks and everything that comes in its way. Then we can see what would happen to us if God should no longer hold back the divided waters.

"Who shut up the sea with doors
When it brake forth . . .
When I made the cloud the garment thereof?"

Now let us read how God divided the waters of the Red Sea before Israel. "And the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided." The wind is simply the air in motion. When we say; "The wind blows," we mean that the air is moving quickly, and the more quickly it moves, the stronger is the wind.

But we have seen that the air is the breath of the Lord, and so He divided the waters of the Red Sea just as He divided the waters in the beginning,—He breathed between them, and thus made a space for His people to pass through. This is just what Moses sang in the song of victory after they had reached the shore, and the Egyptians were slain: "With the blast of Thy nostrils the waters were gathered together, the floods stood upright as an heap."

Now you see, do you not, that when God divided the sea and made a new way for His people, He was not doing a new thing, but was showing what He had been doing from the beginning, and what He is still doing for us to-day.

This does not mean only that God is still holding apart, by means of the air, the waters which He first divided by it. If you think for a moment you will see that this cannot be so. For the clouds that you see in the sky will not remain there always; they are even now hastening to the place where God is sending them, to pour out the water of life upon the earth.

"Yea, He ladeth the thick cloud with moisture, . . .
And it is turned around about by His guidance.
That they may do whatsoever He commandeth them
Upon the face of the habitable world."

But although the clouds are constantly pouring out their waters upon the earth, there is still an abundance of water above the firmament. How is this?—It is because God is continuing the work that He began on the second day. He said that the firmament was to divide the waters, and He is still, by means of the air, separating or dividing the waters from the earth, and drawing them up to unite with the waters above the earth.

The air passing over the surface of the waters, takes up some of the moisture in the form of vapour, which being lighter than the air, rises and forms the clouds which

float in the sky and carry the water to wherever it is needed. Thus God is "calling for the waters of the sea, and pouring them out upon the face of the earth."

Let us learn the lesson that the dividing of the Red Sea is to teach us. Let us learn to see God working and to see "the power of His works," so that we may put our trust in Him and enter into His rest.