

Sabbath School Lesson #11 – Out of the Whirlwind – 3-9 December 2016

Christ would have us learn lessons in the questions asked of Job. “Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding” (Job 38:4). Nowhere is the absolute wisdom and immeasurable greatness of God in the least of His works more strikingly revealed than in the pure perfection of the snow and ice crystals. “Out of whose womb came the ice? and the hoary frost of heaven who hath given it birth?” (Job 38:29) was one of the questions which the Lord asked Job out of the whirlwind. And the answer is given: “By the breath of the Lord frost is given” (Job 37:10). Moulded by the Divine breath, upon the perfect form of every crystal is stamped the message, “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5:48).

When God “answered Job out of the whirlwind,” He began at the beginning of His creation, saying: “Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding” (Job 38:1, 4). The same question could be asked of every man who lives, or who has ever lived, and not one of them could say a word. Everything else in the whole creation was made before man was. Man was the last of all. When he came into being, he found everything complete; and every man that has ever been born has found everything waiting for him when he arrived. Why this arrangement? Evidently so that no man could have any chance to lay claim to share with God the honour of creation. It is a fact that no man can create. This needs no argument. Men work, and effect changes in form and appearance of many things; but no man ever yet added the slightest particle of matter to the substance of the earth or to anything that exists; and no man ever can do it. Yet such is the conceit and self-assertion of the human mind that if God had performed any new act of creation after man came into being, man would surely claim that he himself had done it.

Even as it is, men are very prone to exalt themselves above God. The only thing that will keep them – *us* – from doing this in some form or degree, is to remember “who is the beginning” (Colossians 1:18). We are wont to pride ourselves not a little upon the fact that man was made last – the crown of creation; it may serve to abate that pride if we think that God made man last because there was no use for him before; there was nothing that he could do, he would have been hopelessly in the way of the progress of creation, and what is more, he would not have been able to maintain himself. God had to provide all things first, so that man, the most helpless of created things, might be able to live. If all men had but kept in mind this simple truth, and had remembered that in Christ, who is the Beginning, “were all things created,” and “He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together” (verse 17), there would never have been a pope, great or small. “Seekest thou great things for thyself; seek them not,” says the Lord (Jeremiah 45:5). Let us be content to be children, keeping close to the Beginning. “In all thy ways acknowledge Him,” as the beginning, “and He shall direct my paths” (Proverbs 3:6). What He begins He will carry to successful completion.

When, recorded in the last part of the book of Job, the Lord would convince the patriarch of his weakness and dependence upon God, that he might know that righteousness comes from God alone, He referred to His works of “gathering together of the waters” (Genesis 1:9-10) as proof. “Who shut up the sea with doors, when it brake forth, as if it had issued out of the womb? When I made the cloud the garment thereof, and thick darkness a swaddling band for it, and brake up for it my decreed place, and set bars and doors, and said, Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed?” (Job 38:8-11).

When the Psalmist speaks of the power of the word, by which God created the heavens and earth, he says, “He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap: He layeth up the depth in storehouses” (Psalm 33:7). It may be well to notice here, in passing, the words, “And it was so,” with which the record of every new step in creation is closed. God said, “Let it be,” – “*and it was so*” (Genesis 1:11). His simple word was sufficient to establish it. Let it be remembered that this is the word which by the Gospel is preached unto us. Let us know that the power of God’s word has never diminished; it is able to save as it was to create.

It is impossible that anyone who is acquainted to any degree with the Lord should stand by the sea without being reminded of the mighty power of the Creator. Yet many gaze upon the sea day after day with never a thought of its Maker, and even openly defy Him. To such

the Lord says: "Hear now this, O foolish people, and without understanding; which have eyes, and see not; which have ears, and hear not: Fear ye not me? saith the Lord: will ye not tremble at My presence, which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it; and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it?" (Jeremiah 5:21-22).

But it is not in order to produce fright that the Lord reminds us of His mighty power that can set bounds for the sea, so that it cannot pass over in its fiercest tumult. No; it is that we may trust Him. Perfect faith and love drive fear away. So the power of God over the sea is referred to as evidence of His faithfulness: "O Lord God of hosts, who is a strong Lord like unto Thee? or to Thy faithfulness round about Thee? Thou rulest the raging of the sea; when the waves thereof arise, Thou stillest them" (Psalm 89:8-9). An example of this faithfulness is given in the Gospels. "And the same day, when the even was come, He saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side. And when they had sent away the multitude, they took Him even as He was in the ship. And there were also with Him other little ships. And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. 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? And He arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. And He said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith? And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?" (Mark 4:35-41). This was a manifestation of the original creative power.

He who created the heavens and the earth and sea, retains full control over all. In those words, "Peace, be still," we hear the same voice that said, "Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place" (Genesis 1:9). And this is the word which by the Gospel is preached unto us; so we are to learn from God's power over the sea, which is His because He made it, His power over the waves of strife that surge through human hearts.

For the angry sea represents the wicked. "The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt" (Isaiah 57:20). Christ is our peace. The word which He spoke to the sea of Galilee that night is the word which He speaks to us. "I will hear what God the Lord will speak; for He will speak peace unto His people, and to His saints; but let them not turn again to folly" (Psalm 85:8). Surely here is comfort for those who have long struggled in vain with fierce passions. Not only is God's power over the sea a symbol of His power to save men from the tide of sin, but it is also a pledge and surety of their final complete deliverance. It also shows the power with which God is going to clothe the preaching of the Gospel message in the last struggle preceding His second coming.

Read the following words: "Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord; awake, as in the days of old, the generations of ancient times. Art thou not it that hath cut Rahab [Egypt] in pieces, that pierced the dragon? Art thou not it which dried the sea, that made the depths of the sea a way for the redeemed to pass over? And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away. I, even I, am He that comforteth you; who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass; and hast forgotten the Lord thy Maker, that stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; and fearest continually all the day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he maketh ready to destroy? The captive exile shall speedily be loosed, and he shall not die and go down into the pit, neither shall his bread fail. For I am the Lord thy God, which stirreth up the sea, that the waves thereof roar; the Lord of hosts is His name. And I have put My words in thy mouth, and have covered thee in the shadow of Mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, Thou art My people" (Isaiah 51:9-16). These are thrilling words!

Surely the fact that "the sea is His and He made it" (Psalm 95:5), and that the Lord "hath measured the waters in the hollow of His hand" (Isaiah 40:12), is sufficient grounds for us to have confidence in Him, whether it be for deliverance from sin, or for help in carrying on the work to which He has called us. But if we talk proudly in self-confidence, the Lord will ask: "Who shut up the sea with doors, when it brake forth, as if it had issued out of the womb?"