

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RAINBOW

"I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth." Genesis 9:13.

When God sent the great flood upon the earth, every living creature was destroyed except Noah and the occupants of the ark. After the flood waters subsided and evaporated, Noah and his family found themselves on dry ground. Later, God made a solemn covenant with Noah and sealed the covenant by placing a rainbow in the sky.

A rainbow contains the seven prismatic colors--red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet. It is produced by the rays of light falling upon drops of water. The cloud is needed as the canvas on which the rainbow is to be painted. The sun is needed to give the light or colors of which the painting is to be composed. The drops of falling rain are needed as the pencil by which these colors are to be applied, or the medium required to decompose the rays of light and spread out their varying hues in blended loveliness.

Of course, this was not the first time that God had set the rainbow in the cloud. It was a case of investing a familiar sight with a new meaning. After that day the sight of the rainbow was charged with new significance for Noah and his household. God said, "I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between Me and the earth." So, it is important for us to remember that the flood did not come of itself, and that the rainbow did not appear of itself, but that God sent both of them. In the giving of the rainbow, God ratified His promise that no more would the earth be destroyed by a flood, and He established a memorial of the new relationship between Himself and His creatures. He assured Noah that the rainbow was a visible sign which would serve at once to confirm men in their faith and to dispel their fears.

1. The rainbow is a symbol of beauty.

God, the master artist, has done a noble work in this world in which we live. What a beautiful world we may live in; if we so desire! In it is the beauty of everlasting friendships, love that outshines the stars, flowers to garnish our pathways, and birds without a wrong note.

2. The rainbow is a symbol of harmony.

All seven colors of the rainbow exist in such juxtaposition as to make a perfect chromatic whole. The rainbow is God's lesson of harmony to us. Is there discord in our lives? Is there the knowledge of personal failure? Are we thorough masters of our selves? Any lack of harmony in our lives is a result of our unwillingness to tune our lives to the master key, even Christ.

3. The rainbow is a symbol of faith.

God said, "By the sign of the rainbow, never again shall a flood destroy the earth." Thus God was vouchsafing His faith in the future of the human race. Because He believed in men, there would be no necessity of another destruction. God believes in us. God trusts us. He endows us with the possibility of divine sonship, gives us the privilege of choice, either to walk in the mud of sin or among the stars with Him. He has faith in us, and He depends upon us to live worthily in His sight. Therefore, we should live accordingly.

"I would be true, for there are those who trust me,
I would be pure, for there are those who care;
I would be strong, for there is much to suffer,
I would be brave, for there is much to dare."

God chose the rainbow, probably the most beautiful thing in all nature, to be the sign of the covenant that He made with Noah following the flood.

God chose the cross, the most hideous thing in all the world, to be the token of sign of the New Covenant He has made with all those who believe in His Son.

The rainbow typifies the cross of Christ and enables us to understand certain of the marvelous truths concerning it which bring peace and comfort to our souls when rightly understood and believed. In what ways does the rainbow typify the cross?

I. It Is The Token Of An Unconditional Covenant.

The word covenant is one of the great words of Scripture. A covenant is a contract wherein one or both of the parties to the covenant pledge themselves to perform certain things. In the covenant with Noah, God made an unconditional promise never again to destroy the whole earth with a flood. God never asked Noah or his family to promise anything, but simply to believe what He said. The cross is the token of God's new and unconditional covenant. It is God's pledge to those of us who trust Christ as our Saviour, that the Father will never condemn us for our sins, because Christ was punished in our stead on the cross. The believer shall not come into condemnation because he has put his trust in the Son of God who loved him and gave Himself for him. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Romans 8:1.

II. It Is The Token Of A Perpetual Covenant.

"And God Said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you, and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations." Genesis 9:12. Nothing was to abrogate or nullify or supersede the covenant God has made with those who trust His Son. It will stand through all eternity.

III. It Exhibits The Glory Of The Sun.

The rainbow exhibits the glorious component lights that blend into the white light of the sun. In the rainbow we behold the brilliant red, yellow, green and blue.

In the cross we see all the marvelous attributes of God exhibited in their magnificence:

1. God's magnificent justice.

So just is He that He could not let sin go unpunished. Ages before the Cross He had written: "I will be no means clear the guilty," and on the cross He laid the guilt of our sin upon His beloved Son, and visited His wrath upon Him, as our Substitute. Thus, by the punishment of Christ in our stead, God can be both, "Just and justifier of him that believeth on Jesus." If God had merely remitted the penalty He would not have been a just God. Instead of remitting it, He bore it in full in the person of His Son.

2. God's infinite love.

The Old Testament spoke of God's love, but the cross exhibited it in all of its matchless perfection. The cross shows that God's love was a love

to the ill-deserving. We did not deserve anything at God's hands except punishment, but God loved us and sacrificed His Son for us. The death of Christ exhibits this matchless love.

3. God's marvelous wisdom.

The plan of salvation is so wonderful it could not have been devised by human brains. All man-made religions say that "salvation must be earned," and of course that is impossible. But the cross exhibits the fact that God saves sinners by the work which Christ did, and not by anything which we have done.

4. God's matchless power.

"And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." Romans 1:4.

IV. It Forms A Bridge Between Earth And Heaven.

Its ends are on the earth, and its arch is in the sky. All man's efforts to please God by human works could not bridge that gulf. And so Jesus Christ on the cross, God's Rainbow, has united God and man. He has bridged the gulf that separated them. He has reconciled us to God by the blood of His cross, having slain the enmity thereby. By His death for sin Jesus bridged the gulf between earth and heaven and made it possible for those who believe to come unto God by Him. "No man cometh unto the Father but by Me."

V. It Embraces The World.

Between its arms it gathers all the earth that we can see. And in this it is but a type of the all-embracing love of Christ and mercy of God. "There's a wideness in God's mercy, like the wideness of the sea." It embraces all men within its sweep. It excludes none, denies none, and rejects none. Jesus Christ is "the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world." Yes, for every one, the rainbow is in the sky. God's grace and mercy are freely offered to every one. The rainbow is a perpetual reminder of the goodness and faithfulness of God. Whenever men see it in the clouds, it whispers something to them about God's love and mercy.

VI. It Was Designed To Be An Incentive To Holy Living.

Noah could not behold that sign in the sky without realizing that God loved him, and had been gracious to him, and that he ought to continue to trust God and obey Him. The purpose of the rainbow was to remind redeemed men of their duty to God. The cross should likewise be an incentive to holiness, for all believers. It should remind us of God's grace, and how He saved us through faith, from the awful judgment we deserved, and delivered us through the death of His Son to security and peace. It should remind us that we ought not to live to please ourselves, but to live to please Him who loved us. It should remind us that God has saved us that we might walk before Him and fear Him and honor Him in all things.

VII. It Is A Constant Source Of Comfort.

Every time Noah saw the rainbow in the sky he was reminded anew of God's love, and reassured of God's announced purpose to bless him and his family.

The cross should be a source of comfort and a ground of rejoicing to all believers. It reminds us that God, who loved us enough to give His Son for us, will not withhold any other blessing He has promised for our growth

in grace. However, the rainbow was not a source of comfort until Noah and his family had escaped judgment by means of the ark. Likewise, the cross is meaningless until we believe God and obtain deliverance from judgment through faith in the sacrifice of Christ upon the cross.

Perhaps the clouds which infest our skies the most frequently are the following:--

1. The cloud of sin.
There is a rainbow of cleansing for every cloud of sin. "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee." Isaiah 44:22.
2. The cloud of sorrow.
There is a rainbow of comfort for every cloud of sorrow. God does not prevent the clouds of sorrow from casting their shadows over the lives of His own. But He does promise to span the clouds with the rainbow of His unfailing presence. "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you." John 14:18.
3. The cloud of judgment.
Over this sinning world hangs God's cloud of righteous judgment. Yet, in that cloud is the rainbow of saving grace for all who come to Him by way of the cross. As long as Jesus remains in the presence of God, all believers are safe from destruction. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." John 5:24. We are saved from wrath through Him.

If we believe that Christ died as a God appointed sacrifice for our sins, then the cross is to us what the rainbow was to Noah, namely,

1. A token of unconditional covenant, which requires nothing on our part but faith.
2. A token of perpetual covenant, which will never be cancelled or changed or superseded.
3. A bridge between earth and heaven.
4. An incentive to holy living.
5. A constant source of comfort.

But if we refuse to believe what God says about judgment, and fail to put our faith in Christ, who died to save us, the cross will not bring any comfort to our hearts in this life or in the life to come.