

Series: Popular Stories

Title: The Rainbow

Text: Genesis 8: 20-22; 9: 8-17

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Whether young or old, one thing that causes a flutter of excitement for us all, is to look up in the sky and behold “The Rainbow.” Who put the rainbow in the sky? What does it mean? What is its spiritual meaning? We find the answers to those questions in our text.

Genesis 8: 20: And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. 21: And the LORD smelled a sweet savour; and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man’s sake; for the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done. 22: While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease...Genesis 9: 8: And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying, 9: And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you; 10: And with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you; from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth. 11: And I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth. 12 : 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: 13: I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. 14: And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud: 15: And I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh. 16: And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth. 17: And God said unto Noah, This is the token of the covenant, which I have established between me and all flesh that is upon the earth. (Ge 9:8-17)

God made a covenant with Noah that he would never again destroy the world with a flood. As a token of God’s covenant to Noah, God set the rainbow in the sky. The rainbow is a perpetual reminder of God’s everlasting covenant. Each time you see the rainbow in the cloud remember that God promises, “While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.” (Gen 8: 22) God promises, “Neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth.” (Gen 9: 11)

Yet, there is much more represented here. The covenant that God made with Noah, of which the rainbow is a token, points us to the everlasting covenant of grace which God made with Christ for his people.

CHRIST FULFILLED THE COVENANT

Along with the ark, we see in Noah, a shadow of Christ who fulfilled all covenant obligations toward God on behalf of his people. After the ark bore the flood of God’s justice, “Noah builded an altar unto the LORD; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And the LORD smelled a sweet savour.” (Gen 8: 20-21)

Before the foundation of the world, the Son of God entered covenant with God the Father to save all God’s people from our sins. At the appointed time, the Son of God took flesh like unto his people. Like as Noah built an altar, Christ is himself our Altar. Noah made a sacrifice and offering, Christ is himself the sacrifice

and offering to God for the sins of his people. The fire of God consumed Noah's sacrifice, likewise the fire of God's justice came down upon Christ in the room and stead of his people but Christ consumed the fire. God smelled a sweet-savour in Noah's offering, likewise, in Christ's one offering God smelled a sweet-savour. It means as the one GodMan representing all his people on the cross, Christ made full satisfaction to God, satisfying justice on behalf of his people. The Holy Spirit declares through the apostle Paul, "Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour." (Eph 5: 2)

So in Noah's blood sacrifice, we see a picture of Christ, the Lamb of God, for whose sake and in whose merits, God will not curse his people, "And the LORD smelled a sweet savour; and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart *is* evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done. And God blessed Noah and his sons,...(Ge 8:20-21; 9: 1)

In the everlasting covenant of grace, God left nothing in the hands of his people. When Adam failed to fulfill his covenant obligations, we fell in him. We are sinners, unable to fulfill the law. But before the world was made, God trusted the whole work into the hands of his Son as Ephesians 1: 12, says, "That we should be to the praise of his glory, [to the praise of God's glory] who first trusted in Christ."

GOD THE FATHER FULFILLED THE COVENANT

Since God is well-pleased in Christ, the everlasting covenant of grace, with all God's blessings, is established from God the Father to Christ. All God's elect—Christ's seed—are blessed with Christ. But it is first, with Christ, that God established his covenant. God establishes his covenant of grace with each of his children only in Christ and because of Christ. We see it pictured in how God spoke only to Noah, and to his sons with or in Noah, "And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying, 9: And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you;" (Ge 9:8-9)

Having received his sacrifice and offering, God established his covenant with Noah. So it is that God, being pleased with Christ, established his covenant with Christ. Noah's sons, and Noah's seed after him, were blessed with Noah when God established his covenant with Noah. So it is that all Christ's seed—you and I who believe—were blessed with Christ when God established his covenant with Christ.

Ephesians 1: 3: Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ: 4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:...7: In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace...11: In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: 12 That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.

What a blessing to helpless sinners! Sinners saved by God's grace have no part in establishing this covenant. It is a covenant of pure grace ordered in all things and made sure in Christ from eternity, "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." (2 Tim 1: 9) It is a covenant ratified in Christ's blood, "the God of peace,...brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant." (Heb 13: 20) The everlasting covenant of grace is a covenant established and sealed in our hearts by the Holy Spirit in regeneration through God-given faith, "In whom ye also *trusted*, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until

the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.” (Eph 1:13-14) So we see it is a covenant of pure grace beginning to end.

GOD’S COVENANT PROMISE

What is God’s everlasting covenant promise to Christ, and to all Christ’s seed? God promises Christ and his people in him shall never be cut off but shall have everlasting mercies from God. We see it shadowed God’s promise to Noah concerning the earth, “And I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth. (Ge 9:11)

In Isaiah 54, we are told that God’s promise to Noah typifies the everlasting covenant of grace. This is God’s everlasting covenant of grace to all who God calls to faith in Christ, “For a small moment have I forsaken thee.” When God forsook Christ on the cross, he forsook all who were in Christ. And because Christ satisfied divine justice declaring God just and the Justifier, God shall regenerate and make this promise in the hearts of all who were in Christ, “but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy Redeemer. For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee. (Isa 54:7-10)

This is an everlasting covenant, a covenant of unchangeable promise, because it is a covenant which does not demand anything of us. Our eternal God, in Christ, has done it all!

When Christ hung upon the cross, the Psalmist gives us the words of his heart, saying, “Thine arrows stick fast in me.” (Ps 38: 2) When we behold a rainbow in the sky, it looks much like an archer’s bow. But the bow is not pointed at us, it is pointed up. There is no string and no arrow in the bow. It is because Christ bore the arrows of justice and made satisfaction for his people.

Sinner, do you hear God declare Christ satisfied divine justice for his people? Is God making this promise in your heart? Only a hard-hearted rebel would be foolish enough to kick against the sure mercies of Christ Jesus our Redeemer. Those he draws in mercy rejoice in faith and rest in Christ!

GOD’S ASSURANCE OF THE COVENANT

How can I be sure that this covenant is from everlasting to everlasting? God has given us a token to assure us this covenant is forever, “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.” (Gen 9: 12)

First, God set a bow in the cloud. God said to Noah, “I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. (Ge 9:12-13) The rainbow is God’s token of his covenant that he will not destroy the earth with a flood anymore. But our assurance of the everlasting covenant of grace is that God the Father has set Christ in the heavens like as he set the rainbow in the cloud, “Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.” (Ro 4:25) Our risen Redeemer is himself the Covenant God has given to his people to assure us we are established in his grace, “Thus saith the LORD, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages;” (Isa 49:8) So our first assurance of the everlasting covenant of grace is that God the Father has set Christ in the heavens like as he set the rainbow in the cloud. But there is more.

Secondly, we behold a token of our assurance in the example of what God brings to pass with the rainbow and the cloud. God said, “And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud.” (Gen 9: 14) The rainbow is the shining of the sun’s beams. A rainbow is only seen against the dark backdrop of a cloud. The cloud is brought over the earth by God for the very purpose of showing us the glory of the sun in the rainbow. Likewise, Christ is the glory of God’s shining. God’s glory in Christ is seen only against the dark backdrop of sin. Sin is the dark cloud which came over the earth by God’s design just so we could see “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus.” (2 Cor 4: 6) When Ezekiel saw God’s throne, he saw God’s glory and he saw God’s glory in the appearance of a Man. He saw Christ Jesus, the GodMan. Christ is God’s glory set in God’s throne. From the Man’s loins upward and downward, this is how Ezekiel described Christ’s appearance, “As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so *was* the appearance of the brightness round about. This *was* the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD.” (Eze 1:28) The Rainbow who God has set in the heavens for our assurance is Christ. He is set in God’s throne. We behold God’s glory in Christ through faith as we behold Christ overcoming the dark cloud of sin for us. So it is John described Christ’s appearance this way, “And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire:” (Rev 10: 1) So our second assurance is God’s glory in Christ overcoming sin like as we behold the sun shine in the rainbow against the cloud. If God loses one sinner for whom Christ died, God’s glory would be tarnished. Therefore, we have great assurance that God will preserve us because God’s glory shall never be diminished.

Thirdly, chiefly, our assurance is not in our behold Christ but in God our Father behold Christ. God said, “And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth.” (Gen 9: 16) On the day of Passover, God promised, “When I see the blood, I will pass over you.” (Ex 12: 13) Like as the rainbow in the cloud is between us and God, Christ is between God and all his people. If we did not have Christ between us and God the Father, the fiery justice of God would consume us in our sins. But see what John saw between us and God’s throne, And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and *one* sat on the throne. And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and *there was* a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.” (Re 4:2-3) Like the rainbow around the throne, Christ our Covenant is ever before God, ever living to make intercession for us, therefore God “will ever be mindful of his covenant.” (Ps 111: 5)

For guilty, needy, sinners, bless God, it means there is a Way to God—a new and living Way—Christ and only Christ! The rainbow in the sky has seven colors which is the number of perfection. The everlasting covenant of grace is perfect and complete. But John saw a rainbow like unto an emerald. Green is the color of Life. “God has given to us eternal life and this life is in his Son.” (1 Jn 5: 11) Without Christ God is a consuming fire! But for all who put their trust in Christ, God delights to show mercy! Sinner, believe on Christ and God shall save you.

Oh, what blessed assurance every believer has in Christ. God is preserving and governing this world for the sake of those he has covenanted to save in Christ. That is why “we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose.” (Ro 8:28) At all times every event in this world from the largest to the smallest, using the most powerful kings and nations on earth, is for God’s elect only. Each one must be saved because Christ purchased them with his own blood; each believer must be preserved and provided for because God has promised it in his everlasting covenant of grace. We shall not be cut off!

Next time you behold that rainbow in the sky, remember Christ seated upon his throne, remember the rainbow round about the throne and remember “all the promises of God in him *are* yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.” (2Co 1:20 AV) Believer, remember, “he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all *things*, and sure: for *this is* all my salvation, and all *my* desire...” (2Sa 23:5)

Amen!