

# RAINBOW REFLECTIONS

*Mike McDaniel*

Today, we have a sign from God that is truly marvelous. The rainbow is the sign of the covenant which God made to include not only Noah and his sons, but also all their descendants as well as the entire animal creation. This covenant was designed to give assurance that the world would never again experience a universal flood such as had just occurred.

The rainbow is a beautiful sign that God will keep His word to us. The bow in the cloud requires both sunlight and the cloud and liquid water droplets in the air before it can form. As white sunlight passes through one transparent medium such as air and into another such as water, it is bent; upon reemerging into the air, it is bent again. This bending is called refraction. The bending of white light produces different colors of light at different angles. Red light bends the least and violet bends the most. The colors of light which are produced are called the spectrum. This series of colors in order are violet, blue, green, yellow, orange and red. The first explanation of the rainbow was advanced in 1666 by the English mathematician and physicist Sir Isaac Newton. How significant it is that the rain, which in part caused the flood, should be the means of giving back a sign of the covenant that there would not be another universal flood! Surely in this token, we see the genius and the wisdom of God! The rainbow in its glory is a scene of unearthly beauty. Consider with me briefly some "rainbow reflections."

## **(1) THE PROMISE OF THE RAINBOW**

It is said that a rainbow is "heaven's promise in technicolor." When we look upon the rainbow, let us remember the purpose of the promise. And although the rainbow causes believing men and women to call to mind the covenant concerning the future of the earth, and its security against such a flood as that of Noah's time, the book of Genesis calls attention to the fact that its presence in the cloud is a reminder *to God* of the covenant He has made. In Genesis 9:16, God said, "I will look upon it that I may remember." The rainbow which is spread across the heavens is something upon which God can gaze upon and remember His promise to us. The meaning which the rainbow has for God is even more greatly stressed in the text than the meaning it has for us! When a rainbow is arched in the clouds, it stirs our souls when we think that Almighty God is Himself looking at that same bow, and that He is remembering that which He spoke in the long ago. He will never forget His promise, the promise of the rainbow.

## **(2) THE PROVIDENCE BEHIND THE RAINBOW**

A rainbow is not a miracle. Yet it is something provided by God through the framework of the laws of nature which He has designed. It is a token of providence. It reveals that God is in control. God has promised in the rainbow covenant not to destroy the earth by water anymore. The fact is, it is His divine intention to destroy the world again not by water, but by fire according to Second Peter 3:5-7. God is sovereign. He plans, promises, and provides.

A helicopter pilot once told of a magnificent experience he had when he was flying a police helicopter. For the first and only time in his life, he saw a complete rainbow. All we usually ever see in a rainbow is an arch with one end or both fixed to earth. But that is only half the rainbow, because a rainbow is actually a full circle. You just cannot see all of it. The uppermost part of a rainbow is at an elevation of 42.08 degrees. The lower part of the rainbow is below the horizon and hence cannot be seen. But if you are in a airplane or helicopter, with sun-lit drops everywhere, it is

possible to see a whole circle rainbow. This pilot said, "When I was in just the right position at just the right spot in that heavenly prism, I not only saw it, but I flew through it and around it. It was a once-in a lifetime moment as I was entering into this rainbow."

Think about Joseph for a moment and what he said to his brothers later in life. "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive" (Gen. 50:20). In effect, Joseph was saying to his brothers, "God has allowed me to see the whole rainbow. You are only able to see a part of it, but I can see the whole thing. You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good." Sometimes I wish we could see the whole rainbow too, see the totality of God's providential work within the framework of natural law in our own lives. But even though we do not, we have to continue to trust in God even through the bad times, knowing that God will care for His own.

We have to keep in mind that in providence, God works behind the scenes. A miracle is an open, dramatic, demonstrable event. But providence is God working behind the scenes within the framework of natural law. While God may be working in the lives of men, they are frequently unaware of it. We may suspect it, believe it, hope it to be the case, and even act in such a way as to accommodate it; but in the final analysis, we walk by faith and not by sight (2 Cor. 5:7).

Joseph and his brethren were instruments in the hand of almighty God to preserve the life of the Hebrew nation. Yet those brethren were unaware of this, and there is no reason to believe that Joseph understood this early on.

Cyrus, king of Persia, was used by God to deliver the kingdom of Judah from captivity in Babylon (2 Chron. 36:22-23). God said of Cyrus, "I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me" (Is. 45:5).

In 444 B.C., Nehemiah was serving as the cupbearer to the Persian ruler Artaxerses in Babylon. Nehemiah heard that Jerusalem was in ruins and that the walls of the city were broken down. Nehemiah asked for permission to return to his homeland, to supervise the rebuilding of the walls, and to be given the building materials needed. Amazingly, the king agreed. How did the man of God view what had occurred? "And the king granted me, *according to the good hand of my God upon me*" (Neh. 2:8). It is obvious that Nehemiah believed this was the providence of God in his life.

It is amazing to think about the fact that God can overrule evil for our good. God overruled the evil done to Joseph by his brothers, by Potiphar's wife, by Potiphar, and by Pharaoh's butler in order to save the nation of Israel from the famine. God also overruled the evil done by the Jews and by the Romans against Christ to accomplish our salvation. Peter said, "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom **ye slew** and hanged on a tree. Him hath **God exalted** with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins" (Acts 5:30-31). God overruled all the evil they did and worked it into His marvelous plan for saving man by the blood of the cross. As Romans 8:28 says, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." It is truly amazing what God can work together for our good and for the accomplishing of His divine will!

### **(3) THE PREVIEW OF THE RAINBOW TO COME**

How interesting it is that we also find the rainbow in Revelation 4:1-3, "After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter. 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." John saw an emerald rainbow encircling the throne. Ezekiel uses this same description. "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. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that spake" (Eze. 1:28).

No inhabitant of the Roman empire had ever beheld anything comparable in majesty, beauty, and power to what the apostle John was able to see. By the book of Revelation, God transported those Christians, many of whom were discouraged, beyond the temporal realities of Rome to the eternal realities of the throne of righteousness in the realm of God above. With the mind's eye, let me encourage you to go to that rainbow circled throne in prayer and receive the encouragement to overcome the problems of today.