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A Rainbow

The Bible uses many things of nature as symbols to illustrate spiritual lessons, sometimes representing the same thing with several different symbols. Example: The spoken word of God is represented by several things in nature, some of which are *water, fire, thunder, lightning, sunlight, rain, snow, hail and wind*. Various symbols give a different shade of meaning to the topic presented. The Spirit invites each of us to consider the visible, physical symbol so that we can come to understand the invisible, spiritual things. ... *For the invisible things of Him are clearly seen* ⁽²⁵²⁹⁾ *being understood by the things made from the creation of the world, both His eternal power and Divine nature, for them to be without excuse.* (Rom 1:19-20 Greek) [The Greek word *kathorao* ⁽²⁵²⁹⁾ has a proper meaning of *to behold fully*. The KJ Bible used the figurative meaning.]

One of the most fascinating symbols of nature that I have studied is the rainbow. The English word appears only twice in the Bible - Revelation 4:3 & 10:1. It is the Greek word *iris* ⁽²⁴⁶³⁾ from which we get the English word for the flat, colored, ring-shaped membrane of the eye. The Old Testament word (Hebrew) is *qeshet* ⁽⁷¹⁹⁸⁾, and occurs 77 times, most of which relate to a *bow* that shoots arrows. The root (6983) means *to circle, bend*, from which *qeshet* lends the idea of a rainbow in four places (Gen 9:13, 14, 16; Eze 1:28).

The rainbow is used as a sign of the everlasting covenant in Genesis 9:13: *I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token (sign) of a covenant between me and the earth*. It would be good to establish some characteristics of a **rainbow** before continuing. There are three conditions for seeing a rainbow:

1. There must be plenty of moisture in the air - best right after a rain.
2. The sun must be shining.
3. The sun must be behind you.

White light is composed of seven colors, which can be seen in a rainbow. The color order can be remembered by the mnemonic ROY G BIV: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, violet. Shine a beam of light on one side of a prism and it will produce its own mini-rainbow on the other side (a prism is a triangular piece of glass or plastic). The same thing happens in a rainbow when a raindrop acts as a prism. A beam of sunlight enters a raindrop and is broken into different colors. The light is then reflected (and magnified) off the back of the raindrop and passes back into the air again, in the process being further refracted. Because of the drop's round shape, the light shines in slightly different directions.

Under certain conditions, some of the light will bounce off the inside of the water droplet more than once, exiting at a different angle. This produces a weaker, secondary arc known as a double rainbow, which appears above the original, or primary arc. The colors in a primary rainbow are always in the same order, with red on top and violet on the bottom, but reversed and less brilliant in a double rainbow. Only one color exits from each raindrop at the exact angle necessary to reach the observer's eye. So, an observer sees only one color at a time reflecting from each raindrop. For this reason, it takes millions of raindrops to create a rainbow. In between violet and red, we find all the colors of the rainbow refracted and reflected from countless raindrops in just such a way that they shine our direction. Beyond the edge of the arc, where we see no color, the raindrops may be emitting colored light but not at the appropriate angle to observe.

What is the significance of a rainbow as a sign? Genesis 9:8-17: 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** (sign) **of a 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** (sign) **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** (sign) **of the covenant**, which I have established between me and all flesh that is upon the earth.*

The **bow in the cloud** is a sign of the **everlasting covenant**, which is a promise between God and every living creature that *the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh*. To understand the promise, we need to understand the symbols: Sunlight, earth, clouds, seven colors of a rainbow, raindrops, heaven.

I do set my bow in the cloud, and ... when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud (verses 13, 14). A rainbow can be seen in a cloud with raindrops when the sun is behind them. The wicked are represented as clouds without water (Jude 1:12), and so the righteous can be represented by clouds with water (Heb 12:1); God's word is like drops of water (Dt 32:2) which clouds, or people carry. Light is also a symbol for understanding of truth (Ps 119:105; Isa 8:20; 2 Pet 1:19), and the sun is a symbol for the Son of God (cp Mal 4:2 & Ps 84:11; Isa 60:19). Colors in general represent spiritual understanding (cf Isa 1:18; Rev 19:8). There are seven colors in the rainbow, and seven represents a fullness, or, a full experience.

Think about it - when facing the sun all you see is the shadow of the cloud. I used to be an avid bird watcher. I was always disappointed when a bird landed between me and the sun, as it is most difficult, if not impossible to discern its markings and colors. Having the sun behind you and being at the correct viewing position can be likened to having to have the correct relationship with Jesus Christ in order to discern the truth. Here is a figure of Christ: Revelation 10:1 *And I saw another mighty angel coming down out of the heaven, clothed with a cloud, and the rainbow upon his head, and his countenance as the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire.* The fullness into which all desire to come is that of Jesus Christ (Eph 4:13), who is in the fullness of the Father (Col 1:19; 2:9). The covenant promise in Genesis 9 is for that of a Savior, the cloud being the symbol. *Let this mind* (understanding) *be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:* (Phil 2:5) The Rainbow represents the full spiritual understanding the Son of God carries. Think of the earth as yourself (cf parable of the sower with four types of ground, Mk 4:3-20), or the way of thinking that makes up your character. We are to look at the Son and what He did in our behalf for a spiritual understanding that will develop in us the Divine character (cf 2 Pet 1:3-4).

It is worthy to mention here that the most we can see from the earth is one-half of the rainbow, while from the heavens, we see a full circle. (Years ago, I actually saw a complete rainbow from an airplane while flying above a Pacific rain-storm) A full rainbow has no end, neither is there an end to God's knowledge - it is infinite. Negatively, the heavens represent the way you see God, or, to look at something from the heavens, spiritually speaking, is to look at it from God's viewpoint. A person standing beside you may see the same rainbow differently, because of the way light strikes the eye, or, they may not see it at all. One person may understand a certain scripture one way, and another person see something totally different. To whom are you listening?

Revelation 4:1-3: *1 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. 2 And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne. 3 and he that was sitting like in appearance to a stone of jasper and a sardine, and a rainbow [encircling] the throne like in appearance to an emerald. [Greek] In chapter 1:10-13, the first voice is that of Christ. Here, it is the voice of Christ telling John to ascend into heaven where he sees God's throne encircled with a rainbow. Looking from God's point of view we can have a full spiritual understanding and the channel through which we learn is the Son of God.*

The promise in Genesis 9 is that a Savior will bring to anyone desiring to receive it, a spiritual understanding that will enable them to understand self AND God's love. Another part of the promise is in verse 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.* The promise is two-fold: 1) there will not be another literal flood to destroy all flesh; 2) there will not be a spiritual flood to destroy individuals by separating them from God. This, also, is mentioned in Revelation 12:15-16: *15 And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood. 16 And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth.* The serpent is the whisperer, deceiver, doubter, and out of his mouth comes false information; or, worse yet, truth mixed with error. This was the deception the woman faced in the garden (Gen 3:1-7). Each individual must chose to listen to God's voice (in the conscience) and not the serpent's, and your earth (understanding) will be opened.

Summary: When the symbols are understood, it can be seen that the promise to Noah after the flood was that there would be a Savior to bring God's understanding to each of us as we choose to listen. The promise is realized in the ministry of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Ezekiel 1:25-28: *25 And there was a voice above the firmament (heaven) that was over their heads: when they stood, they let down their wings. 26 And above the firmament (heaven) that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne was a likeness as the appearance of a man upon it above. 27 And I saw as the color of amber, as the appearance of fire within it round about, from the appearance of his loins and upward; and from the appearance of his loins and downward I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and there was brightness round about him. 28 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. (Revised Version)*

Ezekiel describes a similar picture as does John in Revelation, connecting it to the promise of Genesis 9. These creatures are likened to having spiritual life because they are listening to the voice from above the throne. This is a figure of responding to the voice of the Spirit as one listens with spiritual ears. Also, the rainbow is likened to Yahweh's glory, described in Exodus 34:5-7 as His name - i.e. His character.

Through-out history, and now, the church of the living God is the pillar and ground of truth (1 Tim 3:15), of which we all have the opportunity to be a part - clouds (people) carrying rain (God's word) and moved by the wind (spirit) to share. The church was under a cloud (Christ) in the wilderness (1 Cor 10:1) and the clouds in which Jesus comes near the end (Mk 13:26) is the church. Study and listen and God will use your experiences, *Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.* (Isa 55:3, plus Acts 13:34 promise of resurrection) Amen!