

A Rainbow

Almost everyone has a story of a rainbow they have seen that remains a vivid memory long after the rainbow disappears. Because rainbows are so beautiful and wonderfully unique, many have decided to cash in on it. In commerce, everything from awnings, shoes and books, even cereal (Lucky stars), to myth, leprechauns and the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. But no use of the rainbow is more impressive than the original one given by God in Genesis 9:11-13.

“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. And God said, this is the token of the covenant which I will make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a token of a covenant between me and the earth” (Genesis 9:11-13)

A rainbow that causes all who see it to stop, point and be amazed by its beauty, declares the power of God. He who created the earth (Genesis 1:1; Psalms 33:6-9; 148:1-5) has the power to sustain it (Genesis 8:22; Hebrews 1:3) and destroy it (2 Peter 3:10-12).

Two Judgments

In this lesson, I want to look at the rainbow as it stands between two judgments, a judgment that has occurred and the one to come. The earth was allowed to recover after God's first judgment, in fact, God planned for that recovery to occur. God instructed Noah to bring at least two (a male and a female) of every creature he intended to carry over to the other side of the flood (Genesis 6:18-22).

Understanding the earth would undergo a

dramatic change, to this point in time God had not caused it rain (Genesis 2:5). That sheds some insight into Hebrews 11:7 ***“By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, preparing the ark to the saving of his house...”***

Rather, a mist went up from the earth and watered the whole face of the earth (Genesis 2:6) causing a more tropical climate, but that would give way to more seasonal weather trends: spring, summer, fall and winter (Genesis 8:22),

As far as humanity is concerned, Noah, his wife, their sons and their wives entered the ark (Genesis 7:13). When the earth was dry, God told Noah the same thing he told Adam, multiply and replenish the earth (Genesis 9:1).

After the second judgment of God there would be no earth to recover. ***“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burnt up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for the hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?”*** (2 Peter 3:10-12).

Two Elements

Each judgment of God has an element, water and fire. Peter speaks of both elements after he addresses the scoffers which said; ***“...Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of...”*** (2 Peter 3:4-5).

Then Peter said, ***“Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water perished: But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men”*** (2 Peter 3:6-7).

God will never use water again to destroy the earth, the rainbow being a visual declaration of that promise. Fire will be the element used in the second judgment. When Jesus comes it will be; ***“In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power”*** (2 Thessalonians 1:8-9).

Two things from those verses:

1. Jesus will take vengeance on them that ***“know not God”***. So much for the argument that those who are ignorant will not be accountable. The simple truth is, ignorance has never been an excuse (Romans 1:20).
2. Jesus will take vengeance on those who have ***“not obeyed the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ”***. Notice please, God is not saying, those who do not believe the gospel of Jesus Christ, there are a lot of people who are believers, but have never done the will of the Father (Matthew 7:21-23). Obedience is absolutely required (Hebrews 5:8-9).

Significantly, the element God used on the first judgment (water) can play a major part in saving us from the fiery judgment to come. ***“Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also save us...”*** (1 Peter 3:20-21). God used the first element (water) to help us escape the second (fire).

Two Warnings – One Piercing Message (There Is an End to the Patience of God)

We know that God is patient, that he is longsuffering, that he is gracious, the God of all grace (2 Peter 3:9; Jonah 4:2; 1 Peter 5:10). Having said that, you can reach the limits of that patience – 1656 years from creation, man did!

The longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah while the ark was prepared (1 Peter 3:20). 120 years of time was allotted for mankind to come to itself and turn toward God (Genesis 6:3). Noah, a preacher of righteousness tried (2 Peter 2:5), but the warning went unheeded.

In Noah's day **"...they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until Noah entered into the ark, and they knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be"** (Matthew 24:38-39).

God's first judgment has come and gone. The rainbow is a continuing reminder that the next judgment is coming. Will we put the patience of God to the test?

God calls us through the gospel (2 Thessalonians 2:14). How often will some sit and listen to the call and silently reject it? In their minds they rationalize "maybe later", "I'm just not ready yet". Do we put it off until the message no longer reaches the heart? Folks, we can we reach a point where we have judged ourselves unworthy of eternal life (Acts 13:46). Would we dare do that? Would we put the patience of God to the test?

No less true of those who are members of the Lord's church. Do we try the patience of God? We know certain things; namely, there is an expectation on God's part concerning what we are supposed to be. The word faithful means something (Revelation 2:10).

1. Faithful to the church? Yes! (Matthew

6:33). Not forsaking the assembly (Hebrews 10:25).

2. Faithful to the word? Yes! No shame of Jesus or of his teaching (Mark 8:38; 2 Timothy 1:12).
3. Faithful to the Lord? Yes! Jesus made it plain in Matthew 10:34-38 that we are to love him above all others. There can be, and often are, those in your own home who will try to stand between you and Christ.
 - a. Ridicule of your faith is extreme, there are more subtle ways
 - b. Silent disapproval of your commitment to Christ.
 - c. Making plans when they know where you should be.
 - d. Work on the mind of a child.
Jesus knew there would be obstacles and said point blank, do not let anything get between you and your love for me!
2. Faithful in our labour for the cause of Christ. In Matthew 20:1-16, the householder went out to hire labourers for his vineyard, no interviews, not taking applications, he was hiring – come work for me. There were expectations: namely, that they were labourers worthy of the hire.

Would we put the patience of God to the test?

Please appreciate the beauty of a rainbow, but do not miss the message behind the beauty.

A rainbow and a promise
A Rainbow

This tract is condensed from a lesson presented at the 27th Annual Mid-West Lectures, "God's Precious Promises." To hear or view the complete lesson go to www.kc-cofc.org/2009Lectures.htm or contact the 39th Street Church of Christ 15331 East 39th Street Independence, MO 64055-4240 USA

God's Precious Promises...

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