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The Rainbow

by T. Austin-Sparks

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"I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud, 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." Genesis 9:13-15.

"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 Jehovah. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that spake." Ezekiel 1:28.

"And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper stone and a sardius: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, like an emerald to look upon... And I saw another strong angel coming down out of heaven, arrayed with a cloud; and the rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire." Revelation 4:3; 10:1.

"I do set my bow in the heavens, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth." There is nothing profound about that - it is simple and beautiful, yet so full of meaning.

What is a rainbow? We gaze upon it, are entranced by it, held by it. It is sun rays shining through rain, or it is rain arresting sun rays and breaking them up, and showing us the inside of the sun rays, what the rays of the sun are made of - their composition, the rain acting as a prism to break up the white light into its component parts. That is all, but you have one of the richest symbols in the

rainbow and we just want to understand the meaning of God's sign in the heavens by which He governs. He is ruling by this sign in the heavens.

In the above we see that in every case the rainbow is connected with judgment. In Genesis the flood; then afterward the renewed earth, the altar and the sacrifice of Noah upon it. "And the Lord smelled a sweet savour" and the Lord said, "I will no more judge the earth by water." "I will set my bow in the heavens and it shall be for a token of a covenant." Something has happened with which all future judgments will take place. They will be governed by a certain thing that has happened.

When you come to Ezekiel you know that in the first chapters of the book you are going to have judgments. Nations are going to be brought into view for judgments. First of all there is a revelation of a throne and of One as of the appearance of a Man above the throne, and then the rainbow, and then in relation to Him and that rainbow these judgments are going to take place - judgment of hostile nations, and then of God's own people in relation to him and His rainbow throne.

Now the rainbow is the symbol of incarnation and redemption - two phases of one thing, God manifested in the flesh, God in Christ the Son of Man. Note the words in Ezekiel, "and the likeness of a man above it." Incarnation and redemption as the outworking and purpose of incarnation. What that was intended to meet was the force and unbearable blaze of the infinite holiness of God. God is an infinitely holy God - the perfection of holiness, righteous to the uttermost, with Whom there is no shadow or suggestion of unholiness, and God cannot tolerate unrighteousness, unholiness, sin. We have to reckon with a God like that. He made man for His own glory, and intended this earth to be full of holiness. He determined that everything that was to abide before Him should be holy, without stain or suggestion of sin. There is that fierce blaze of divine holiness to meet and we are sinners; we are all "an unclean thing" and if our "righteousnesses are as filthy rags," what about our unrighteousness? Apart from redemption we should have to meet the full blaze of that holiness in our unholiness, and who could stand? Righteousness is a question of relationship to the Lord Jesus again.

"Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged." The prince of this world has been condemned, and if you have not taken sides with the Lord Jesus you have taken sides with him - either with the devil or Christ. If with Christ, no judgment: if not you are with that judged one - eternally judged and condemned. Here it is the question of relationship to the Lord Jesus again. Sin has been dealt with and put away because of oneness with Him Who put it away, and you are already in the presence of the Father in the Person of Christ. The basis of divine government from the heavens depends upon our relationship to Christ on the ground of what Christ was - the Son of God Who "loved me and gave Himself for me" and to do so became the Son of Man.

The rainbow is a symbol of God manifest in the flesh - taking the form of man and "he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." The rainbow shows forth the beauty of the Lord - "let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us." There is wondrous beauty in the light of the rainbow, perfections we have not seen or heard or detected. Let us, therefore, come boldly before the Throne of Grace.

The heavens do rule now by grace. It is grace that governs the Throne. The power of God in this age is grace. I hope the day never comes when I stand before that Throne and know any other power than grace. The covenant in grace is the covenant in His blood, and we need never know the awfulness of divine power but may know the beauty of divine power - the love of God. The covenant is a covenant in relation to the Lord Jesus as our Redeemer, and that is the covenant in which there

is to be no judgment. The sin question has passed forever because of our relation to the Lord Jesus. The basis of divine government is that sacrifice on the altar. God has smelled a sweet savour: judgment has passed, His holiness, His righteousness, His standard is satisfied. Judgment has passed - it has been meted out upon the Substitute and the covenant sealed in that precious blood.

Could you bear to have all the evil thoughts, words, deeds, suddenly brought back in full remembrance? It is one of the mercies of God that we can forget. If we could not we could never sleep at night. The day is coming when every evil word, thought and sin committed will be brought up in the light of His Holiness but there is not going to be the remembrance of the sins of those in relation to the Sin Bearer. "I will remember them no more," and if God does not remember them, we need not. "Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." It is hell to have them remembered and heaven to have them blotted out. Rejoice in the rainbow - it governs the Throne and controls heaven's dealings with us!