

THE PRETTIEST SIGHT IN HEAVEN
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(Revelation 4: 3)

"And, behold, a throne was set in heaven and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald." The rainbow and the throne are two opposites, and yet they belong to each other. The former was placed in the clouds after the great deluge, to be the sign of God's covenant with man never to repeat the catastrophe. The rainbow speaks of mercy. The throne is the symbol or seat of divine authority, where God rules in equity. When John was permitted to look into heaven, he marvelled for the rainbow around the throne expressed the greatest truth in holy Scripture.

The Mercy of God Always Overshadows His Judgments

The Old Testament writers recorded four outstanding acts of judgment, and in each of these the rainbow was about the throne. (i) The great deluge of Noah's time was prefaced by a long period of earnest preaching, when Noah warned his fellow men of impending disaster. And even after Noah and his family had entered the ark, the Lord still waited seven days before the rains were allowed to fall. (ii) The midnight judgment on Egypt was prefaced by the warnings of God given to Pharaoh, and even on the night of doom a way of escape was provided for all who had accepted the offer of sheltering behind the blood of the lamb which had been sprinkled on the doorposts. (iii) The destruction of the Canaanites as illustrated by the fall of Jericho revealed that even for the greatest sinner a way of escape had been provided. Rahab the harlot placed a scarlet thread in her window, and all within that house were saved. (iv) The fall of Jerusalem and the subsequent captivity in Babylon revealed that God had sent His prophets to warn Israel, and even when the people rejected His admonitions He still preserved a remnant in the land of bondage. God's judgments may seem severe, but keen eyes will always detect the rainbow around the throne.

The Mercy of God is Something of Exquisite Beauty

"In sight like unto an emerald." As the light of the glory of God played on the sombre clouds of justice, the sign of the mercy of God shone forth in scintillating beauty. It was a jewel of the skies. The mercy of God is the most wonderful thing in the world. (i) It is undisguised. A rainbow cannot be hidden, unless one can extinguish the sun. Even so no man can hide the mercy of God, unless he be able to remove the Lord Jesus. Mercy is evident in all God's dealings with man. (ii) It is undeserved. Each one of the Old Testament examples provides an illustration of this truth. The first mention of a rainbow is found in Genesis 9:13, where the bow is seen in the clouds. The next reference is found in Ezekiel 1: 28, where the sign of God's mercy is found amid the evil evidences of Babylonian idolatry. (iii) it is unequalled. There has never been a substitute for a rainbow, nor for the mercy of God. They stand alone in splendid isolation, and are exclusively connected with God and the sun.

The Mercy of God is Still Extended to Man

The fourth and final reference to a rainbow is perhaps the greatest of all. "And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow

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was upon His head. . . . And He had in His hand a little book open. . . . And He said to me, Take the little book and eat it up; and it shall make thy inmost being bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey. And I took the little book and ate it up. . . . And he said unto me, Thou must prophecy again before many peoples and nations and tongues and kings" (Rev. 10:1, 10). The last book of the Bible has many things to say concerning the everlasting kingdom, when the tabernacle of God shall be with men. The coming of that glorious day will bring either supreme happiness or eternal sorrow to mankind. It is truly significant that prior to that era the angel with the rainbow is sent to commission a preacher to make known the message of the "little book." God is still desirous to welcome additional guests to the marriage supper of the Lamb, and every preacher who has first "eaten" the little book will cry aloud to the nations, "Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts."

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