

The Rainbow Covenant

Key Verse: *“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.”*
—Genesis 9:16

Selected Scripture:
Genesis 8:20-22;
9:8-17

that “the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his.”—II Tim. 2:19

The covenant of our lesson was given following the Flood. God said to Noah that he was making it “between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh.” (Gen. 9:15) The seal of this covenant was in the form of a rainbow, something which Noah had likely never seen before. Our Key Verse points out that the rainbow, visible to the human eye, was to be the confirmation of this important promise. Repeated assurances of this are given

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among men are usually sealed, or confirmed, in one or more ways, that the covenants may be the more formal, and their performance surer, to the satisfaction of both parties. Paul, when speaking of God’s covenant made with Abraham, illustrates this principle by stating that “to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel,” God confirmed the covenant “by an oath.” (Heb. 6:17) Concerning those whom God has invited to be his people, we have the pledge

in the surrounding context. “God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make . . . I do set my bow in the cloud. . . . 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.”—vss. 12-15

A rainbow can appear in the clouds when rain is likely to soon occur at a given location. It also may return after the rain is over and has moved to another area. In both cases, the rainbow serves as a seal of God’s promise that he will never again destroy all flesh by a flood of waters. When the clouds are thickest and darkest, the brighter the rainbow appears to our vision. In these simple illustrations of nature, God gives us assurances of his abiding promises. Indeed, he is “the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort.”—II Cor. 1:3

In order for a rainbow to appear, one part of the sky must be clear and sunny, indicating that the clouds and rain are limited, and do not overspread the heavens. In fact, the rainbow is caused by the refraction and dispersion of the sun’s light by rain or other water droplets in the atmosphere. The connection between the sun, the rainbow and the clouds well illustrates the glory and majesty of God and his Son, Christ Jesus. God’s throne is described as having a rainbow surrounding it. (Rev. 4:3) The glorified Christ is spoken of as “the Sun of righteousness.” (Mal. 4:2) He is also said to be “clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow . . . upon his head, and his face . . . as it were the sun.”—Rev. 10:1

The rainbow is bent upward, not toward the earth, well illustrating that God is its author, not man. Marvelously designed, it serves as a fitting symbol of God’s mercy even at times of severe judgment. “While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” (Rom. 5:8) Thus, as God looks upon the rainbow in remembrance of his covenant, let us also be ever mindful, with faith and thankfulness, of his further promise, “The earth abideth for ever.”—Eccles. 1:4 ■