

Rainbows and the Flood

Commentary for February 15, 2013 — and a Speaking Engagement Notice

In Portland, Oregon, my wife and I try to regularly attend monthly meetings of the Design Science Association. This organization features speakers who give very informative presentations on a variety of aspects about God's creation. The presentations and speakers this group sponsors are high quality. The December 12, 2012 presentation by Sylvia Thompson was "Treasures of Snow" which covered a range of information about different kinds of snow. She made the observation that snowflakes form around a pollen or dust particle, and snow is actually different than crystalized water or ice.¹

Her statement stuck in my memory. My wife told me that raindrops also form around pollen or dust particles. She was correct. The United States Geological Survey has information about raindrop formation:

"For precipitation to happen, first tiny water droplets must condense on even tinier dust, salt, or smoke particles, which act as a nucleus. Water droplets may grow as a result of additional condensation of water vapor when the particles collide. If enough collisions occur to produce a droplet with a fall velocity which exceeds the cloud updraft speed, then it will fall out of the cloud as precipitation. This is not a trivial task since millions of cloud droplets are required to produce a single raindrop."

• **"The Water Cycle: Precipitation"**²

Rainbows

We now come to rainbows, the subject of this Commentary. Rainbows are caused by the refraction of light through water vapor. When the angle of viewing is correct the refraction of light divides colors into a pattern of a visible rainbow. The amount of water needed to form a rainbow is not sufficient at that moment and location to form clouds.³

This is fascinating because we are told in the Book of Genesis that rainbows did not exist before the flood. In other words, rainbows were a post-flood creation of God.⁴ Allow me to describe a remarkable experience I had viewing a rainbow.

One summer in college I had the privilege to see a complete double rainbow. I was cleaning

¹ See the article "[How Do Snowflakes Form?](#)" on the NOAA webpage. NOAA stands for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, a U.S. government agency,

² The article "[The Water Cycle: Precipitation, from USGS Water-Science School](#)" is presented by the United States Geological Survey for children.

³ "[How Do Rainbows Form?](#)" from the United States National Weather Service.

⁴ Read Dr. Ernest Martin's excellent article, "[Creation of Life in Contemporary Times](#)" where he points out other post-flood creations, others during the time of the Old and New Testaments, and even creations by God that are ongoing today.

for part-time money on the 12th floor of an apartment building overlooking a large lake. A strange lighting effect on the wall made me turn around, open the blinds, and look out the window. A beautiful sight was in front of me. The sun was soon to set and the rain clouds nearby were a vivid pink reflected upon the water of the lake 12 stories below. This was beautiful in itself, but what surprised me most was the display arrayed before me.

My attention was seized by a complete double rainbow, both reaching from horizon to horizon, one inside the other with intense and brilliant full colors clearly delineated even to the deepest violet. It was awesome, and I had a front row seat, so I sat down and watched the display.⁵ I remember saying to God and myself in praise, "Author, Author!"

Unfortunately I was alone and had no one to share this remarkable but natural light-show experience. I was grateful to have had a perfect vantage point with full view of this display. The sight continued while I watched for several minutes. Then the colors began to fade and the rainbow slowly disappeared, as do all rainbows.

I knew the Scriptures enough to realize God was speaking to me personally and to all mankind through the rainbows. It was not some mystical message, but part of God's creation. It was nonetheless personal because God communicates to every person who sees a rainbow, whether or not they realize He is communicating with them.

A rainbow is a sign to man from God, and this includes me and you. After the flood, God spoke to Noah about a covenant He was to make with mankind. God's one-way covenant was to be signified by a rainbow⁶:

"And as for Me, now I am setting up My covenant with you and with your seed after you, with every living soul that was with you, flyer, domestic beast and every wild animal of the earth that was with you, all that came forth from the ark, every animal of the earth. And I will confirm My covenant with you: Never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a deluge, and never again shall there be a deluge to wreck the entire earth.'

Elohim further said: 'This is THE SIGN of the covenant that I am giving, between Me and you and every living soul that was with you, for eonian generations. My bow I have set in a cloud, and it will be for a sign of the covenant between Me and the earth. And it will occur when I make the sky cloudy over the earth with

⁵ The internet article "[How Do Rainbows Form?](#)" from footnote #3 above, has a section titled, "What makes a double rainbow?":

"Sometimes we see two rainbows at once. What causes this? We have followed the path of a ray of light as it enters and is reflected inside the raindrop. But, not all of the energy of the ray escapes the raindrop after it is reflected once. A part of the ray is reflected again, and travels along a different path inside the drop to emerge from the drop at a different angle. The rainbow we normally see is called the primary rainbow and is produced from one internal reflection. The secondary rainbow arises from two internal reflections and the rays exit the drop the second time at an angle of around 50°, rather than the 42° for the primary rainbow. This effect produces the secondary rainbow, with the colors reversed from the primary rainbow."

⁶ Some covenants are two-way agreements. God's covenant with Israel is such a two-way agreement, both participants have obligations to fulfill. A rainbow is a sign of God's one-way covenant with mankind. It will be fulfilled by Him whether or not mankind acknowledges God or His covenant.

clouds and My bow appears in a cloud, then I will remember My covenant between Me and you and every living soul among all flesh, so that never again shall the waters become a deluge to wreck all flesh. When My bow comes to be in the cloud, I will see it to remember the eonian covenant between Elohim and every living soul among all flesh which is on the earth.'

So Elohim said to Noah: 'This is the sign of the covenant that I have set up between Me and all flesh which is on the earth.'"

• Genesis 9:8–17, Concordant Literal Version

God mentions this covenant again in Isaiah 54:9–10, but he does not mention the rainbow. In my opinion the rainbow is implied. In Ezekiel we find that God adorns His traveling throne with a rainbow. It successfully awed the prophet Ezekiel⁷:

"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 YHWH. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, ..."

• Ezekiel 1:28, KJV

In vision the apostle John saw an emerald rainbow around God's throne in heaven:

"And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald."

• Revelation 4:3

The last mention of a rainbow in the Bible occurs when an angel comes from heaven and wears a rainbow like a crown:

"And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire: ..."

• Revelation 10:1

While we cannot know the full significance of rainbows in the Ezekiel and Revelation passages, we can be certain about rainbows in the sky. Next time you see a rainbow **"in the firmament,"** know it is God's sign to you as an individual belonging to mankind. You can accept that message as personal to you from God. God remembers, so should you.

No Rainbows before the Flood?

According to the account in Genesis chapter 9 above, rainbows were a post-flood creation of God. How could such a thing be possible? (If they existed pre-flood, why would their post-flood presence be unique?) Today rainbows obey natural laws as shown in the internet articles listed in the footnotes above.

Dust particles which form the nucleus of each raindrop and snowflake are necessary for water vapor and rainbows. Remember this fact when thinking about the situation before the flood:

⁷ The Hebrew word for bow in Genesis 9:13–14, 16 and Ezekiel 1:28 is the same word that identifies a bow shooting an arrow. Yet there is no ambiguity in the Genesis and Ezekiel account. Both are clear in their meaning. The shape is what is being spoken of in all instances of "bow" in the Old Testament, whether is meant a bow of color in the sky or a bow that shoots an arrow.

“... for YHWH God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was not a man to till the ground. [So how was needed moisture distributed to plants?] But there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground.”

• **Genesis 2:5–6**

Consider this. If there was dust in the air, then water vapor should have formed raindrops, ice crystals, and snow, just like today. The absence of rain BEFORE the flood, and the presence of rain and rainbows AFTER the flood can be explained by the fact that there was an insufficient quantity of dust in the atmosphere in the pre-flood world. No dust in the air, therefore no rain, no snowflakes. Rainbows are always associated with rain and clouds. Ezekiel understood this, just as we do today: **“As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, ...”** (Ezekiel 1:28).

The next question is, why would there be an absence of dust in the air? Well, what causes dust? Wind, volcanic activity, lack of moisture in a given area, human and animal skin particles flaking off — all of these factors contribute to dust, pollen, and other minute particles entering the atmosphere:

“And YHWH God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.”

• **Genesis 2:7**

So we know there was dust in Eden. He formed Adam from that dust and placed Adam in the garden in Eden (Genesis 2:8). There likely was dust all over the earth. So what suppressed atmospheric dust? Some creation researchers wonder if the air pressure was greater in the pre-flood world than it is today. This is surmised from the large size of animals, both reptiles and mammals, that lived before the flood. If the oxygen content and air pressure were greater than today, it would be much easier for huge animals to breath. Higher air pressure would precipitate the dust to the surface, decreasing the volume of dust in the atmosphere, and hence preventing raindrops or snowflakes.

Future Speaking Engagement

Again I have been invited to speak at the “Richmond Bible Fellowship” conference on Saturday, April 6, 2013. I will give two presentations, each less than an hour. My 10:00 a.m. lecture will be “YHWH’s Body” and the second at 3:00 p.m. will be “Temple Symbolism in Genesis,” lectures will present material from Dr. Ernest L. Martin’s articles, but this material will be new to most attendees. All the speakers teach the biblical doctrine of universal salvation.

The conference starts on the evening of Friday, April 5th; runs all day Saturday, April 6th; and ends after Sunday morning, April 7th. There is a nominal charge to attend. Lodging is yours to arrange, but several inexpensive motels are near the conference site. The conference room will be at the Quality Inn, Richmond Airport, 5203 Williamsburg Rd, Sandston, Virginia. The Quality Inn phone number is 804-222-6450 if you need directions. Make arrangements early if you expect to attend. Please call the “Richmond Bible Fellowship” organizer, Roosevelt Arrington, at 804-350-2198. I hope to meet several of you there.

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