

Lessons from clouds and bows (Quality: Good)

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[0 : 00] In the name of the Lord and by the Holy Spirit, let us seek to continue our meditation in the ninth chapter of Genesis, reading verses 13 and 14.

Genesis chapter the ninth, we read verses 13 and 14. 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.

You will remember, as we opened this morning, that we mentioned a sacred objective, as in our spirit, and the objective was this, and is this.

It appeared in my spirit that there would be some precious souls assembling and gathered together here in this blessed spot of hallowed ground, as it has been made to a number of us who would know something about a cloud.

And the message, and I name this to you in a very concise and simple form, the message to you under that cloud would be that the Lord of his nursery would give you to see something that he has placed in the cloud, and that is unique and altogether exclusive to those who are in the covenant of his grace.

[2 : 53] One of the most beautiful sights in the firmament and in the whole of creation is that marvelous rainbow, the whole spectrum of light visible to our eye.

And to know this, that not only is this visible and is translated in spiritual terms to the living family of God, but at the same time God himself looks upon it and remembers his covenant with the earth and especially with his dear saints.

So let us make this brief comment. It will be acknowledged by every member of this congregation that the whole earth and the whole human race, especially now in the dregs of time, is beclouded.

Now, there is a tremendous distinction. God's people, every one of his dear children, although they are often beclouded, they see the bow in the cloud.

Therefore, you will perceive what we have to endeavor to work out this evening, by the grace of God, God's people, and the grace of God, and the grace of God, and the grace of God, and the grace of God.

[5 : 04] So that I shall seek to lift up the majestic and beautiful symbolism and translate it into spiritual terminology.

Let us begin, then, with the clouds. Will I bring a cloud over the earth?

A cloud in the book of God stands for a number of different things. For instance, a cloud sometimes stands for the glory of God.

When the priests brought in the ark into the oracle of Solomon's magnificent temple, the cloud filled the house.

That cloud was the glory of the God of Israel. When Moses communed with the Lord concerning those rebellious Israelites, we read that a cloud descended and stood at the tabernacle door.

- [6 : 34] To translate, this means that the Lord himself was there. And he was speaking with Moses, as one speaketh with his friend face to face.
- A cloud filled the place. And as you well know, the divine record of God's method of leading the Israelites from Egyptian bondage was by the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire.
- The presence of the glory of God. The power of God. Then you have the same in the New Testament, where the transfiguration of Christ is narrated by the three evangelists.
- And Christ was seen by that favored trio, Peter, James, and John.
- And he was seen by that, just as so many of our loved ones and dear friends see him now enthroned in glory.
- [7 : 54] They saw him there in all his glory. And presently a bright cloud overshadowed them.
- A bright cloud. And this was the presence of the Father. And out of that cloud behold a voice saying, This is my beloved Son.
- Hear him. A cloud. And I do not want to focus any attention, obviously, upon myself, But upon my blessed Lord a few times.
- And once in particular, It was the most heavenly experience of the preacher To know that this sanctuary was filled with that bright cloud of his glory.
- Last year, as we celebrated an anniversary day, I look back on that occasion 40 years ago.
- [9 : 20] It was 41 years ago this year, if we are favored to live to, I think it was July. When in this sanctuary, the bright cloud filled this house.
- And the Lord gave to me a most heavenly visitation, a confirmation of forgiveness.
- And so great was the divine blessing that night that I could have gone straight to heaven from this house of God.
- So that before I pass, I want to make an appeal to you, beloved friends, older friends, younger friends.
- Have you known what it is for this bright cloud to fill this sanctuary? And for your soul to be so happy, pardoned, free, anointed, blessed and favored, That you could have gone immediately to your eternal inheritance.
- [10 : 45] Heavenly bliss. Very sacred, is it not? So you see, although many years have passed, the remembrance and the reality and the blessedness of that heavenly and divine visitation of that bright cloud remains in my spirit.
- And it is something that can never be taken away. How often in Sussex, my spirit travels to Shaftesbury Avenue and to that spot.
- Well, I wanted to say that possibly I have referred to it every year in my visits here. And if so, it is to the supreme glory of our triune God, because it is a heavenly anointing.
- Now then, the cloud also is a symbol of mercy. For instance, after the three and a half years of drought, when that great man of God went to the top of Carmel and put his face between his knees and prayed to the Lord, you will remember the directive.
- He said, go now, look toward the sea. And he said, and this is often our lamentation.
- [12 : 34] You may have felt the same when you opened your eyes this morning, when you looked for tokens for God, or when you looked for some evidence of divine life in your soul.
- You may have said, there is nothing, nothing that I can comfortably feel. It is the same sometimes in prayer and sometimes in preaching.
- There seems to be nothing. Now, he said, go again seven times. Keep going.

For those who are seeking some deliverance, or some special token for God, or some visitation of the Lord to their souls.

For instance, in passing, I want to say this. There are those in the house of God who have a hunger and thirst after righteousness, and for many, many years they have no satisfaction concerning their state in Christ, their standing in him.

[14 : 01] For that word is a directive and an encouragement. Go again seven times. One of my congregation, some years ago, was in this very place.

An elderly man. And he had attended all his life. And he had the grace of God in his heart, but there was no deliverance or satisfaction.

Now, when he came to his lost days and to his dying circumstances, and I affectionately questioned him, he said, well, this was the word that the Lord conveyed to my spirit with divine power through your ministry.

Go again seven times. And as he came closer to death, so the Lord completely satisfied him concerning his standing in that dear Redeemer and his accomplished work of redemption.

So, I want to just, in passing, to name that to you, because obviously I know not of you, there may be some here, there may be some poor soul, who feel such a longing, such an intense thirst for God, and yet you have no assurance.

[15 : 41] You've never been satisfied. You've never received a deliverance. Just a little crumb. Now, I want to say to you, because you may not be here next year, I may not be, I want to say to you, keep going.

You pray, don't you, in your flat, in your little room, you keep asking the Lord to visit you. He knows whether you're in Westminster or wherever you are.

Ask the Lord to visit that flat and to assure your conscience of its part in the Redeemer's blood. And he will not disappoint you.

The message is then, go again seven times, and at the seventh, he said, there ariseth, oh yes, it's here. We have not waited in vain.

There was nothing, nothing visible, but now it's here. A little cloud the size of a man's hand.

[16 : 55] Nursing. Wonderful, that is, to get this sweet token of his special love.

Well now, I felt it wise to endeavor to run over the table of the symbolism of clouds. Obviously, when we think of clouds in relation to mercy, we think of the Lord visiting his people, sending a plentiful rain, whereby thou didst confirm thine inheritance when it was weary.

And now I want to come to the cloud that is obviously before us in this text.

For it is intimately connected with what had been experienced prior to this, when the windows of heaven had been opened and the fountains of the great deep broken up.

This deluge and so how awesome and ominous it must have been to have seen a cloud formation.

[18 : 23] So that I believe we may correctly judge that the cloud here relates rather to trouble, distress, affliction, sorrow, temptation, as Mr. Medley has it, when trouble like a gloomy cloud has gathered thick and thundered loud.

He near my soul has always stored his loving kindness oh how good. Now quite clearly this is the cloud that is before us in our subject.

I want at this stage just to make two observations. The first is many of you may feel that you will live under a cloud.

In your work and because of your temperament and because you're so tense and agitated and apprehensive and nervous and because of certain things in your lot and path you may feel that you live really largely under a cloud.

and I believe that is true. I mean after all if you take a general survey you look at your own case with all the innate evils and the corruption of fallen nature and the poor way we serve the Lord and obey and honour him when we look at our own record and so on it casts a cloud over our spirit Lord I am not what I should be I am not what I wish to be and it casts a cloud over you and the Lord opens to you the den of wickedness the human heart and you see such baseness and vileness there it casts a cloud over you doesn't it you may say can ever

[21 : 00] God dwell here in my soul is it possible that God can dwell with me or in me and what you are casts a cloud over you am I speaking the truth if you don't know your own heart and nature obviously you don't realize this but if he says to you turn again son of man and thou shalt see greater abominations than these and you see all these hideous monsters in those cells of the human heart this casts a cloud over you the carnality the wandering the rebellions the departures the uncleanness all that is within you casts a cloud over you wonderful thing to be led to the blood of Christ and to have it sprinkled upon the heart to be led to his cross and passion now let us extend this survey then you go to the churches of

God certainly we have much to bless God for there are sweet tokens his goodness runs an endless round but how much there is to cast a cloud over us last week I was passing a chapel both on the outward and return journeys a chapel that I have preached in for 37 38 years and now of course it's locked up the whole place is desolate it casts a cloud over you then you see the declension the numerical declension and not only that the spiritual declension and this casts a cloud over one

I mean you look at this if the Lord was pleased as I tried to pray just now to go out to the cinema or somewhere and call a few poor sinners by grace regenerate them and bring them into the sanctuary well this would put heart in us for so much to be cloud then of course you take the wider dimensions and that is the state of the world of the human race their own dear nation and you are absolutely be clouded so am I right in suggesting that it may well be that you feel sometimes that you almost live under a cloud clouded now then if that is true I want to go back now to something that is absolutely basic before we speak of the bow in the cloud when would you think in this category of cloud formation

I use this as a symbol dark clouds stormy clouds and so on when would you think this cloud formation commenced in this earth when do you think men and women first looked up looked up and felt fearful and apprehensive because of the clouds well what I want to say is this the cloud formation that we have before us before us relieved but before us commenced when man fell the fall of man in Adam and what I see then in this dark cloud formation is the frown of God and that surely is tantamount to say his wrath his curse dark clouds and ever since the

Adamic fall and the curse for sin the whole world and the whole human race more or less have been under these dark clouds and it is only the child of God who knows the bow in the cloud very solemn is it not whichever way you look through the whole earth it is wars preparation for global conflict and annihilation of the human race enmity bitterness murder violence hatred oh how big how did we are so when man fell and the curse bore sin surely this was when this dark cloud formation commenced over the human race and over the whole earth so how wonderful that there is a bow in the cloud for those who are in the covenant of grace

[27:17] I mean after all you have your troubles and distresses and afflictions and your neighbours have very much the same a similar pattern they come into the same experience of distress and sorrow and pain and bereavement and so on so after all what is the grand distinction here well surely it is this let me say to you at once and I do this with profound reverence what is the great token that is the sign and the proof of the covenant of grace where will you go to find this bow in the cloud where will you see the whole spectrum of light that is to say all the perfections of Jehovah in holy harmony in your salvation and deliverance you will go to the incarnation of the son of god and the greatest sign and proof of this covenant is the cross of christ this is it let a poor sinner be led to calvary and you will see the bow in the cloud my friend this is it well let us go just a little further

I want now to translate this into intimate experience to take that doctrine and translate it thus now when the lord quickened your soul into divine life he brought you although you had no knowledge of what it was until you came under the gospel but he brought you under his holy righteous moral law that law apprehended you as a law breaker one who had violated it that law accused you and bound you and imprisoned you and condemned you now these were the darkest days of your life when you were under the clouds of condemnation it would be very spiritually interesting and edifying to hear your testimony on this you may have walked the streets of london a lost sinner i will remember when i walked in the street of a town and in my soul i had not a not a shadow of hope i was lost it was not a matter of fearing that i was lost i was lost i felt i was lost no hope no what a cloud the clouds of condemnation i'm sure some of you are coming up in your spirit and saying yes i know i know exactly i've been under those clouds of condemnation feeling cut off wretched ruined undone lost now then the lord was pleased to set his bow in that cloud when after all as you know so well there would never be a rainbow without the mighty orb the sun and the sun shining on and through those droplets of condensed water that great mass the sun shining the rainbow now there's a sun of righteousness in heaven and you will be fully condescent and abundantly acquainted if you know it with the first time when the sun shone through all your misery and wretchedness and there was a rainbow when you see that arch of the rainbow what do you say does that spell out ruin and gloom no it spells out something that is beautiful it gives you hope there's joy wonder harmony so when

Jesus was first revealed and when a broken hearted sinner and a bleeding saviour met as seen by faith then you saw the bow in the cloud how wonderful to see and to know those lively colours shine to show that heaven is surely nigh a sweet hope in your soul delivered from the gloom the ruin the curse do you know what the lord has done for you you'll still have your clouds if i am right in what i feel some of you this is of course with myself too some of you may have a cloud over you but this is just what the lord has done for his dear people at

Calvary he extracted the sting that is wroth curse he extracted that sting from all their troubles and from death for his dear people and having extracted that he injected his divine love and so with every cloud there's a bow the bow in the cloud well when the lord first revealed himself to you then you saw this bow you saw this bow because of the incarnation of his only son his assumption of holy humanity into indishable union with his divine person you had some sense of all his divine perfections shining forth in that spectrum of eternal light every attribute harmonious and united in the salvation of his chosen wonderful isn't it his eternity his infinity his omnipotence his immutability his grace his love his justice his truth his will all his perfections shining forth in

Jehovah Jesus in your redemption and you saw the bow in the cloud now just for a few minutes let me take a further step he says and it shall come to pass when I bring a cloud over the earth that the bow shall be seen in the cloud what constitutes then your cloud trouble pain sickness sorrow fear temptation conflict all these things go to spell out a cloud what a cloud is you're in trouble you're under a cloud now the whole point is this if you take the case of we will say

[36 : 53] Job he had a confluence of troubles did he see the bow in the cloud the time came with him when he said this he was trying to find God he couldn't find him then it occurred to him by the spirit that although he could not see God that God could see him in love obviously and he said he knoweth the way that I take ah I've seen the bow and how is this interpreted I've seen the bow when he has tried me I shall come forth as gold seen the bow now do you understand that secret I have been thinking of a few occasions in this sanctuary and one especially something like twenty or more years ago

God only knows how I went through the services of that Lord's day because of the deep distress that we were in it was sheer agony no one knew anything about it because the deep things that you pass through you cannot speak of but on that Lord's day in the vestry I believe I commenced to see not with any great power but with a little sense just a little sense of sweet relief in my soul the bow in that terrible cloud and it was a most terrible overwhelming experience and I have opened the hymn book on this

I want to tell you what that bow was Mr. Medley's hymn it was this though sharp afflictions still abound and clouds and darkness thee surround well now you see the very place relevant and now this was the bow still pray for God will all explain nor shalt thou see his face in thine now in that vestry that was the bow in the cloud to me I felt yes God will explain it and also I shall not pray in thine it's the bow in the cloud and today I wish to bless and praise the Lord for the issue it has not yet been completed although how wonderfully the

Lord has wrought so whatever cloud you're under you'll presently see by the grace of God this bow in the cloud if he may well use the ministry of your dear pastor he being unaware of the sorrow of your heart and the distress of your mind will deliver to you God's message and that message will be to you the bow in the cloud just one word from his precious lips one sweet visitation one look of divine love to irradiate your spirit you'll see the bow in the cloud and as you see the bow in the cloud it will spell out to you this let me name it to you a few scriptures many are the afflictions of the righteous but the

Lord delivereth him out of them all who hath delivered us from so great a death and doth deliver in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us the bow in the cloud have you seen it seen it today just over four years ago now when I was down the road in Westminster hospital I saw the bow in the cloud when the Lord gave me this word have faith in God now from that moment I saw the bow in the cloud see my friends if you're in the covenant of grace the Lord loves you whatever cloud you come under cry without ceasing presently you'll see the bow in the cloud sweet holy heavenly token that he is your divine father heavenly father your god your savior your friend there's no curse in it there's love in it and he will deliver you in six troubles yea in seven there shall no evil befall thee he shall guide thee by his counsel and afterward receive you to glory amen