

The Emerald Rainbow: The God of Tender Mercy (Rev. 4:3)

I. THE GOD OF THE EMERALD RAINBOW

³ He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the Throne, in appearance like an emerald. (Rev. 4:3)

A. In Rev. 4, we see God's Temple and courtroom (Dan. 7:9-10). This is the place where God as the judge hands down His sentences upon the guilty. Our only hope is in God's great mercy as depicted in the emerald rainbow.

B. The passion of God's sardius like glory is tempered by His rainbow of mercy. God's mercy is as dynamic and vast as His majesty and holiness. God never suspends one attribute to exercise another. Majesty without mercy would crush the very people that God has invited to partner with Him.

¹⁴ Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your Throne; mercy and truth go before Your face. (Ps. 89:14)

C. We receive mercy based on what Jesus did on the cross, not on what we have accomplished. Jesus, the innocent One, became guilty so that the guilty ones who believe in Him may become innocent. God's mercy forgives us and assures that what would disqualify us from our destiny is removed, if we will receive God's grace (2 Cor. 5:17-21).

¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.... 21 For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Cor. 5:17-21)

D. The flood in Noah's day killed everyone except the eight people in Noah's family (2 Pet. 2:5). God set a rainbow in the sky as a sign of covenant to never destroy the earth with water.

¹³ I set My rainbow in the cloud, and it shall be for the sign of the covenant between Me and the earth...15 I will remember My covenant...the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. 16 The rainbow shall be in the cloud, and I will look on it to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature...on the earth." (Gen 9:13-16)

E. God told Noah that He would look on the rainbow to remember His covenant of mercy (Gen 9:16). In a similar way, for all eternity, the saints will look at the rainbow around His Throne and remember His great mercy shown to us. The rainbow will be forever prominent for all to see.

F. God has it in His heart to never curse the ground, thus to not destroy all the food supply for the sake of His people (v. 21). In this promise, He committed that in every generation there would be a seedtime and a harvest along with changing seasons and daylight to provide food, warmth, and light for man's sake. He did not promise to remove all famine, but to keep the routines of the earth functioning so as to sustain life.

II. ALL OF GOD’S WORKS ARE SURROUNDED WITH MERCY

- A. The rainbow around God’s Throne completely encircles it. In other words, God’s mercy surrounds all the activity that proceeds from His Throne. John used the rare Greek word for rainbow (“*iris*”) instead of the common one (*toxon*) to point out how it makes a full circle (instead of a semicircle) around God’s Throne. The prepositions “above” or “over” would have been used if a half-arc was to be understood.
- ³ *...There was a rainbow around the Throne, in appearance like an emerald. (Rev. 4:3)*
- B. Ezekiel also saw a glorious rainbow "around" God’s Throne.
- ²⁶ *The Throne...with the appearance of a man high above it...28 The appearance of a rainbow...was the appearance of the brightness all around it (Throne in v26). This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. (Ezek. 1:26, 28)*
- C. God’s mercy surrounds His Throne as well as His people. He treats us with tender mercy.
- ¹⁰ *But he who trusts in the LORD, mercy shall surround him. (Ps. 32:10)*
- D. All of God’s ways exalt and express His mercy even as He removes that which refuses it.
- ¹⁰ *All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth, to such as keep His covenant... (Ps. 25:10)*
- E. God’s mercy prevails in God’s court as well as in transforming our heart. In other words, it triumphs by causing people to turn from sin and thus to avoid God’s eternal judgments.
- ¹³ *Mercy triumphs over judgment. (Jas 2:13)*
- ⁴ *...Not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? (Rom. 2:4)*
- F. David understood that his only hope to mature in the fear of God was to receive mercy throughout the years of growing spiritually mature.
- ³ *If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? 4 But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared. (Ps. 130:3-4)*
- G. God treated David with gentleness when he sinned. This caused him to mature in heart responses that were esteemed as great before God. David grew great in love, humility and the fear of God.
- ³⁵ *Your gentleness has made me great. (Ps. 18:35)*
- H. God delights in seeing the impact that mercy has on the heart of His children. God forever delights even in the remembrance of our response to His mercy.
- ¹⁸ *Who is a God like You, pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression...? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in mercy. 19 He will again have compassion on us, and will subdue (defeat) our iniquities. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. (Mic. 7:18-19)*

- I. The grand song of redemption is that “the Lord is good, His mercy endures forever” (1 Chr. 16:34, 41; 2 Chr. 5:13; 7:3, 6; 20:21; Ezra 3:11; Jer. 33:11; Ps. 52:1; 118:1-4, 29; 136:1-26).
- J. God is tender in how He relates to us in our weaknesses and sin. This is the first aspect of His personality that He revealed because it is the one we need first and most. People often resist, reject, and repel God’s mercy because it violates their sense of justice. They feel that they do not deserve forgiveness. It is true, they do not deserve it. However, God’s indescribable goodness gives us His favor as a gift. At the cross, the Father fully satisfied the claims of justice. When we understand the heat of God’s wrath poured out on Jesus, then we stand confident in receiving mercy knowing that justice is fully satisfied. We must trust in God’s mercy.

⁵ *I have trusted in Your mercy... (Ps. 13:5)*

- K. God will show abundant mercy to those who cry out to Him. We are all babes in understanding the depths of God’s mercy. We long to feel what God feels when He gives us mercy.

⁵ *You are...ready to forgive, and abundant in mercy to all those who call upon You. (Ps. 86:5)*

² *For His merciful kindness is great toward us... (Ps. 117:2)*

²² *Through the Lord’s mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. 23 They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. (Lam. 3:22-23)*

- L. David was not disqualified from his calling after he murdered Uriah and committed adultery because he repented deeply and trusted in God’s mercy.

¹ *Have mercy upon me...according to the multitude of Your tender mercies... (Ps. 51:1)*

¹⁸ *If I say, "My foot slips," Your mercy, O LORD, will hold me up. 19 In the multitude of my anxieties within me, Your comforts delight my soul. (Ps. 94:18-19)*

III. ABOUT THE RAINBOW

- A. This rainbow around God’s Throne is different from other rainbows in nature, in that this one has a dominant emerald hue seen along with the other six colors of the rainbow. Emerald green is the rainbow’s dominant color, speaking of life (in the vegetation) and refreshing. The emerald stone was Judah's stone. Judah was the royal tribe in which the Messianic King would come to sit on the throne of David (Heb.7:14; Rom.1:1-3; Rev. 5:5).
- B. A rainbow occurs in the clouds because of the refraction (reflection or bending) of sunlight as it passes through raindrops which form a prism. The rainbow is light which is broken or diversified as it passes through a prism. An arc of seven colors appears in the clouds as a result of the refractive dispersion of sunlight in raindrops, causing the seven colors to be seen. Isaac Newton defined the seven colors of the rainbow as red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo (*blue-violet*) and violet. The various colors of the rainbow symbolize the different aspects of God's dealings with His people. The color order of the rainbow starts with red (at the outer edge) and ends with violet. The brightness and width of the bands of color vary greatly in rainbows.

IV. GOD HAS JOINED MERCY AND THE FEAR OF GOD TOGETHER.

- A. God delights in mercy that produces the fear of God in people instead of spiritual presumption.
¹¹ The LORD takes pleasure in those who fear Him...who hope in His mercy. (Ps. 147:11)
- B. God shows great mercy to those who have set their heart to fear Him.
³ If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? ⁴ But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared. (Ps. 130:3-4)
¹¹ As the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him... (Ps. 103:11)
¹⁸ The eye of the LORD is on those who fear Him...who hope in His mercy... (Ps. 33:18)

V. RESPONDING TO GOD'S MERCY

- A. How we respond to God's mercy determines our future in God. We must not refuse it nor take it in vain. We must not refuse to trust it when we fail, nor seek to earn it when we do well. David trusted in God's mercy in the times of his failure. We take His mercy and say, "thank you."
⁶ Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life... (Ps. 23:6)
⁸ I am like a green olive tree in the house of God; I trust in the mercy of God... (Ps. 52:8)
¹⁶ Let us therefore come boldly to the Throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy. (Heb. 4:16)
- B. We must not be casual about God's mercy and thus receive it in vain so that it does not produce gratitude, obedience, and the fear of God in our hearts.
¹ We...plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain. (2 Cor. 6:1)
- C. To hear the Word in faith is to be responsive to it with both confidence and obedience.
² For indeed the gospel was preached to...them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith (confidence) in those who heard it. (Heb. 4:2)
- D. It is possible to fall short of receiving God's grace with both confidence and obedience.
¹⁵ Looking diligently lest anyone fall short of the grace of God...¹⁶ lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. (Heb. 12:15-16)
- E. To honor God's mercy, we must refuse compromise and condemnation. The way to receive the full benefits of God's delight in showing us mercy is by declaring war on all the areas of compromise in our life and to refuse to condemnation after we repent of our sin.
¹ There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. (Rom. 8:1)
- F. Legalism seeks to earn God's favor which is impossible. We only receive it freely (Rom. 4:2-8).