



"Reflect upon your present blessings, of which every man has plenty, not on your past misfortunes, of which all men have some."
—Charles Dickens

24-Oct-14

The Rain Comes Down

Now that a little more than a week has passed since the Last Great Day closed the fall festival season, we have had a chance to digest a lesson or two from our experiences during that time. Most of us enjoyed ourselves and the company of brethren from various corners of [the world](#), eating good food with them, seeing some sights, and participating in some good conversations. The spiritual food was consistently helpful and meaty, and even the prayers were a notch or two above what we generally expect. Even if we had to endure and overcome a few bumps in the road, we can look back and say, "It was a good Feast!"

In Nashville, where most the members of Church of the Great [God](#) traveled to keep those eight days, this year's Feast may go down as one of the rainiest in living memory. The skies opened up nearly every day, not always at critical times—sometimes overnight—but with enough frequency that a burst of brilliant sunshine was a welcome change from the persistent overcast. At least one storm that rolled through the area made driving quite hazardous, scuttling some dinner plans that evening. The golf outing took

place under threatening skies, but the participants had to endure only a scattered shower or two. In other words, the rain disrupted our activities only in minor ways.

We have a tendency to consider such persistent things as blessings or curses from God. Sometimes they are, and sometimes they are not. Without a clear revelation from Him, we cannot be dogmatic about such things. At any rate, it can be instructive to contemplate these events from a biblical perspective to see what they *may* mean or what they can add to our understanding of spiritual realities. Rain is a good candidate for such study.

To understand rain from a biblical perspective, it is helpful to begin by realizing that the lands of the Bible, particularly Canaan, are naturally dry places. Unlike America and many of the other Israelite possessions around the world, where many and/or major rivers water the land, the land of Israel has no major rivers, and even the streams it has may dwindle to a trickle or dry up altogether during the heat of summer season. Rain is a rare event, occurring only during specified rainy seasons. In fact, rain is so rare that dewfall and water captured in cisterns provide much of the moisture needed to grow crops.

This is especially significant because during Bible times Israel was substantially agrarian. It had little industry, so the economy was dependent on the productivity of the farmers' fields, which in turn was dependent on favorable weather. God purposely put His people in a land in which they had to rely on Him and His control of the weather, so that the cycle of their lives became an annual test of [faith](#). Rain in due season became a sign of blessing from God, as [Deuteronomy 28:12](#) attests: "The LORD will open to you His good treasure, the heavens, to give the rain to your land in its season, and to bless all the work of your hand." Conversely, when they turned from Him, "The LORD will change the rain of your land to powder and dust; from the heaven it shall come down on you until you are destroyed" (verse 24).

Thus, to the Israelites, rain was a sign of blessing and abundance and even of life itself, since the plants could not grow and bear fruit without it, and they themselves would subsequently perish without the produce from the ground. Rain was among the foremost of God's provisions to His people, and they made a direct correlation between it and God's favor. Psalm 147, the

summary psalm for Book Two—covering the Pentecost season wherein was the harvest of Israel's staple crop, wheat—praises God for His supply of rain: "Sing to the LORD with thanksgiving; sing praises on the harp to our God, who covers the heavens with clouds, who prepares the rain for the earth" ([Psalm 147:7-8](#)).

We must also remember that the controlling feature of the relationship between God and Israel was the covenant that they made at Mount Sinai. Keeping the covenant was all-important. Israel promised to keep God's laws and do His will, while God promised them numerous helps and benefits. God always kept His end of the bargain, but Israel failed repeatedly. It did not take long for the wise among them to realize that, when Israel was more or less faithful, the rains were more consistent and the crops more bountiful. Therefore, rain soon began to be seen as a reward for the people's [faithfulness](#) to the covenant. Consider this part of Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the Temple in this light:

When the heavens are shut up and there is no rain because they have sinned against You, when they pray toward this place and confess Your name, and turn from their [sin](#) because You afflict them, then hear in heaven, and forgive the sin of Your servants, Your people Israel, that You may teach them the good way in which they should walk; and send rain on Your land which You have given to your people as an inheritance. ([I Kings 8:35-36](#))

In terms of rainfall on the land, the ideal is to have rain "in its season" ([Leviticus 26:4](#)). Rain that fell at the wrong time could be just as harmful or useless as no rain at all. Crops require an infusion of moisture at seeding time—to germinate the seed and encourage growth—and for a time just before harvest to mature the fruit. This reflects the Bible's several references to "the early rain and the latter rain" ([Deuteronomy 11:4](#); [Jeremiah 5:24](#); [Hosea 6:3](#); [Joel 2:23](#); [James 5:7](#)). The former rain falls in the late autumn, when seeds for the spring crop are planted, and the latter rain comes in the spring, when the crop is nearing harvest (see [Job 29:23](#)).

Interestingly, fall and spring are both holy day times, when God gathers His people at holy convocations to teach them His way. The pouring down of rain, then, parallels God pouring out His Word to His people to bring success and prosperity into their lives:

For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and do not return there, but water the earth, and make it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it. ([Isaiah 55:9-11](#))

So, just as we experienced the physical rain falling down from the heavens just about every single day of the Feast, so the spiritual rain of God's Word poured down upon us, the necessary watering we all need to produce fruit for God's pleasure ([John 15:8](#)). With this understanding, we can consider the rain to have been no curse but a sign of God's blessing.

- Richard T. Ritenbaugh

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[Warning in the Wind](#)

by Richard T. Ritenbaugh

The violent weather this spring resulted in over 1,415 tornadoes and 530 deaths (518 of the deaths occurred in the United States). This year alone had more deaths than the 564 that occurred over the last decade as a result of 948 tornadoes. The vortex of the Joplin tornado measured three quarters of a mile, with wind velocities exceeding 250 miles an hour, killing 138 people. The Scriptures have a great deal to say about the significance of these catastrophic storms, beginning with the narrative of Noah, in which the majority of human life was utterly obliterated. This deluge was engineered

by Almighty God, in response to the disgusting cumulative, incremental sins of humankind. God can use lethal storms to execute judgment on sinful people. Elihu informed Job that God has sovereign control of the weather, for blessing or cursing. The Psalms suggest that weather patterns fulfill God's Word; nothing happens without His knowledge. The recent violent weather may not mean that the individuals who lost their lives were any more sinful than the rest of us, but we should be sobered that God is probably displeased with the general increase of immorality in our culture. Though weather phenomena are not top-tier indications (like deception, famine, earthquakes, etc.) that the end of the world is near, their increase nevertheless should cause us to soberly reflect on the current immoral conditions of our culture, coupled with the disgusting timidity of the ministry to explain the causal relationship between sin and calamity. The trumpet plagues will include some rather large specimens of hail and other forms of inclement weather. We need to regard God as a refuge from these horrible storms.

From the Archives: Featured Article

[The Dew of Heaven](#)

by Ronny H. Graham

Dew is a creation of God that He uses several times in His Word. Ronny Graham illustrates how this symbolism applies to us today.

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