

What have they done to the rain?

Some of you older members might remember a popular song from the sixties, with this intriguing title, “What have they done to the rain?”

Like me, you might remember my favourite version of this song by a Liverpool group called “The Searchers,” or perhaps you prefer the one by folk singer Joan Baez. The song was actually written by a relatively unknown folk-blues singer by the name of Malvina Reynolds.

Although a lament of lost love, the song’s title line implies that, even almost fifty years ago in 1962 when this song was written, the rain – which *should* be pure and clean – had been polluted by mankind.

Some time ago, we received an e-mail message from our church brethren in Zambia, asking us to pray about the lack of rain in that country. The weather conditions seem to have been very upset over this past year or so and there have been severe drought conditions in some parts of the United States and Australia, while other areas have suffered severe flooding. I don’t know if it is my imagination, but they seem to be getting gradually worse each and every year. The climax of more recent bizarre weather conditions must have been the awful hurricane “Katrina” that wreaked so much havoc in the New Orleans area of the U.S.A. in August 2005.

So again I ask: What have they done to the rain?

Today I would like us to study at least some of what God’s Word has to about rain and water both pure and polluted rain and water; both gentle and storm-driven rain and water; both physical and spiritual rain and water.

God's pure spiritual water

God's Holy Spirit is often symbolized by refreshing, life-giving rain and pure, living water – all three of which God is the source:

For I will pour water on him who is thirsty, and floods on the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit on your descendants, and my blessing on your offspring; (Isaiah 44:3)

Rain down, you heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness; let the earth open, let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together. I, the LORD, have created it. (Isaiah 45:8)

Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the LORD, till He comes and rains righteousness on you. (Hosea 10:12)

For my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn themselves cisterns—broken cisterns that can hold no water. (Jeremiah 2:13)

O LORD, the hope of Israel, all who forsake you shall be ashamed. "Those who depart from me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the LORD, the fountain of living waters." (Jeremiah 17:13) And in that day it shall be that living waters shall flow from Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea and half of them toward the western sea; in both summer and winter it shall occur. (Zechariah 14:8)

Chapter 47 of the book of Ezekiel describes these living waters in even more detail, but we will defer discussion of them until a separate Bible study. For now, let us look at a few New Testament examples:

Jesus answered and said to her... [the Samaritan woman at the well]... "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'give me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water." The woman said to him, "Sir, you have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Where then do you get that living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, as well as his sons and his livestock?" Jesus answered and said to her, "Whoever drinks of this [physical] water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life." The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw." (John 4:10-15)

On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." But this he spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. (John 7:37-39)

I [John the Baptist] indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. (Matthew 3:11)

And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely. (Revelation 22:17)

So we clearly see the symbolism of pure, fresh, clear water for the Holy Spirit of God.

Satan's counterfeit spiritual rain

God warns us, however, that, as Satan is the prince of the power of the air, the atmosphere we call “the first heaven” is filled with his evil power and spirit:

Wherein in time past you walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience. (Ephesians 2:2)

Let us look at a few more scriptures that speak of the dangerous, deceptive, counterfeiting ways of Satan and his cohorts:

Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. (Matthew 7:15)

For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works. (II Corinthians 11:13-15)

Let us think about this. If God's Holy Spirit is so frequently symbolized by pure, gentle, clean rain and water, perhaps the spirit of Satan might be symbolized by dirty, polluted, storm-driven rain and water.

Perhaps his spirit falls on us like acid rain, which may *look* clean enough, but is, in actuality, heavily and dangerously polluted.

Solutions

During a rain-storm the air is filled with millions – or even billions – of water droplets as they fall to the earth. Unlike ducks, most human beings don't like getting wet, especially by the polluted rain that falls on many areas of the world today. Likewise, Christians should not like being pelted with Satan's spiritual "acid rain."

But how can we escape all of those physical raindrops? How can we prevent being soaked – and polluted – by them? And, what is much more important, how can we protect ourselves from their spiritual counterparts?

There are at least four solutions – some practical, some not – to the problem of being drenched by rain – both clean or polluted; both physical and spiritual:

Solution 1: An Umbrella

I go for a walk nearly every day, rain or shine. When it is raining quite lightly, I take a small umbrella with me. It prevents the rain from falling on my head and *most* of my body. But not *all* of my body. As I usually hold the umbrella in my right hand, some rain always gets to my left arm and side, both of which often get quite wet.

Our first solution then is a *bigger* umbrella, which can protect our whole bodies from the rain. A big, spiritual umbrella may be one solution for God's children.

Umbrellas are not specifically mentioned in the bible. But that does not mean that some form of umbrella did not exist back then. Here is the article, *Umbrella*, from Wikipedia:

Umbrella:

An umbrella is a device used for temporary shade or shelter from precipitation. They can be made by stretching a fabric or other material over a wire frame. Umbrellas carried by hand are now usually used as rain shields, although their first use was for shielding from the sun; however, as tans became more sociably acceptable, this usage declined. An umbrella made for protection from the sun, is called a parasol. These are often meant to be fixed to one point and often used with patio tables or other outdoor furniture, or on the beach for shelter from the sun. The word "umbrella" is from the Latin word "umbra" for shade or shadow. "Brolly" is a slang word for umbrella, used often in Britain (both word and object).

History of the Umbrella:

Depictions on ancient artifacts provide evidence that umbrellas have been in existence for over four thousand years. The civilizations of ancient Assyria, Egypt, Greece, and China all used umbrellas. It was not until the 16th Century that the trend spread to Europe. In England, umbrellas were only used by women until the practice was popularized by Jonas Hanway (1712-1786). Having noted the custom in Portugal, in the 1750s he started to carry an umbrella regularly in London, and continued to do so for thirty years despite derision. Another pioneering Londoner was John MacDonald, who from 1778 used a silk umbrella when it rained. The use of "Hanways" by English gentlemen slowly spread, so that by 1790, their pioneering efforts had helped lift the English taboo against men carrying umbrellas. Chinese umbrellas have traditionally been made of either oilpaper, or silk on a bamboo frame. Victorian era umbrellas had frames of wood or baleen, but these devices were expensive and hard to fold when wet. Samuel Fox invented the steel-ribbed umbrella in 1852. Modern designs usually employ a telescoping steel trunk. New materials such as cotton, plastic film and nylon often replace the original silk. They now are available in compact collapsible designs.

Interesting facts to be sure; but what is a big, *spiritual* umbrella? Let us go back a step and ask first, what, in effect is a *physical* umbrella? The above Wikipedia article shows that an umbrella is a portable "shelter" from the sun or the rain.

Solution 2: Protective Clothing

Another type of portable shelter from the rain is a suit of protective clothing specifically designed to keep out the rain. When our Vancouver Island rain gets heavy, I don my hooded, rubberized nylon rain suit. Avoid mental picture!

But what kind of protective clothing will help protect us from Satan's spiritual acid-rain-storms? I'm not aware of any scriptures that discuss raincoats – either physical or spiritual. But to protect ourselves against Satan's acid rain, we need more than raincoats. We need the kind of spiritual protective clothing specified by God. We need spiritual armour:

The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. (Romans 13:12)

But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God: in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses... By the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left. (II Corinthians 6:4, 7)

Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil... {The English word "wiles" is from the Greek word "methodeia" which means to lie in wait, cunning arts, deceit, craft, or trickery}... For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace... {We'll jump over verse 16 for now}... And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. (Ephesians 6: 11-15, 17)

I purposely jumped over verse 16; but let us go back to it now:

Above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.

The shield of faith is listed as part of the armour of God. But, like the sword of the Spirit, a shield is not something that a soldier normally wears. It is something that he carries. It is another kind of portable “shelter” which he can direct at the incoming torrents of acid-rain – here described as the fiery darts – of Satan which are fired at us from many directions.

Let us take a quick look at the Bible words for “shield.”

Another English Bible word for “shield” is “buckler” which comes from the French words for a soldier’s shield: “bouclier” and the old French word “boucle.”

There are 44 mentions of the word “shield” in the Bible plus 21 more derivatives such as “shielded” and “shields.” There are five Hebrew words translated into the English word “shield” but, surprisingly, only one New Testament Greek word.

The Old Testament Hebrew words are:

1. Magen or in its feminine form **Maginnah** which can be translated as: *shield, buckler, armed, defense, rulers or scales*. These words are derived from the Hebrew root verb **Ganan** which can be translated as: *to defend, to cover or to surround*.

2. Tsinnah which can be translated as *shield, buckler, target, hook, something piercing, barb, or large shield*. This word is derived from the root verb **Tsen** which means: *to be prickly, thorn or barb*.

3. Kiydown which can be translated as *spear, shield, lance, target, javelin, short sword, dart or gorget (a piece of armour for the throat)*. This word is derived from the root verb **kiyd** which means: *to strike, destruction or ruin*.

4. Shelet which is usually translated as *shield*. This word is derived from the root word **Shalat** which means: *rule, give power, dominion, to domineer, to exercise power over, to dominate, to have mastery, to be master, to lord it over, to become master, to give power of or to get mastery of.*

The only New Testament instance of the word “shield,” as we have already seen, is found in Ephesians 6:16. Its Greek word for shield is:

Thureos: which is a large oblong, four-cornered shield. This word derives from the root word **Thura** which means: *Door, gate, vestibule, any opening like a door, an entrance, way or passage into, door through which sheep go in and out, the name of him who brings salvation to those who follow his guidance, "an open door" is used of the opportunity of doing something, the door of the kingdom of heaven (likened to a palace)... denotes the conditions which must be complied with in order to be received into the kingdom of God.*

Let's go back to our physical raincoats for a moment, and discuss their shortcomings. It seems that no matter how much you pay for a good set of rain gear, it all has its limitations. For example, my high quality Columbia rain-suit seems at first to do a good job; but when I get home from my walk and take the suit off, I find that condensation has wet me almost as much as the rain would have. Can't win, can you?

Armour has its limitations too. You're all familiar with the story of David and Goliath, and the problems young David experienced with armour – even King Saul's armour – probably the highest quality armour available at the time:

Moreover David said, "The LORD, who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, he will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine." And Saul said to David, "Go, and the LORD be with you!" So Saul clothed David with his armor, and he put a bronze helmet on his head; he also clothed him with a coat of mail. David fastened his sword to his armor and tried to walk, for he had not tested them. And David said to Saul, "I cannot walk with these, for I have not tested them." So David took them off. (I Samuel 17:37-39)

David preferred to put his trust totally in the armour of God. Continuing:

Then David said to the Philistine, "You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you and take your head from you. And this day I will give the carcasses of the camp of the Philistines to the birds of the air and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. Then all this assembly shall know that the LORD does not save with sword and spear; for the battle is the LORD's, and He will give you into our hands." (Verses 45-47)

Jesus agrees with David – that physical armour has limitations! And He implies that this limitation might also even be extended to *spiritual* armour – especially when faced with a stronger spiritual foe – such as Satan and his demons:

But if I cast out demons with the finger of God, surely the Kingdom of God has come upon you. When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are in peace. But when a stronger than he comes upon him and overcomes him, he takes from him all his armor in which he trusted, and divides his spoils. (Luke 11:20-22)

I'm sure you've all heard the old Aesop's Fable about the wind and the sun vainly vying to get a travelling man's coat off him. The warm sun is the successful one. We often think of the positive lessons of this fable – i.e. that we will have more success with people if we treat them warmly. And this is, of course, very true. However, the fable can carry a negative warning too. As we have already seen, Satan is undoubtedly stronger than we are; and he is so very crafty. He will pull out all the stops in order to remove our protective armour from us – or even to deceive us into removing our own armour, and to expose us to his deadly spiritual acid-rain.

Solution 3: A Permanent Shelter

We have already touched on some of the shortcomings of temporary, portable physical shelters. Most umbrellas are quite flimsy. During a recent storm in which the wind and rain were blowing so hard, they bounced off the sidewalk, blew upwards, blew my little umbrella inside out and pretty-well wrecked it! And we have already seen that protective clothing also has its drawbacks. These both work fine during a light to moderate shower. But when it comes to a *real* storm, we need something more substantial. And make no mistake; Satan will *not* send a light to moderate spiritual shower upon God's children:

So the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood. (Revelation 12:15)

In a very heavy rain storm, we would normally make an effort to get indoors, out of the rain. In doing so, we exchange our small, portable, flimsy, limited-use umbrella and even our limited-benefit rain-gear for a more effective, permanent, solid shelter.

Let us look for the word "shelter" in the scriptures. There are two mentions, both in the Old Testament:

They are wet with the showers of the mountains, and embrace the rock for want of a shelter. (Job 24:8)

For you have been a shelter for me, and a strong tower from the enemy. (Psalm 61:3)

In both of these instances, the word "shelter" is translated from the Hebrew word: "Machaceh" which means *refuge or shelter from rain, storm, danger, or falsehood*. But interestingly, it can also mean *hope or trust*.

This Hebrew word was derived from the root word: "Chacah" which means *to make or seek a refuge, to flee for protection, to trust, to put trust in God, to have hope or to confide or hope in God*.

Solution 4: A Canal or Drain

A few years ago, my family and I were travelling home in two separate vehicles on the Interstate Highway 5 after spending the U.S. Thanksgiving holiday weekend in Portland, Oregon. By minutes, we barely escaped a thirty car pile-up just north of Arlington, Washington, caused by a freak narrow band of snow which had laid itself down in the path of the 70 mph traffic. We believe, due to the circumstances, that God protected us.

In another incident, also a few years ago, on our way from the Kansas City airport to the Feast site in Jefferson City, Missouri, my family and I drove through a tremendous rain storm. The Missouri river was rising so high and fast that we were warned that we might need to move our vehicles to higher ground. I don't know whether that storm was a hurricane, a typhoon, a tornado or what other type of storm. But I *do* know that I've never seen rain like it, neither before nor since that day. The rain did not descend in mere drops. It was more like a river being blown at our rental van in continuous, powerful torrents of water. In that storm we received a taste of what it must have been like for the Egyptian armies when the Red Sea came crashing in upon them.

This was a minor trickle, however, compared to the spiritual deluge that is prophesied to be sent against the prophetic "woman" by Satan once he has been cast down to the earth:

Therefore rejoice, you heavens, and you that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! For the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has but a short time. And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child. And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent. And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth. (Revelation 12:12-16)

God will not allow Satan to gush his flood directly onto “the woman.” It will come after her as she is en route to her wilderness place of safety. God will divert the water by opening the earth’s mouth. What does this mean?

Here we see another method of escaping from a deluge – an artificial canal or drain – this one created especially for “the woman” by God.

A few years ago when we were still living in our old home in the Victoria area, we had experienced record winter rainfalls. I heard on the local news broadcast one morning that the water in our main reservoir was overflowing its dam for the first time since its construction.

Our home was at the foot of a small hill. That winter, when we received such heavy rains, much water flowed down our driveway and into our garage, soaking its wooden beams. If I would have allowed this to continue, the beams would have rotted and my garage would have collapsed.

So I had a trench dug in front of the garage and we laid and buried an artificial canal or drain – forty feet of three inch plastic drain-tile-pipe – to carry the unwanted water further down the hill and into the creek that ran through our property.

This, I believe, is just what God will do to divert Satan’s deadly spiritual deluge away from “the woman.”

Solution 5: Rise Above the Source

The final – and most impractical – solution to avoiding a physical rain-storm is to be able to rise above the source of the water – above the clouds which are dropping the rain.

We might occasionally do this with the help of an airplane, a helicopter, an airship, or some other type of aircraft. But as I pointed out earlier, Satan’s spiritual, polluted “rain” – his spirit – fills the space between the earth and the second heaven – or perhaps even the third heaven. Yes, even above the physical clouds. If you think about it, even when astronauts temporarily enter the second heaven of space, they are not immune there from Satan’s spirit.

Nevertheless, rising above even the first heaven is impossible today for all but a few astronauts or millionaire space tourists. And to physically rise above the second heaven in our day and age is totally impossible. But one day – at the time of the First Resurrection – we will rise to meet Jesus Christ in the air:

Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. (I Thessalonians 4:17)

There is even some indication that we will enter the third heaven to celebrate the marriage supper of the Lamb:

Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father’s name written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth. (Revelation 14:1-3)

Although we are not promised an eternal home in heaven as “the reward of the saved,” from that day on, we will be given the ability to rise above the “origin clouds” of Satan’s polluted spiritual influence:

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)

Here we see that the final solution to Satan’s spiritual acid rain is not for us to spend eternity in heaven, but to adopt God’s heavenly ways and thoughts here on earth – both now and forever!

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