



Links Players

FAST FORWARD 3: CLOUDS IN THE AIR

And God said, "Let there be a vault between the waters to separate water from water." So God made the vault and separated the water under the vault from the water above it. And it was so. (Genesis 1:6-7, NIV)

RAIN, RAIN, GO AWAY, LET US PLAY 18 TODAY. No, that's not the original, but it's the prayer of many a golfer, especially here in the spring, when showers may interrupt a round or wipe it out altogether.

At home, we tend to wait out the rain. We drive to the clubhouse or take shelter in a hut on the course designed just for this purpose. Rains and lightning usually come and go quickly enough that we can afford the time to play it safe and dry. But if you're a traveler and you've only so many days on Maui or walking the links of Scotland, you'll likely play the glutton and bear through the rain.

Rain reminds us of the second day of creation as we read of it in Genesis 1. Here God separated the waters, sending some up while leaving some down. Our translation today names this separation a vault, which God called "sky."

Today, in a matter of moments in an airplane, we can bridge this expanse and find ourselves in, then above, the clouds. But we could never dream of getting there in our own physical power. The distance is insurmountable. Which lands us on one of the great understandings of Scripture: the gap between God and humanity.

From this side of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, we know that the chasm of sin has been spanned by the atoning work of our Savior. We who were far away have been brought near by what Christ has done through the shedding of his blood (Ephesians 2:13). And if we have been saved, we can approach God's throne of grace with the confidence of sons and daughters (Hebrews 4:16). But that throne is still a throne, and the sovereign who sits upon it is immeasurably different—and, in ways, distant—from us. As a psalmist, David wrote that the greatness of God's love for those who fear him is like the height of the heavens above the earth (Psalm 103:11). And as a prophet, Isaiah conveyed God's own words: "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:9).

God has come near to us, willing to restore the relationship we have broken. But it is still a relationship of those who are lower with one who is infinitely higher, and thus one who is endlessly deserving of our reverence and worship.

Opening questions What is the worst weather you have ever played golf in? Were you a willing participant or forced by a friend or by competition to stay with it?

READING Genesis 1:6-8; Isaiah 55:9-11; Matthew 8:23-27

The wide sky (Genesis 1)

Does the observation of clouds and other natural phenomenon cause you to think of the Creator? Which created things spark this most often in you? Do you agree that all that has been made by God leaves mankind "without excuse" in knowing him (Romans 1:20)?

Two metaphors (Isaiah 55)

What metaphor in verse 9 reminds us of God's greatness? What metaphor in verses 10-11 depicts the activity of his word? How is it significant that God is both "beyond" and actively "here"?

At his command (Matthew 8)

How does this story remind us that Jesus shares the power of God in the Trinity? Does this increase your appreciation that God is mighty to save?

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2021 Links Players International. A video introduction for this study may be found here: <https://youtu.be/Ymq2sAcpATo>.