Upside-Down

One day we were out walking and to our surprise, we saw an upside-down rainbow suspended high in the sky like the grin of the Cheshire cat from Alice in Wonderland. We wondered if we were dreaming or if it was a trick of the light, so we took a photograph to record what we saw.

We found out afterwards, it was no trick, but a rare event called a circumzenithal arc. It is caused by ice crystals refracting the light in wispy clouds at a height of around 20,000 to 25,000 feet.

In this event, the rainbow was not how we expected to see it and seemed to go against all our preconceptions.

In Genesis, the rainbow is portrayed as a symbol of God's promises to us. Perhaps the upside-down rainbow is a reminder that sometimes God fulfils his promises to us in ways we are not expecting. Perhaps we need to be ready to let him turn our preconceptions on their head.

We need to learn not to put limits on how God works, but to be open to him prompting us to go in new ways and new directions. If we are prepared to be open to him, we might find him using us in ways we never thought of. He could just surprise us, just as we were surprised by the upside-down rainbow.

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Community of Christ Leeds House Church Website.

Circumzenithal arc

It appeared in the sky for the briefest of moments.

A dazzling arc of psychedelic colour reminiscent of the Cheshire Cat's grin in Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland.

But this is no fantasy or trick of the light, it is known as a circumzenithal arc. It is often mistaken for a rainbow hanging upside down.

But unlike a rainbow, the sky has to be clear of rain and low level clouds for it to be seen.

Relatively rare in Britain, the arc only appears when sunlight shines at a specific angle through a thin veil of wispy clouds at a height of around 20,000 to 25,000 feet.

At this altitude the cirrus clouds are made of ice crystals, the size of grains of salt.

Meteorologists say the clouds must be convex to the sun with the ice particles lined up together in the right direction to refract the light.

This results in the sunlight bouncing off the ice crystals high in the atmosphere, sending the light rays back up and bending the sunlight like a glass prism into a spectrum of colour.