<u>Food for Thought Article</u>: **<u>"God and the Weather."</u>**



The headlines say it all: 'Emergency on planet earth', 'To stay on a survivable path we must cut greenhouse gas emissions by 50% by 2030', 'Climate anxiety is everywhere', 'Sea levels are rising', 'Forests are burning', 'Icecaps are melting.'

Yet although there seems to be no doubt that human activity on earth is *affecting* the weather and we have become quite good at *forecasting* the weather, the Bible makes it clear that only God *controls* the weather. Jesus' disciples were amazed that, "Even the wind and waves obey him."

Meteorological events are everywhere in the Bible ~ heavy rain, floods, drought, hailstones, ice, snow, wind, waves, fire, clouds, storms, thunder, whirlwinds, lightning, scorching heat from the sun etc, and these weather events are there for particular reasons.

As we look at different people of God throughout the Bible in relation to meteorological events, we see that the weather is in fact a tool used by God to communicate, guide, reveal and execute His Divine Will. It may even lead us to give thanks to God for the variety of weather we experience!

Noah

God forewarned Noah that because the earth was full of violence and corruption, "Seven days from now I will send rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights, and I will wipe from the face of the earth every living creature I have made" (Gen. 7:4).

True to his word, 'on the seventeenth day of the second month all the springs of the great deep burst forth, and the floodgates of the heavens were opened. And rain fell on the earth for forty days and forty nights' (Gen. 7:11&12).

So the first covenant that God made between himself, Noah and his descendants, and all living creatures was in the context of a never to be repeated global flood. The meteorological sign of this covenant is a rainbow ~ a reminder, for God and for us today, that not only will there never be such a flood again but also that, 'As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease.' (Gen. 8:22 and 9:16&17)

World hunger is never a problem of provision, only of distribution.

Moses

In the book of Exodus we read that Pharaoh was being obstinate in not allowing God's people to leave their bondage in Egypt. So God said to Pharaoh, "In order to show you my power and that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth, at this time tomorrow I will send the worst hailstorm that has ever fallen on Egypt, from the day it was founded till now." In the event, "hail fell and lightning flashed back and forth". It was the worst storm in all the land of Egypt since it had become a nation. Hailstones can be as big as golf balls and do a lot of damage! (See Gen. 9:13-35)

When the people of Israel did eventually leave Egypt, they were faced with a dilemma ~ The Red Sea was before them and the pursuing Egyptian army was behind them. Moses said to his people, "Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today." What happened? All night the Lord drove the Red Sea back *with a strong east wind* and turned it into dry land (Ex 14:21&22).

So the context of the deliverance of the people of God from bondage in Egypt was another meteorological miracle!

Elijah

Elijah was a prophet who knew that God controlled the weather and had revealed to him what was going to happen. He said, "As the Lord, the God of Israel, lives, whom I serve, there will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years except at my word" (1 Kings 17:1).

In fact it is easy for God to cut off the rain in Israel as he just needs to make sure that the wind blows from the north, south or east. There is only significant rain in Israel when the wind comes from the west, i.e. from over the Mediterranean Sea.

James reminds us that Elijah 'prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops' (James 5:17&18).

In England, where I live, we have just had the warmest June on record with temperatures as high as 38 deg. C and the driest July on record with only 6.5 millimetres of rain, just 10% of what would usually fall at this time of year. On August 10th the Environment Agency declared a drought across more than two-thirds of England. This is still in force as I write.

You will have your own stories of how the weather is affecting your country.

Elijah also experienced a lightning strike on his sacrifice on Mt. Carmel and when everyone saw what happened they prostrated themselves and cried, "The Lord – he is God! The Lord – he is God." Weather phenomena in the Bible always have implications, both for human life and for God's purposes.

Finally, Elijah was caught up to heaven in a tornado. What a thrilling ride that must have been! Sucked up into the very presence of God! (2 Kings 2:11)

My wife and I remember a significant weather event in answer to prayer. We were due to take a group of young people away for a weekend's camping at a Christian Youth Centre in Northamptonshire. The weather was looking hostile for the whole weekend and parents were worried! We prayed with the young people that God would do something about the weather and enable us to have a good weekend together.

It was still raining as we put up the first tent but just as we finished, the sun suddenly came out, it was hot and everything dried up! The weather was perfect for the whole weekend, **until** we started to take the tents down when we noticed storm clouds on the horizon. We left in the dry.

Later that week, in front page news, we learned from the local paper that a violent storm had hit the village where we had been! A lightning strike had even set fire to the roof of a thatched cottage!

We all praised the Lord for his intervention on our behalf (whilst sympathising with those who had had to endure the storm).

Job

Job knew the devastating impact that inclement weather can have. His sheep and shepherds were killed by a lightning strike and shortly afterwards his sons

and daughters died when a mighty wind swept in from the desert and struck the four corners of the house where they were feasting, collapsing it on top of them. (Job 1:16-19)

These events would be enough to destroy most people's faith, but not Job's. He 'fell to the ground in worship', recognising that everything he possessed, including his children, was a gift from God which He could take back at any time.

Recently, a few thousand people were swept to their deaths by an avalanche of water which swept through villages on the border of Nepal and Tibet. Apparently, the cause was glacial melt in the Himalayas which brought down massive rocks, mud and silt as well as a torrent of water.

There are no easy answers to this tragic loss of life; perhaps silence, like the initial response of Job's comforters, is the most appropriate response.

When the Lord does eventually speak to Job (out of a storm), he gently crushes him with a series of devastating questions: 'Will you?', 'Can you?', 'Have you?', 'Do you?' There is nothing Job can say – he covers his mouth with his hand – some things are best left with God. 'How unsearchable his judgements, and his paths beyond tracing out! Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counsellor?' (Rms. 11:33&34)

Ezekiel

In Ezekiel chapter 47, verses 1-12 we read of an amazing meteorological event. You may disagree and think this is purely apocalyptic picture language without any basis in what may really take place ~ symbolic truth rather than factual reality. However, I believe this will literally happen and in fact, it is already beginning to take place! The salt water of the Dead Sea is starting to be replaced by fresh water!

In his vision, Ezekiel is shown a new river that begins as a small stream under the foundations of the temple (vs.1) but quickly becomes a river too deep to wade across. It flows down from Jerusalem and enters the Dead Sea at En Gedi, where the volume of water is so great it turns the salt water into fresh. Death is replaced by life and fish can swim there.

In 1975, I had my picture taken, newspaper in hand, floating in the buoyant waters of the Dead Sea at En Gedi. Today, you wouldn't want to go there ~ thousands of cavernous sinkholes are appearing! Road 90, a major highway, has been torn up, the once majestic date trees have collapsed in on themselves and

all that remains of En Gedi is a cluster of dilapidated buildings and mangled metal fences.

What are the reasons for this change? With the Earth's climate warming, temperatures in the summer can reach upward of 50 degrees Celsius (122 deg. F) and the Dead Sea is evaporating. For decades now, the level of the Sea, already the lowest point on Earth, has been dropping by about 1 metre every year.

Other reasons why it is disappearing are because more water has been taken for agricultural and national water projects from the Jordan River which flows into the Dead Sea and local industries have extracted the Dead Sea water itself because of its unique blend of natural minerals – potassium chloride, bromine, sodium chloride, magnesium oxide, magnesium chloride etc.

In our bathroom you will find a packet of 100% Dead Sea bath salts promising to 'Relax the Mind and Body', 'Relieve Stress', 'Improve Mood'. 'Ease Muscle Aches and Pains', and 'Help to Promote a Deeper Night's Sleep'! My wife even testifies to their speedy effectiveness in healing insect bites!

As these changes occur in and around the Dead Sea, natural waters have started to push their way down from the surrounding mountains enhanced by winter rains, creating rivers of gushing freshwater that flow beneath the earth's surface. It is now possible to soak in freshwater pools beside the Dead, turquoise, Sea.

But it seems that Ezekiel's vision will not be completed until the Lord returns because, according to Zechariah, 'On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south.' 'On that day living water will flow out from Jerusalem, half of it east to the Dead Sea and half of it west to the Mediterranean Sea, in summer and winter.'

Jerusalem is built on a geological fault line – the boundary between two tectonic plates, the Arabian and the African – and has been subject to many earthquakes throughout its history. And with Jerusalem being 785 metres above sea level, water will be channelled either to the Mediterranean Sea at sea level or the Dead Sea at 435 metres below sea level.

Yet again we see that revelation comes in the context of what appears to be meteorological disaster. 'The Lord will be king over the whole earth. On that day there will be one Lord, and his name the only name.' (See Zech. 14:4-9)

The Disciples

In October 2025, my wife and I sailed across the Bay of Biscay whilst storm 'Benjamin' was pounding away! It was quite a journey! Wind gusts of 70+ mph (storm force 11 on the Beaufort Wind Scale) and 8-metre-high waves. The Captain sought to reassure us that all was well, that he would try and 'steer a course around the worst of the storm' and that 'the ship was built for this kind of weather.'

Imagine the disciples crossing the Sea of Galilee in a small fishing vessel when a furious squall blew up and waves began to swamp the boat. What was even more alarming was that the 'Captain' was asleep on a cushion! No reassurance from him! Neither does he appear to care that they might drown!

Time for action, 'Jesus wake up!' And the first thing Jesus does is to speak to the storm, 'Be quiet, get down, be still, you storm?' Then he speaks to the storm in the disciples and asks, 'Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?' Ouch! (See Mk. 4:35-41).

Still in a state of terrified shock the disciples speak to each other, 'Who is this? Even the wind and waves obey him!'

The way in which the wind and waves immediately die down together indicates a supernatural event. Normally, after the wind dies down it takes a while for the water to respond and the waves to die down. To go from a furious squall and high waves to complete calm in a short space of time is quite something.

So here again we have Divine revelation in the context of a dangerous meteorological event.

Another more recent intervention by God concerning the weather happened in May 1940 at the beginning of World War 2. About 400,000 Allied troops were pinned against the coast of Flanders near the French port of Dunkirk. Hitler's advancing tanks were only 10 miles away. But by June 4th over 338,000 of these men had been evacuated safely to England.

King George VI had called for a National Day of Prayer and millions of people flocked into Churches to pray. The queue to get into Westminster Abbey was a quarter of a mile long!

My Dad was one of those rescued from Dunkirk and he told me how the sea was flat calm for the 5 days he was there and this enabled them to load ships and small boats with more troops.

He also said that there was a lot of mist and fog which made it difficult for the German bombers to see where to drop their bombs. Weather has often been a key factor in the outcome of battles and wars. Winston Churchill called what happened at Dunkirk "A Miracle of Deliverance."

The 'Malta 276.'

As you might expect, Act 1 scene 1 in Shakespeare's play 'The Tempest' begins with a fierce storm. The sailors and gentry on board a ship fear shipwreck and drowning. Gonzalo, an old counsellor, is not looking forward to a watery grave. He says, "Now would I give a thousand furlongs of sea for an acre of barren ground, - long heath, broom, furze, anything. The wills above be done, but I would fain die a dry death."

This storm, conjured up by the magician Prospero, does indeed wreck the ship, but many onboard, including Gonzalo, are saved.

But for a real account of a real shipwreck and the salvation of the 'Malta 276' we should read Acts chapter 27. The detail, recorded by the physician Luke (the ship's Doctor?), is astonishing. The ship, with its cargo of grain, soldiers and prisoners, is eventually run aground on the island of Malta after a 14-day battering from a hurricane force wind known as the 'North Easter.'

Paul, at his commanding best in this drama, begins with a stern rebuke to the ship's pilot, the ship's owner and the centurion in charge of the prisoners. "If only you had listened to me, we wouldn't be in this mess," argued Paul, "we should never have left Crete."

Nevertheless, Paul has some good news. "Last night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood beside me and said, "Do not be afraid, Paul. You must stand trial before Caesar; and God has graciously given you the lives of all who sail with you – verses 23&24."

Yet again, we have revelation in the context of a disturbing meteorological event.

Today, the Feast of St. Paul Shipwreck is held every year on Malta on February 10th and marked with a Public Holiday celebrating the arrival of Christianity on the island around 60 A.D.

Pastorally, when we experience 'storms' in our lives, God remains sovereign. Sometimes he calms the storm quickly and powerfully, while at other times we have to stay with the storm. This requires courage, patience, obedience and hope.

“We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure.” (Heb. 6:19a) It is in the context of the storm that God gives us strength, stability and peace.

The Weather and Praise

Although adverse weather patterns can have a devastating impact for life on earth, the weather can also turn us to God in Praise.

Psalm 29 is the ‘Storm psalm’. ‘Ascribing glory and strength to the Lord’ and ‘worshipping him in the splendour of his holiness’ are set in the context of thunder, lightning, damaging winds and flood. In fact, the Lord’s voice is heard in and through these meteorological events so we need to have ears to hear what he is saying to us through them.

Psalm 148:7&8 says, “Praise the Lord from the earth, you great sea creatures and all ocean depths, lightning and hail, snow and clouds, stormy winds that do his bidding….”

In the book of Job, Elihu is correct in saying that God does great things beyond our understanding. ‘He [God] says to the snow, “Fall on the earth,” and to the rain shower, “Be a mighty downpour.” “In order that everyone he has made may know his work, he stops all people from their labour.”

“The breath of God produces ice, and the broad waters become frozen. He loads the clouds with moisture; he scatters his lightning through them.” “You who swelter in your clothes when the land lies hushed under the south wind, can you join him in spreading out the skies, hard as a mirror of cast bronze?” (See Job 37:6-18)

One of the many wonderful things about our planet is how delicately balanced everything is. To have water in three phases – vapour (clouds), liquid (water) and solid (ice) requires great creative precision.

Our sun is amazing! Every second it converts 700 million tons of hydrogen into helium. At its centre, the temperature is 27 million degrees Fahrenheit. It is big but not too big (you could put about a million earths inside it). And it is not alone; in our Milky Way there are a hundred billion of them!

Solar winds are particles that the sun emits – responsible for the aurora borealis that we see on earth – and these winds would normally strip the earth of its atmosphere. However the earth’s magnetic field forms a protective bubble around our planet deflecting the solar winds.

Conclusion

The weather is one of the most popular topics of conversation and weather forecasts on TV and Radio are among the most widely viewed and listened to programmes. We are all interested in, and affected by, the weather: it affects our health, what we do, where we go, the price of food, how our transport systems operate etc. etc.

In this article we have seen how weather events were instrumental in the lives of God's people. This was one way in which God spoke to them, guided them, delivered them, rebuked them and executed His Divine Will among them.

God is still sovereign, controlling the weather today, exhorting us, as he did Job, to recognise His power in His dealings with us now.

Let us be encouraged to pray about the weather and to recognise it as a means by which God may draw us more deeply into a worshipping relationship with Him. Our mighty God gives us the weather as a gigantic audio-visual aid that He uses to reveal and demonstrate His power, glory, majesty and sovereignty.

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George Irving – November 2026

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