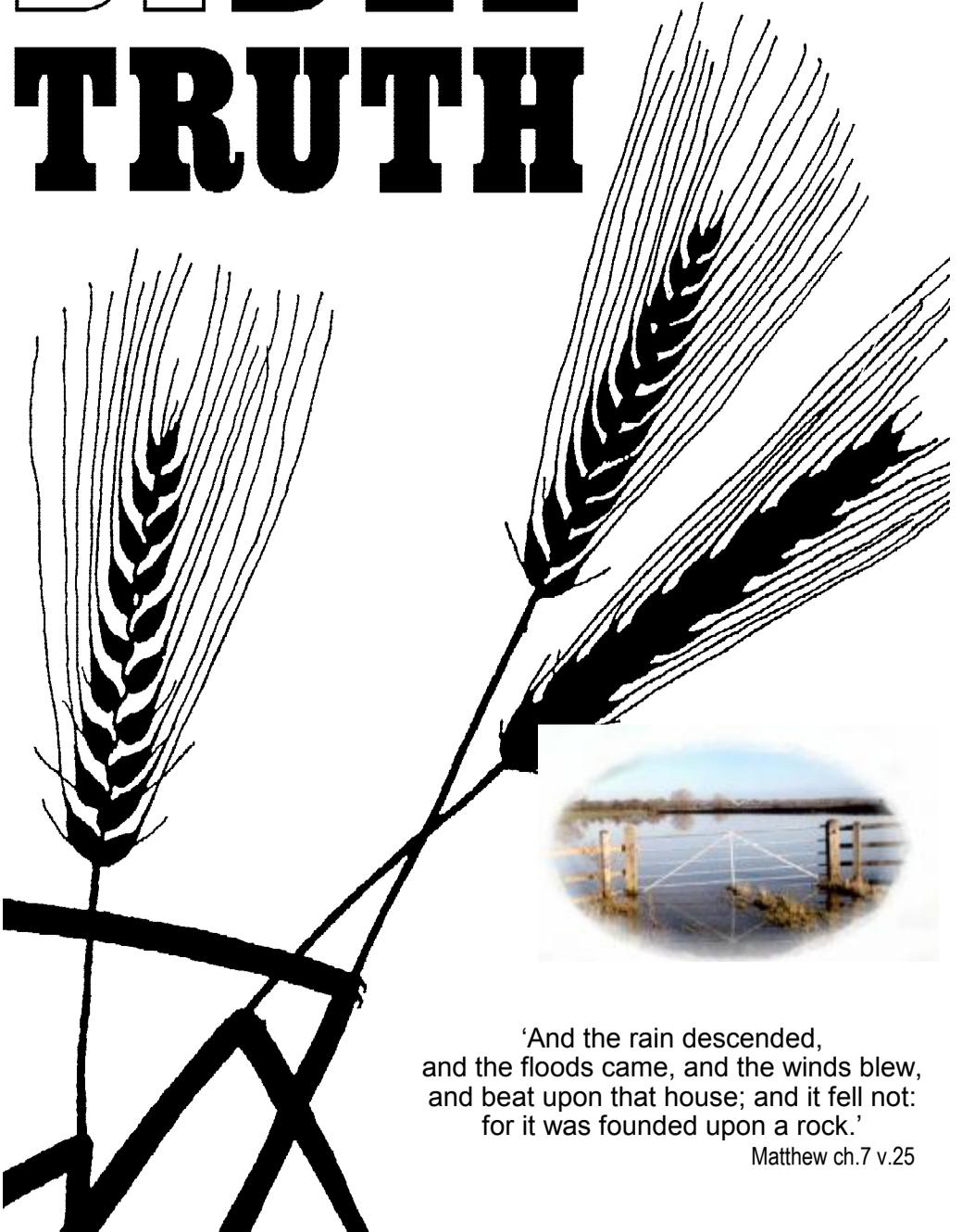


# BIBLE TRUTH

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'And the rain descended,  
and the floods came, and the winds blew,  
and beat upon that house; and it fell not:  
for it was founded upon a rock.'

Matthew ch.7 v.25

# DOES GOD CONTROL OUR WEATHER?

By Dr Michael D. Bennett



Railway damage at Dawlish, Devon (Photo reproduced with permission of NetworkRail)

## 1. Introduction

In recent months the British Isles have been affected by several extreme weather events including a series of powerful Atlantic storms. These have brought strong gales, record rainfall, and tidal surges causing significant structural damage, widespread flooding, and even loss of life. The cost of repairing the damage and of lost production is estimated to reach hundreds of millions of pounds.

In January 2014 devastating waves washed away a large section of coastal railway track at Dawlish in Devon built around 1850 by Isambard Kingdom Brunell. This was the only railway line linking London to Plymouth and Penzance, so it left Cornwall cut off by rail from the rest of England. It has caused massive transport disruption, and experts estimated it would take months to repair the line and to reopen the link.

Among many other examples of structural damage, two of the recent storms tore parts of the roof off the main hanger (which houses a supersonic Concorde) at the Imperial War Museum, Duxford, near Cambridge. This resulted in closure of the hanger and plans to change its roof construction.

The flooded Somerset Levels in England February 2014 (Photo contributed by Glyn Lewis, author of *Did Jesus Come to Britain*, Clairview Books, 2008)



On 31 December 2013 the meteorological office confirmed that Scotland had seen its wettest ever December. Later on, parts of England had their wettest January in 250 years which has caused widespread and prolonged flooding.

Some farmland and communities in low lying areas including the Somerset levels (near Glastonbury where Christianity was first planted in England) flooded in December 2013 and were still under water in February 2014.

Elsewhere serious flooding occurred in the Thames valley where thousands of houses were inundated as villages including Runnymede (where Magna Carta was signed in AD 1215) were submerged. Viewing the devastation, Britain's Prime Minister David Cameron said the floods were of 'biblical proportions'.

Another politician (David Silvestor - a local UKIP town Councillor in Henley-on-Thames) viewing these events also made a biblical connection. He observed in a letter published in the Henley Standard on 2 January 2014, 'The scriptures make it abundantly clear that a Christian nation that abandons its faith and acts contrary to the Gospel (and in naked breach of a Coronation Oath) will be beset by natural disasters such as storms, disease, pestilence and war'.

David Silvestor had previously written to warn the Prime Minister that legislation to change the definition of marriage would result in 'disasters'.

He confirmed his belief on BBC Radio Oxford on 19 January: 'I'm serious. I believe what the Bible says about what is right and what is wrong for mankind? Secondly, I believe what the Bible says about divine repercussions on nations that insist on wrongdoing'.

This simple statement (which would have been widely accepted by previous generations) resulted in another kind of storm as politicians, media and people at large joined to pour scorn, ridicule and hatred on Mr Silvester for daring to voice a Bible Truth, naming sin and identifying the need for repentance.

The United Kingdom Independence Party issued a statement saying his comments were unacceptable and expelled him from the party. Henley town council held an extraordinary meeting and members voted unanimously to distance themselves from their councillor colleague's views. Even some church leaders joined in the attacks.

Revd Colin Coward, from the Anglican group 'Changing Attitudes', said he was not unfamiliar with Mr Silvester's mindset, 'It's just prejudice'. Ian Bunce of the Baptist Union said, 'It's a rather old-fashioned view and it is certainly not an opinion which holds any theological weight at all. It's a big jump from same-sex marriage to finding a cause of flooding. I'm not sure how Mr Silvester gets to that point in any context'.

In view of such comments it is worth rehearsing the scriptural basis for making such links, as the context for judging if such views are mere prejudice, and if they hold theological weight.

This article will therefore consider the following questions, Does the Bible make connections between wicked disobedience and extreme weather events such as destructive winds and floods? If so, does it teach that the link is causal and determined by God Himself? Because most modern church leaders discount the Old Testament as irrelevant, the views of New Testament writers and the teaching of Jesus Christ on Old Testament history will be carefully noted.

The teaching of the Bible could not be clearer in connecting human disobedience directly to Divine judgements involving 'floods', as many striking scriptural examples clearly show.

## **2. God destroyed the wicked with a flood in the days of Noah**

Genesis records how mankind's disobedience provoked judgement resulting in its destruction by a great flood sent by God Himself. Men were warned of the consequences of their great wickedness when Noah preached righteousness for 120 years. The unrepentant masses perished, but faithful Noah and his close family survived, safe in the ark.

‘And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth. ... Make thee an ark ... And, behold I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, ...’

Genesis ch. 6 vv 5,14 &17

Several New Testament writers clearly accepted the fact of and lesson from this flood, while Jesus said that the situation on earth before His future return would be similar to Noah’s time.

[Jesus said] ‘And as it was in the days of Noe\*, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all.’

Luke ch.17 vv 26-29

[\* Noe is an alternative spelling of Noah]

‘By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; ...’

Hebrews 11 v.7

‘God ... spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly;’

2 Peter ch.2 vv 4-5

### **3. God sent a wind and a flood to save Israel and judge Egypt at the Red sea**

The Book of Exodus tells how God sent a message to Egypt’s ruler to ‘let my people go’ which Pharaoh repeatedly ignored. The direct result of his disobedience was the utter destruction of his army by drowning in a flood at God’s own hand. However, Israel was delivered from slavery and founded as a sovereign nation, when God sent a wind to make a way of escape for them through the Red Sea.

‘...and the LORD caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left. ... And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand over the sea, that the waters

may come again upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen. And Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to his strength when the morning appeared; and the Egyptians fled against it; and the LORD overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. .... Thus the LORD saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore.'

Exodus ch.14 vv 21-22, 26-27 & 30

As with Noah's flood, the teaching of Jesus in the Gospels as well as that of several New Testament writers, clearly accepts the fact of Moses, and the theology of God's historical use of wind and flood to deliver Israel and judge Pharaoh at the Red sea.

'He [Moses] brought them out, after that he had shewed wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red sea, and in the wilderness forty years.'

Acts ch. 7 v. 36

'By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned.'

Hebrews ch.11 v. 29

'... he [Jesus] took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. ... And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias: Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.'

Luke ch. 9 vv 28 & 30-31

#### **4. One man's disobedience can provoke God to send a storm**

The Bible teaches that what God does for a disobedient nation like Egypt, He also does for just one disobedient individual like Jonah. When God told Jonah to go east and speak His word to Nineveh, he disobeyed and took a ship sailing west, in the opposite direction, to Tarshish (towards the British Isles). So God sent a great storm causally linked to Jonah's disobedience. Later Jonah repented, took God's message to Nineveh, and they believed it.

'Now the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me. But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. But the LORD sent

out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken. ... Then said they unto him, What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us? for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous. And he said unto them, Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you: for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you.'

Jonah ch.1 vv 1-4 & 11-12

Here too Christ's testimony in the New Testament accepts as true the Old Testament record regarding Jonah and Nineveh.

'But he [Jesus] answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas\* was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.'

Matthew ch.12 vv 39-41

[\*Jonas is an alternative spelling of Jonah]

## **5. God withheld rain for 42 months due to the sin of Ahaz**

When king Ahaz promoted Baal worship in Israel, thus breaking God's law, He punished them by sending a terrible drought for 42 months by the word of Elijah. A test on mount Carmel proved who is God (Baalim or Jehovah), Israel confessed their faith in Jehovah ('The Lord, he is the God') and soon after God sent 'a great rain' on Israel by the word of Elijah.

Again, Christ's teaching and the words of New Testament writers validate the Old Testament record regarding Elijah.

'But I [Jesus] tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of \*Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land;'

Luke ch.4 v.25

[\* Elias is an alternative spelling of Elijah]

See also Luke ch.9 vv 29-30 & 32 cited in section 3 above.

'Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.'

James ch. 5 vv 17-18

## **6. Obeying or breaking God's law brings national blessings or curses on weather**

Moses confirmed God's laws to Israel and presented them with a clear choice between God's blessings if they obeyed, and curses if they disobeyed. The blessings attendant on obedience include clement weather and a strong economy, whilst the curses for not 'hearkening to the voice of the Lord their God' included extreme weather events, and a weak economy.

'The LORD shall open unto thee his good treasure, the heaven to give the rain unto thy land in his season, and to bless all the work of thine hand: and thou shalt lend unto many nations, and thou shalt not borrow. And the LORD shall make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath; if that thou hearken unto the commandments of the LORD thy God, which I command thee this day, to observe and to do them: ... But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee: ... And thy heaven that is over thy head shall be brass, and the earth that is under thee shall be iron. The LORD shall make the rain of thy land powder and dust: from heaven shall it come down upon thee, until thou be destroyed.'

Deuteronomy ch. 28 vv 12-13, 15 & 23-24

## **7. Unseasonal storms marked Israel's wickedness in rejecting God**

Later when Israel rejected continued rule by the invisible God and asked for a visible earthly king, God allowed their request, but He sent unseasonable rain and storms after Samuel's prayer as a sign because of their wickedness.

'Now therefore stand and see this great thing, which the LORD will do before your eyes. Is it not wheat harvest to day? I will call unto the LORD, and he shall send thunder and rain; that ye may perceive and see that your wickedness is great, which ye have done in the sight of the LORD, in asking you a king. So Samuel called unto the LORD; and the LORD sent thunder and rain that day: and all the people greatly feared the LORD and Samuel.'

1 Samuel ch.12 vv 16-18

## **8. Sin causing extreme rainfall is forgivable by repentant prayer**

When king Solomon built the Temple at Jerusalem he asked God to hear repentant prayer if Israel was punished for breaking God's law. God answered that He would forgive and heal if Israel repented. Solomon's prayer and God's reply were both specific in mentioning rainfall.

'When the heaven is shut up, and there is no rain, because they have sinned against thee; yet if they pray toward this place, and confess thy name, and turn from their sin, when thou dost afflict them; Then hear thou from heaven, and forgive the sin of thy servants, and of thy people Israel, when thou hast taught them the good way, wherein they should walk; and send rain upon thy land, which thou hast given unto thy people for an inheritance.'

2 Chronicles ch. 6 vv 26-27

'And the LORD appeared to Solomon by night, and said unto him, I have heard thy prayer, and have chosen this place to myself for an house of sacrifice. If I shut up heaven that there be no rain, or if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among my people; If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.'

2 Chronicles ch. 7 vv 12-14

## **9. God will use weather to control disobedient nations in Christ's future earthly reign**

The Bible teaches that Jesus Christ will return to this earth to rule on the throne of His Father David, and to govern all the nations with a rod (sceptre) of iron. Some may ask how He will keep control. What God has done in the past, using weather to punish disobedient nations, He will also do in the future. If any nation will not obey, He will use drought to punish them.

'And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles. And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain. And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, that have no rain; there shall be the plague, wherewith the LORD will smite the heathen that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles. This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all nations that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles.'

Zechariah ch. 14 vv 16-19

## 10. Famous weather events accepted as Divine interventions in our history

Examples of direct links between human wickedness and extreme weather events, where God used winds or floods to punish nations, are writ large and often in the Bible. They were also widely accepted as having occurred in the history of our people living in the British Isles.

### ***Jehovah blew with his winds and they were scattered – 1588 and the Spanish Armada***

In 1588 Philip of Spain sent an armada to invade England.

Unable to pick up the Spanish army waiting in the Netherlands, it was forced to flee northward and tried to return to Spain by sailing around the north coast of Scotland and around Ireland. Here they ran into a heavy storm, sometimes described as the most northerly hurricane on record.

Over 50 ships were lost and the armada ceased to be an effective force. The Spanish-English conflict was viewed all over Europe as a contest between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism.



The national Armada memorial with Britannia overlooks Plymouth Hoe and Sound where Sir Francis Drake sailed to engage with the Spanish fleet.



At the base of the memorial is a plaque depicting the ensuing battle, topped by the famous phrase of deliverance.



Armada Medal

The unlikely victory was viewed by the English as being proof of God's support for the Protestant cause. Church services of thanksgiving were held across the country and a number of medals were produced in England and the Dutch Republic to commemorate the event.

One of the most famous bore the inscription *Flavit Jehovah et Dissipati Sunt* (with the word 'Jehovah' in Hebrew letters).

This translates as 'Jehovah blew with his wind and they were scattered'.

It is a reference to Job chapter 4 verses 9-11, but it also resonates with other scriptures about the Exodus, and with Psalm 83 vv 4, 15 & 17-18

'They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation; that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance. ... So persecute them with thy tempest, and make them afraid with thy storm ... let them be put to shame, and perish: That men may know that thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH, art the most high over all the earth'.

### ***D-Day June 1944 – a providential lull in an unseasonable storm***

More recently, many made another connection between extreme weather and divine deliverance concerning the events of June 1944 in War II. The allies had prepared an armada to invade Normandy in a 10 day period when the moon and tides were favourable. A strong unseasonable Atlantic storm delayed the invasion and seemed to put this plan in jeopardy. The Germans believing no invasion was possible for several days stood some troops down, and sent many senior officers away to conduct war games. Field Marshal Rommel left to celebrate his wife's birthday. However, the allied commanders were informed of a window of

opportunity due to a lull in the storm, and so the largest amphibious invasion in history went ahead on 6 June 1944, against a weakened enemy, lulled into a false sense of security.

## **11. God uses whirlwinds to warn and punish – ‘in the latter days ye shall consider it’.**

Bible writers could not see the satellite images of weather systems which showed us that Atlantic storms are really huge cyclones that rotate around their centres as great whirlwinds. Yet the language used in Scripture for winds and storms is scientifically accurate in speaking of rotation (‘circuits’) and destructive (cutting) whirlwinds.

‘The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his **circuits**.’

Ecclesiastes ch.1 v.6

‘For they [Ephraim] have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind: ... I have written to him the great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange thing.’

Hosea ch.8 vv 7 & 12

‘God is jealous, and the LORD revengeth; the LORD revengeth, and is furious; the LORD will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies. The LORD is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked: the LORD hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet. He rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry, and drieth up all the rivers: Bashan languisheth, and Carmel, and the flower of Lebanon languisheth. The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burned at his presence, yea, the world, and all that dwell therein. Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him. The LORD is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him. But with an overrunning flood he will make an utter end of the place thereof, and darkness shall pursue his enemies.’

Nahum ch.1 vv 2-8

‘And ye shall be my people, and I will be your God. Behold, the whirlwind of the LORD goeth forth with fury, a continuing whirlwind: it shall fall with pain upon the head of the wicked. The fierce anger of the LORD shall not return, until he have done it, and until he have performed the intents of his heart: in the latter days ye shall consider it.’

Jeremiah ch.30 vv 22-24

The teaching of the Bible could not be clearer in connecting human disobedience directly to Divine judgements involving ‘floods’ and ‘droughts’, as the many striking examples listed above show. It also teaches that such connections are both causal and determined by God Himself. Moreover, by citing the Old Testament examples, the testimony of Jesus in the gospels and the teaching of New Testament writers agree in accepting the historical facts, and in validating the theological truths of the Old Testament examples. Thus, the ‘old fashioned view’ expressed by David Silvester is not prejudice, but is accurately presented orthodox teaching of the Bible, which is the only authority admissible for judging true theological weight. Sadly many so-called ‘mainstream’ church leaders have deviated from recognising the authority of Scripture as the sole basis for Christian practice and teaching. Instead, they are ‘willingly ignorant’ of God’s word and ways, and hence as false shepherds and prophets stand in peril of His judgement.

## **12. Conclusion**

God does use the weather to warn His people and to punish the wicked who flout His law, and so we are wise to consider today's extreme weather events in the light of the Scriptures.