The Winds

By Mark Mayberry
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Introduction

Holy Scripture contains many references to the winds (Eccles. 1:6; Matt. 16:1-4; Luke 12:54-56; etc.). According to Nelson’s New Illustrated Bible Dictionary, wind is “the natural movement of air as a part of the weather pattern. The hot, dry climate of Palestine made the winds very important to the Hebrew people. The winds of this region included cool day-time winds, evening sea breezes bearing essential moisture, and hot blasts from the desert.” [NIBD]

Ecclesiastes 1:6 (NASB95) — 6 Blowing toward the south, Then turning toward the north, The wind continues swirling along; And on its circular courses the wind returns.

Matthew 16:1-4 (NASB95) — 1 The Pharisees and Sadducees came up, and testing Jesus, they asked Him to show them a sign from heaven. 2 But He replied to them, ‘When it is evening, you say, ‘It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.’ 3 ‘And in the morning, ‘There will be a storm today, for the sky is red and threatening.’ Do you know how to discern the appearance of the sky, but cannot discern the signs of the times? 4 ‘An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign; and a sign will not be given it, except the sign of Jonah.’ And He left them and went away.

Luke 12:54-56 (NASB95) — 54 And He was also saying to the crowds, “When you see a cloud rising in the west, immediately you say, ‘A shower is coming,’ and so it turns out. 55 ‘And when you see a south wind blowing, you say, ‘It will be a hot day,’ and it turns out that way. 56 “You hypocrites! You know how to analyze the appearance of the earth and the sky, but why do you not analyze this present time?

Physical Usage

North Wind

“The dry north wind is the coldest wind in Palestine, blowing from June until September. Today the Arabs call this wind the simoom (from samm or ‘poison’). Its combined cold, wind, and heat cause headache, fever, and neuralgia. The ‘north wind’ of Proverbs 25:23 that ‘brings forth rain’ is really the northwest wind.” [NIBD]

Job 37:9 (NASB95) — 9 [Elihu said.] “Out of the south comes the storm, And out of the north the cold.

Proverbs 25:23 (NASB95) — 23 The north wind brings forth rain, And a backbiting tongue, an angry countenance.
Song of Solomon 4:16 (NASB95) — 16 [The Bride said] “Awake, O north wind, And come, wind of the south; Make my garden breathe out fragrance, Let its spices be wafted abroad. May my beloved come into his garden And eat its choice fruits!”

South Wind

“The south wind blew Paul’s ship gently (Acts 27:13), before a fiercer wind demolished his ship. God ‘quiets the earth’ with the south wind (Job 37:17). The Arabs call the south wind off the desert sirocco. It blows for about one day at a time during the spring (February-June).” [NIBD]

Job 37:9 (NASB95) — 9 “Out of the south comes the storm, And out of the north the cold.

Job 37:17 (NASB95) — 17 You whose garments are hot, When the land is still because of the south wind?

Psalm 78:26 (NASB95) — 26 He caused the east wind to blow in the heavens And by His power He directed the south wind.

Luke 12:55 (NASB95) — 55 “And when you see a south wind blowing, you say, ‘It will be a hot day,’ and it turns out that way.

Acts 27:13 (NASB95) — 13 When a moderate south wind came up, supposing that they had attained their purpose, they weighed anchor and began sailing along Crete, close inshore.

Acts 28:13 (NASB95) — 13 From there we sailed around and arrived at Rhegium, and a day later a south wind sprang up, and on the second day we came to Puteoli.

East Wind

“The violent east wind blows from the desert. This is the wind most often mentioned in the Bible. It scorched the grain (Gen. 41:6, 23, 27), withered the vine (Ezek. 17:9), and parched the fruit (Jon. 4:8). The east wind also brought the plague of locusts (Gen. 10:13). Blowing ‘from the wilderness,’ it dried up the springs of water (Hos. 13:15). Generally, all such violent gusts of wind were attributed to the east. These winds were also called winds of the wilderness. The blast that struck the home of Job’s sons and killed them was probably the east wind (Job 1:19). An east wind from God parted the Red Sea (Ex. 14:21) and shattered the ships of Tarshish (Ps. 48:7). Probably it was an east wind that wrecked Paul’s ship (Acts 27:14).”[NIBD]

Genesis 41:6 (NASB95) — 6 Then behold, seven ears, thin and scorched by the east wind, sprouted up after them.

Genesis 41:23 (NASB95) — 23 and lo, seven ears, withered, thin, and scorched by the east wind, sprouted up after them;
Genesis 41:27 (NASB95) — 27 “The seven lean and ugly cows that came up after them are seven years, and the seven thin ears scorched by the east wind will be seven years of famine.

Exodus 10:13 (NASB95) — 13 So Moses stretched out his staff over the land of Egypt, and the Lord directed an east wind on the land all that day and all that night; and when it was morning, the east wind brought the locusts.

Exodus 14:21 (NASB95) — 21 Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord swept the sea back by a strong east wind all night and turned the sea into dry land, so the waters were divided.

Job 15:2 (NASB95) — 2 “Should a wise man answer with windy knowledge And fill himself with the east wind?

Job 27:21 (NASB95) — 21 “The east wind carries him away, and he is gone, For it whirls him away from his place.

Job 38:24 (NASB95) — 24 “Where is the way that the light is divided, Or the east wind scattered on the earth?

Psalm 48:7 (NASB95) — 7 With the east wind You break the ships of Tarshish.

Psalm 78:26 (NASB95) — 26 He caused the east wind to blow in the heavens And by His power He directed the south wind.

Isaiah 27:8 (NASB95) — 8 You contended with them by banishing them, by driving them away. With His fierce wind He has expelled them on the day of the east wind.

Jeremiah 18:17 (NASB95) — 17 ‘Like an east wind I will scatter them Before the enemy; I will show them My back and not My face In the day of their calamity.’ “

Ezekiel 17:10 (NASB95) — 10 “Behold, though it is planted, will it thrive? Will it not completely wither as soon as the east wind strikes it—wither on the beds where it grew?” ‘“

Ezekiel 19:12 (NASB95) — 12 ‘But it was plucked up in fury; It was cast down to the ground; And the east wind dried up its fruit. Its strong branch was torn off So that it withered; The fire consumed it.

Ezekiel 27:26 (NASB95) — 26 “Your rowers have brought you Into great waters; The east wind has broken you In the heart of the seas.

Hosea 12:1 (NASB95) — 1 Ephraim feeds on wind, And pursues the east wind continually; He multiplies lies and violence. Moreover, he makes a covenant with Assyria, And oil is carried to Egypt.
Hosea 13:15 (NASB95) — 15 Though he flourishes among the reeds, An **east wind** will come, The wind of the Lord coming up from the wilderness; And his fountain will become dry And his spring will be dried up; It will plunder his treasury of every precious article.

Jonah 4:8 (NASB95) — 8 When the sun came up God appointed a scorching **east wind**, and the sun beat down on Jonah’s head so that he became faint and begged with all his soul to die, saying, “Death is better to me than life.”

**West Wind**

“The west wind carries moisture from the Mediterranean Sea over Palestine between November and February. A west wind drove off the locusts in Egypt (Ex. 10:19). The rain-bearing west wind also ended a severe drought in the days of the prophet Elijah (1 Kin. 18:43-44).” [NIBD]

Exodus 10:19 (NASB95) — 19 So the Lord shifted the wind to a very strong **west wind** which took up the locusts and drove them into the Red Sea; not one locust was left in all the territory of Egypt.

1 Kings 18:43-44 (NASB95) — 43 He said to his servant, “Go up now, look toward the sea.” So he went up and looked and said, “There is nothing.” And he said, “Go back” seven times. 44 It came about at the seventh time, that he said, “Behold, a cloud as small as a man’s hand is coming up from the sea.” And he said, “Go up, say to Ahab, ‘Prepare your chariot and go down, so that the heavy shower does not stop you.’ “

**Figurative Usage**

**Associated with the Power of God**

Winds are associated with the power of God. The Lord makes the clouds His chariot. Walking upon the wings of the wind, He makes the winds His messengers, and flaming fire His ministers (Psa. 104:1-4). The Lord causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth. He makes lightning for the rain, and brings forth the wind from His treasuries (Psa. 135:5-7). All created things praise the Lord: “Fire and hail, snow and clouds; stormy wind, fulfilling His word…” (Psa. 148:7-12).

Psalm 104:1-4 (NASB95) — 1 Bless the Lord, O my soul! O Lord my God, You are very great; You are clothed with splendor and majesty, 2 Covering Yourself with light as with a cloak, Stretching out heaven like a tent curtain. 3 He lays the beams of His upper chambers in the waters; **He makes the clouds His chariot; He walks upon the wings of the wind;** 4 **He makes the winds His messengers, Flaming fire His ministers.**

Psalm 135:5-7 (NASB95) — 5 For I know that the Lord is great And that our Lord is above all gods. 6 Whatever the Lord pleases, He does, In heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps. 7 **He causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth; Who makes lightnings for the rain, Who brings forth the wind from His treasuries.**
Psalm 148:7-12 (NASB95) — 7 Praise the Lord from the earth, Sea monsters and all deeps; 8 Fire and hail, snow and clouds; Stormy wind, fulfilling His word; 9 Mountains and all hills; Fruit trees and all cedars; 10 Beasts and all cattle; Creeping things and winged fowl; 11 Kings of the earth and all peoples; Princes and all judges of the earth; 12 Both young men and virgins; Old men and children.

Associated with the Judgment of God

Winds are associated with the judgment of God. “Upon the wicked He will rain snares; fire and brimstone and burning wind will be the portion of their cup” (Psa. 11:4-7). Praying for rescue from his enemies, David said, “The Lord tests the righteous and the wicked, and the one who loves violence His soul hates. Upon the wicked He will rain snares; fire and brimstone and burning wind will be the portion of their cup” (Psa. 35:4-6). Offering a similar imprecatory prayer, Asaph implores the Lord to confound his enemies, saying “O my God, make them like the whirling dust, like chaff before the wind… So pursue them with Your tempest and terrify them with Your storm” (Psa. 83:13-15).

Psalm 11:4-7 (NASB95) — 4 The Lord is in His holy temple; the Lord’s throne is in heaven; His eyes behold, His eyelids test the sons of men. 5 The Lord tests the righteous and the wicked, And the one who loves violence His soul hates. 6 Upon the wicked He will rain snares; Fire and brimstone and burning wind will be the portion of their cup. 7 For the Lord is righteous, He loves righteousness; The upright will behold His face.

Psalm 35:4-6 (NASB95) — 4 Let those be ashamed and dishonored who seek my life; Let those be turned back and humiliated who devise evil against me. 5 Let them be like chaff before the wind, With the angel of the Lord driving them on. 6 Let their way be dark and slippery, With the angel of the Lord pursuing them.

Psalm 83:13-15 (NASB95) — 13 O my God, make them like the whirling dust, Like chaff before the wind. 14 Like fire that burns the forest And like a flame that sets the mountains on fire, 15 So pursue them with Your tempest And terrify them with Your storm.

Associated with the Spirit of God

Winds are associated with the Spirit of God. Speaking to Nicodemus, Jesus spoke of the necessity of being born again. Yet, Nicodemus comprehended not. Accordingly, Jesus elaborated upon his statement: “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be amazed that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit” (John 3:1-8). Among other signs, the Spirit’s presence on Pentecost was manifest by the sound of a violent rushing wind (Acts 2:1-4). As we do not always understand the cycles of nature, so we cannot fully understand the working of God. Yet, we observe the evidence of God’s glory in the processes of nature, and in the effect of the Spirit’s teaching upon the soul (Eccles. 11:4-5).
John 3:1-8 (NASB95) — 1 Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; 2 this man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, “Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.” 3 Jesus answered and said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” 4 Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born, can he?” 5 Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Do not be amazed that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ 8 The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

Acts 2:1-4 (NASB95) — 1 When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. 2 And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.

Ecclesiastes 11:4-5 (NASB95) — 4 He who watches the wind will not sow and he who looks at the clouds will not reap. 5 Just as you do not know the path of the wind and how bones are formed in the womb of the pregnant woman, so you do not know the activity of God who makes all things.

Associated with the Trials of Life

Winds are associated with the trials of life. With an anguished heart, David exclaimed, “Oh, that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and be at rest… I would hasten to my place of refuge From the stormy wind and tempest” (Psalm 55:4-8). Anticipating a time when Israel would enjoy divine forgiveness, Isaiah spoke of God’s favor as a protective canopy, “a shelter to give shade from the heat by day, and refuge and protection from the storm and the rain” (Isa. 4:4-6). In the parable of the wise and foolish builders, Jesus contrasted the stability of obedient faith with the instability of those who hear but do not obey. Winds and waves come into the life of each, but the effects are dramatically different (Matt. 7:24-27).

Psalm 55:4-8 (NASB95) — 4 My heart is in anguish within me, And the terrors of death have fallen upon me. 5 Fear and trembling come upon me, And horror has overwhelmed me. 6 I said, “Oh, that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and be at rest. 7 Behold, I would wander far away, I would lodge in the wilderness. Selah. 8 “I would hasten to my place of refuge From the stormy wind and tempest.”

Isaiah 4:4-6 (NASB95) — 4 When the Lord has washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion and purged the bloodshed of Jerusalem from her midst, by the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning, 5 then the Lord will create over the whole area of Mount Zion and over her assemblies a cloud by day, even smoke, and the brightness of a flaming
fire by night; for over all the glory will be a canopy. 6 There will be a shelter to give shade from the heat by day, and refuge and protection from the storm and the rain.

Matthew 7:24-27 (NASB95) — 24 “Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 “And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. 26 “Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. 27 “The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great was its fall.”

Associated with the Brevity of Life

Winds are associated with the brevity of life. The psalmist said, “As for man, his days are like grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourishes. When the wind has passed over it, it is no more, and its place acknowledges it no longer” (Psa. 103:15-18). Isaiah expressed similar sentiments (Isa. 40:6-8). In like manner, James wrote, “You do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor (breath) that appears for a little while and then vanishes away” (James 4:13-15).

Psalm 103:15-18 (NASB95) — 15 As for man, his days are like grass; As a flower of the field, so he flourishes. 16 When the wind has passed over it, it is no more, And its place acknowledges it no longer. 17 But the lovingkindness of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him, And His righteousness to children’s children, 18 To those who keep His covenant And remember His precepts to do them.

Isaiah 40:6-8 (NASB95) — 6 A voice says, “Call out.” Then he answered, “What shall I call out?” All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field. 7 The grass withers, the flower fades, When the breath of the Lord blows upon it; Surely the people are grass. 8 The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever.

James 4:13-15 (NASB95) — 13 Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.” 14 Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. 15 Instead, you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that.”

Associated with the Folly of Life

Winds are associated with the folly of life. The wicked are like chaff which the wind drives away (Psa. 1:4-6). He who troubles his own house will inherit wind (Prov. 11:29). Describing earthly activity apart from God, Solomon said, “All is vanity and striving after wind” (Eccles. 1:12-15). The New Testament echoes these thoughts: Those without spiritual conviction are like “a reed shaken by the wind?” (Matt. 11:7-11). Those who turn aside from the truth are “tossed here and
there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine” (Eph. 4:14-16). Those dominated by doubts are like “the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind” (James 1:5-8).

Psalm 1:4-6 (NASB95) — 4 The wicked are not so, But they are like chaff which the wind drives away. 5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment. Nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. 6 For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, But the way of the wicked will perish.

Proverbs 11:29 (NASB95) — 29 He who troubles his own house will inherit wind, And the foolish will be servant to the wisehearted.

Ecclesiastes 1:12-15 (NASB95) — 12 I, the Preacher, have been king over Israel in Jerusalem. 13 And I set my mind to seek and explore by wisdom concerning all that has been done under heaven. It is a grievous task which God has given to the sons of men to be afflicted with. 14 I have seen all the works which have been done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and striving after wind. 15 What is crooked cannot be straightened and what is lacking cannot be counted.

Matthew 11:7-11 (NASB95) — 7 As these men were going away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John, “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? 8 “But what did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Those who wear soft clothing are in kings’ palaces! 9 “But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and one who is more than a prophet. 10 “This is the one about whom it is written, ’Behold, I send My messenger ahead of You, Who will prepare Your way before You.’ 11 “Truly I say to you, among those born of women there has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist! Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

Ephesians 4:14-16 (NASB95) — 14 As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; 15 but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

James 1:5-8 (NASB95) — 5 But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. 6 But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. 7 For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, 8 being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

**Conclusion**

As disciples of Christ, we follow One possessing such power “that even the winds and the sea obey Him” (Matt. 8:23-27). Do you believe in Him? Have you obeyed Him? Will you faithfully follow Him?
Matthew 8:23-27 (NASB95) — 23 When He got into the boat, His disciples followed Him. 24 And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being covered with the waves; but Jesus Himself was asleep. 25 And they came to Him and woke Him, saying, “Save us, Lord; we are perishing!” 26 He said to them, “Why are you afraid, you men of little faith?” Then He got up and rebuked the winds and the sea, and it became perfectly calm. 27 The men were amazed, and said, “What kind of a man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?”

Source: NIBD = Nelson’s New Illustrated Bible Dictionary, s.v., “Wind.”