

The God of the Storm

By Mark Mayberry
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Introduction

Sacred Scripture oft refers to storms, both literally and figuratively (Matt. 16:1-3; Psa. 55:4-8). Let us consider both, focusing first upon physical storms, and then upon the spiritual equivalent. Storms can be destructive (Zech. 7:13-14), and also beneficial (Zech. 10:1).

God's Role in Physical Storms

He Brings the Storm

Jehovah, the Creator of heaven and earth, sits upon His throne, clothed with majesty and girded with strength. His praise is greater than the sounds of many waters, the pounding waves of the flood, and the mighty breakers of the sea (Psa. 93:1-5). All creation offers its praise: the heaven and the earth, angelic hosts and human hoards, the sun, moon and stars, fire and hail, snow and clouds, and the stormy wind, fulfilling His word... (Psa. 148:1-14, esp. vs. 8). Devastating judgments fall upon the wicked, as the Lord punishes them with thunder and earthquake, whirlwind and tempest, and the flame of a consuming fire (Isa. 29:5-8). Wayward Israel faced the calamitous storm of Jehovah, sent forth in His wrath, swirling down upon the head of the ungodly (Jer. 23:16-24). The wicked are pursued by His tempest and terrified by His storms, to the end that they repent and seek His name, or persist in their rebellion and perish (Psa. 83:13-18).

When God brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly, the fountains of the great deep burst open, the floodgates of the sky opened, and it rained upon the earth for forty days and forty nights (Gen. 6:1-8, 7:6-12). When God delivered Israel from Canaanite oppression in the time of Deborah, the torrent of Kishon swept them away, suggesting a downpour flooded the Jezreel valley, neutralizing the advantage of Sisera's chariots, leading to the defeat of his army (Judges 4-5, esp. 4:4-7, 12-16 and 5:19-21). After demonstrating God's might at Mt. Carmel, Elijah slew the prophets of Baal beside the Brook Kishon. The drought, which had lasted for three years, ended as a small cloud, originally the size of a man's hand, quickly covered the entire sky and brought a raging torrent (1 Kings 18:36-46).

He Protects in the Storm

Noah and his family were preserved in the ark. Being warned by God about things not yet seen, in faithful reverence he prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith (Gen. 7:17-24; Heb. 11:7).

Ascending Sinai, surrounded by the thick storm cloud enveloping the mountain, Moses communed with God, and was sheltered in the cleft of the rock as He revealed His glory (Exod. 20:18–21; 33:17-23).

God protected Paul and his companions as his ship was caught in a violent storm. After they had been driven along by the winds, and neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, all hope of their being saved was gradually abandoned. Yet, an angel appeared, saying, “Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar; and behold, God has granted you all those who are sailing with you.” Exhorting the crew, the apostle said, “Therefore, keep up your courage, men, for I believe God that it will turn out exactly as I have been told. But we must run aground on a certain island.” Indeed, this is exactly what occurred (Acts 27:1-44, esp. vs. 22-25).

He Calms the Storm

Ethan the Ezrahite sang of God’s commitment to His covenant and His concern for Israel’s afflictions, saying, “Who is like You, O mighty Lord? Your faithfulness also surrounds You. You rule the swelling of the sea; when its waves rise, You still them...” (Psa. 89:5-18, esp. vs. 8-10). Consider how Jesus manifested His divine power over nature, calming the raging storm on the Sea of Galilee. The disciples were amazed, and said, “What kind of a man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?” (Matt. 8:23-27; Mark 4:35-41; Luke 8:22-25).

God’s Role in Spiritual Storms

He Brings the Storm

As mentioned earlier, God causes disaster to fall upon the wicked and the wayward. Sometimes we bring calamity upon ourselves (Prov. 1:20-33; 2 Pet. 2:17). On other occasions, God allows us to face unprovoked and undeserved adversity, allowing us to be tested and tried, that we might grow thereby (Deut. 8:3; 2 Cor. 11:24-29; 12:7-10).

He Protects in the Storm

On the day the Lord delivered David from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul, the Sweet Psalmist of Israel said, “The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer... For the waves of death encompassed me; the torrents of destruction overwhelmed me; the cords of Sheol surrounded me; the snares of death confronted me.” In his distress, David cried unto the Lord; God answered from on high, descending in the menacing storm, rescuing him from all these perils (2 Sam. 22:1-51; cf. also Psa. 18, esp. vs. 4-6). The prophets employed similar language, often with Messianic overtones, in describing the divine protection offered to the faithful remnant: Over Mount Zion and Jerusalem, there will be a shelter to give shade from the heat by day, and refuge and protection from the storm and the rain (Isa. 4:2-6; cf. also 25:1-5; 32:1-2).

He Calms the Storm

The God of our salvation stills the roaring of the seas, the crashing of their waves, and the tumult of the peoples (Psa. 65:5-8). He aids those who cry out to Him in their trouble, stilling the storm, quieting their hearts, guiding them to their desired haven (Psa. 107:23-30).

Conclusion

In times of anxiety, we should trust in God, casting all our cares upon Him, knowing that He cares (Phil. 4:6-7; 1 Pet. 5:6-7). In times of doubt and distress, we should focus our minds and still our hearts, offering the sacrifice of the righteous, and trusting in the Lord (Psa. 4:1-5). Instead of yielding to despair, let us wait upon the Lord (Psa. 27:13-14). When the waters roar and foam, and the mountains quake, as if they are about to slip into the heart of the sea, may we trust Jehovah's providential plan and purpose, and heed the ancient admonition: "Cease striving and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth" (Psa. 46:1-11, esp. vs. 10). In times of transition, we should also trust in the Lord, and "Be still" (2 Kings 2:1-14, esp. vs. 3 & 5).