

“Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers” (Rom. 15:8). It is through Jesus that God will “perform the mercy promised to [the] fathers, and . . . remember His holy covenant; the oath which He sware to our father Abraham, that He would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve Him without fear, in holiness and

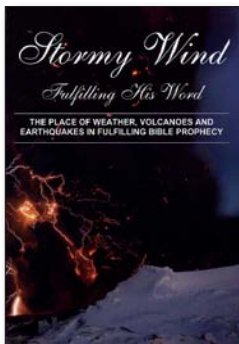
righteousness before Him, all the days of our life” (Lk. 1:72-75). May the day soon come when “all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: for this is My covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins” (Rom. 11:26,27). “Even so, come, Lord Jesus” (Rev. 22:20).

(Concluded)

## Review

# God’s control of world events

John Nicholls



**Stormy Wind Fulfilling His Word: The place of weather, volcanoes and earthquakes in fulfilling Bible prophecy.**

**Tony Benson.**

**Second edition 2010.**

**Christadelphian Scripture Study Service.**

**Currently available from the Testimony (see back cover) as well as CSSS agents worldwide.**

**M**OST READERS of the *Testimony* will have read or heard of Brother Tony Benson’s book on how God uses the weather, volcanoes and earthquakes, amongst other agencies, to fulfil His purpose. It is twenty-seven years since the book was first published, and it is good that our brother was able to complete an updated edition just before his untimely death in 2009. The book is an extensive revision with twenty-four more pages and three new chapters, with other chapters comprehensively reworked. Some new illustrations are added. The book is nicely produced as a paperback.

Since the first edition, produced in 1983, climate change and the issues of global warming and extreme weather conditions have rarely been out of the news, and have become important political issues with many financial implications. This book is therefore very timely in its appearance, and we are thankful to our heavenly Father that Brother Tony was able to complete it, though sadly he did not live to see the book come out in print.

## Not simply the weather

There are some who argue that natural calamities such as storms and volcanoes have always been with us, and that, for example, earthquakes today are not more frequent or intense than in years gone by. Such would say that, in sparsely populated areas and beneath the oceans, earthquakes have occurred regularly, and that today they are reported more widely and detected more easily by the sensitive equipment in modern monitoring stations. But it is clear from Scripture that earthquakes have accompanied major events in God’s purpose, such as the resurrection of the Lord (Mt. 28:2), and will continue to do so in the future, such as in the overthrow of the Gogian confederacy in Israel (Ezek. 38:19,20).

An impartial reading of this book should help to convince sceptics and doubters that the weather is under God’s control and is one powerful method, amongst others, used by Him to fulfil His plans. Brother Geoff Walker reviewed the first edition of this book in the *Bible Student* in 1984, and it is worth quoting the opening words of that review: “I have found this book fascinating. It is easy to comprehend; the message is clearly presented and there is ample evidence to support the main conclusions as to when and how the Creator has used the climate and other forces of nature to effect His will among the nations.”<sup>1</sup>

One new term we hear in connection with our weather today is ‘El Niño’ (p. 12), which describes how changes in atmospheric pressure and ocean temperatures can alter the Gulf Stream, which in

1. Review, “Stormy wind fulfilling His word,” Geoff Walker, *Bible Student*, Jan./Feb. 1984, p 210.

### Effects of the East Indies volcanic eruption

“The climatic disorders of those times produced not only droughts, but also occasionally freak rainstorms. One such caused the [Marib Dam in Yemen] to give way in the 540s. Though it was repaired it was never the same again, and after two further bursts it was abandoned. Silt washed down by floods had apparently rendered the complex irrigation systems all but useless. Tribes from the Yemen migrated northwards to the Mecca/Medina area, from where emerged Mohammed and the invading Arabs in the next century. Climatic conditions therefore played their part in bringing forth the Arabs against the Eastern Roman Empire.”

Tony Benson, *Stormy Wind Fulfilling His Word*, p. 73

turn can affect the climate in Western Europe. These effects illustrate the words in Job 26 about God’s control of weather. In chapter 2 Brother Tony suggests an explanation for the plague of “darkness which may be felt,” that of dust from a volcanic eruption (p. 18), and recently it was such ash clouds (from a volcano in Iceland) that grounded most of Europe’s jet aeroplanes for several days.

On page 21 a new exodus theory for how the waters of the Red Sea were parted is weighed up with the usual impartiality that the author showed in his writings. Minor alterations are made to chapter 4; but in the next chapter, entitled “Deciding battles,” two extra pages are added to show the effects of weather on an important battle on 29 May 1453. This was when Constantinople fell to the Ottoman Turks, who held sway in much of Eastern Europe and the Middle East for several hundred years. It was the lack of a windy day to propel the Christian fleet bearing reinforcements that enabled the Turks to maintain their siege and eventually take the city.

In the chapter “God blew and they were scattered” there are more comments about the failure of the Spanish Armada to defeat England and restore her to papal domination. The failure in 1588 was followed by at least two further invasion attempts, both of which were thwarted by severe storms at sea. The weather also played an important role in preventing Hitler from establishing a world empire: poor weather to the east meant German aircraft were unable to bomb the boats evacuating British and French troops from Dunkirk, and the high tide that day enabled the evacuees to embark and disembark swiftly and safely. The prolonged and severe winter of 1941 made the German invasion of Russia unsuccessful, and later, in June 1944, the D-Day invasion of Europe by American and British troops was only

possible because of a lull in a severe storm over the English Channel. General Eisenhower afterwards attributed this lull to an “almighty and merciful God.”

### New topics considered

Chapter 9 is new, and is entitled, “The catastrophe that changed the world.” It is based on a theory of David Keys that around A.D. 535-40 a huge volcanic eruption took place in the East Indies, where, much later, in A.D. 1883, the volcanic island of Krakatoa blew up. The earlier eruption was worldwide in its effects, significantly reducing light and heat from the sun. The effect on the Byzantine (Eastern Roman) Empire was to cause widespread famine and also a severe outbreak of bubonic plague that lasted three years, with further major outbreaks over the next two hundred years.

The drought conditions following from the volcanic eruption also caused the movement of Slavs from the north into the Byzantine Empire. The weakening of the empire was followed by the fifth and sixth trumpet judgements, which were the invasions by the Arabs and then the Ottoman Turks. Climate had a part to play in preparing these two invading powers for their work, as the author shows in this intriguing chapter (see box above).

Chapter 12, whose title, “Great earthquakes in divers places,” is taken from Luke’s Gospel, has been extensively reworked from the first edition. The author carefully compiles earthquake data and concludes that, whilst there is no increase in the number of earthquakes today, there does seem to be evidence that their magnitude is increasing.

Since the book was written, major earthquakes in New Zealand and Japan have occurred, with television news bringing the horror of these disasters right into our homes. The explosions in and the closure of the nuclear power station in Japan have been a reminder to us of the potential for chaos and disruption that a God-directed earthquake can cause. This chapter gives us much food for thought.

Chapter 13, like the one before it, has been extensively reworked and rewritten. Its title, “Is our weather getting worse?” is answered by new material from the last thirty or so years. There is more on El Niño, which explains the effects

of the warming of ocean currents off the Pacific coast of South America. This is linked by some scientists with global warming. Global warming is in turn linked with extreme weather conditions such as floods, thunderstorms, landslides, drought and bush fires, and may have both man-made and natural causes, such as sunspot activity. Either way, it must be the case that God, through His angels, controls weather to bring about His purposes. Brother Tony also discusses the Gaia theory of James Lovelock, and how it illustrates the finely balanced environment for a myriad of living things that our God has provided in His infinite wisdom.

### Positioning the world for Christ's return

Three excellent chapters follow, two of them extensively rewritten from the first edition, and the third a new one. In "The part played by weather in fulfilling prophecy before Christ comes" the author assesses how climate helped in the establishment of the State of Israel in the last century, and how the severe winter of 1946/47 played a part in helping Europe to unite to form eventually the European Coal and Steel Community in 1952, and then the European Economic Community in 1957. This later became the European Union. The water crisis in Israel and the surrounding nations, Syria, Jordan and the Palestinians, and the weather in Russia, are all factors that the author believes will be significant in the invasion of the Middle East by the northern power that has yet to take place.

"Famine in the last days" is an updated version of the chapter in the first edition, but "Earthquakes in Israel" is a new chapter and perhaps one of the best in the book. Descriptions by observers of past earthquakes make interesting reading, as does a research paper for

### Earthquakes in Israel at the time of the end

"Perhaps the most interesting point made by [Dr Martin Degg of the Department of Geography at Chester College in the UK] is that the Dead Sea/Jordan Valley was unusually quiet in the twentieth century whereas the Red Sea area seems to have had high seismic activity. Dr Degg's research indicates that when seismic activity is high in the Red Sea area it is low in the Dead Sea/Jordan Valley area and vice versa. He says: 'If the historical patterns are to be repeated, sooner or later the emphasis of earthquake activity in this part of the Middle East must swing away from the Red Sea and back to the Dead Sea fault system.'"

Tony Benson, *Stormy Wind Fulfilling His Word*, p. 129

the insurance industry so that they could assess the probability of earthquake damage in Middle Eastern countries. Perhaps the most fascinating quotation here is from the *Jerusalem Report*, under the headline "A disaster foretold" and the explanatory words, "Today, next week, or in 50 years, a massive earthquake will devastate Israel. And Israel, say the experts, is no better prepared than New Orleans was for a catastrophe sure to come." The author concludes this chapter, "We are aware of how God is moving the nations, ready for their role in the great events that are soon to happen in the earth. It seems that He has also, down the centuries, been preparing the land of Israel physically for the great day when His wrath is to be poured out upon those who invade His land."

This book is well reasoned and easy to follow. It will be of interest to all, both young and old, who are today's watchmen, seeking to understand how God has worked in the past and continues to work in the present to bring about His purpose. This book is also a tribute to the author who, throughout his life, had many interests: in archaeology, science, current affairs, history, nature (especially bird-watching) and, of course, Bible exposition and prophecy; and above all, in his brothers and sisters in Christ. May we have the same keen interests that he did. We look forward to seeing him again well and strong in the day of the resurrection and the Kingdom.

"The believer in God's word is not pessimistic about the future, however, for the Master said his followers should lift up their heads in hope and expectation of his return 'when these things *begin* to come to pass' (Luke 21:24). Even if . . . it is too late for man to change the road to disaster through climate change, God can and will intervene through His Son to undo man's evil work, 'destroy[ing] them that destroy the earth' in the process. The outcome will be a peaceful, happy world in which people will use the resources of the world in accordance with the great Creator's laws under the beneficial guidance of the saints" (Tony Benson, *Stormy Wind Fulfilling His Word*, p. 108).