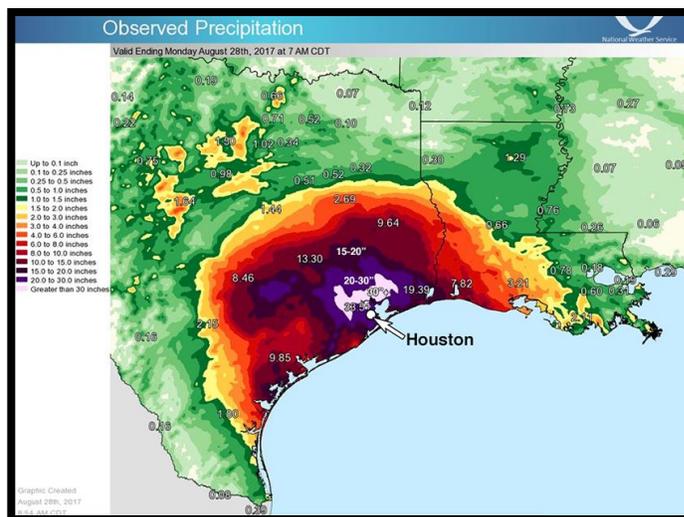


Theological Musings from Dave's Laptop

August 29, 2017

While today's international news is dominated by North Korea's latest global provocation, today's national news is overwhelmingly about Tropical Storm Harvey. Coming ashore as a Category 4 hurricane, Harvey appears to be lingering and recharging for a second landfall somewhere between Houston and New Orleans.

Harvey appears to be a nearly unprecedented weather event. The National Weather Service has had to add new colors to their precipitation charts to accommodate this new reality.



The chart to the right shows the color chart and a graphic on the next page shows the rainfall in just the first two days—now two days ago. Today we're hearing numbers as high as 15 trillion gallons of precipitation before the storm dissipates. This may be a weather event of "biblical" proportions.

Although at the moment, only government and military personnel are being allowed into the stricken areas (together with the Red Cross), once other relief workers are allowed in, the Southern Baptist Disaster Network will be hard at work. SBC Disaster Relief is renowned for its effectiveness, and you can help in the effort by making donations at www.bcnd.org.

While we're praying and giving, I've also been thinking about the various ways storms appear in the Bible. The Flood of Noah's time was an event far beyond what's happening right now (Genesis 6:9-9:17). At least one of the Egyptian plagues appears to have been a storm (Exodus 9:13-35). And Jesus showed His power over storms quite dramatically in the Gospels (cf. Mark 4:35-41).

God appears many times in the pages of the Bible, and these appearances are known as "theophanies." Several of these theophanies came in the form of a storm.

Ezekiel's famous vision of wheels within wheels happened in a windstorm (Ezekiel 1:1-28). The oldest book in the Bible (or so we think), the book of Job, ends with a fierce theophany of God's majesty, including not a little "storminess" (Job 37-41). Psalm 18:1-19 describes a theophany in which God descends in a storm to deliver David from great peril. And through Isaiah, God promises deliverance from storms both literal and metaphorical:

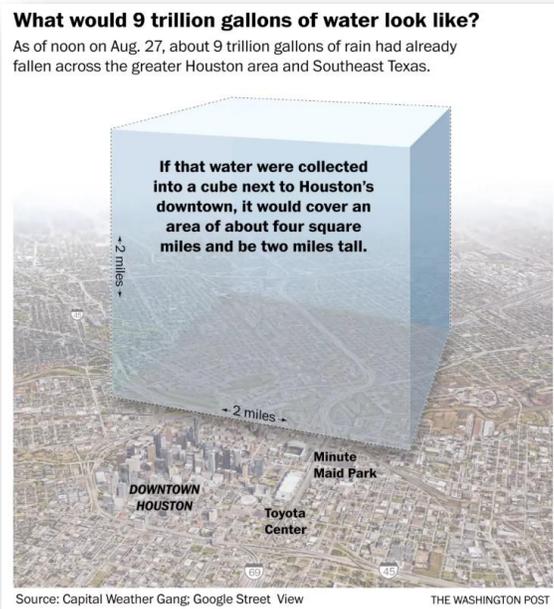
*But now, this is what the LORD says—
he who created you, Jacob,
he who formed you, Israel:
"Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;
I have summoned you by name; you are mine.
When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;
and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you.
When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.
For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior" (Isaiah 43:1-3a).*

I've included the passages from Psalm 18 and Job 37-38 for you to ponder as you pray for our Gulf Coast friends.

Dave

Psalm 18:1-19

- 1 I love you, LORD, my strength.*
- 2 The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.*
- 3 I called to the LORD, who is worthy of praise, and I have been saved from my enemies.*
- 4 The cords of death entangled me; the torrents of destruction overwhelmed me.*
- 5 The cords of the grave coiled around me; the snares of death confronted me.*
- 6 In my distress I called to the LORD; I cried to my God for help. From his temple he heard my voice; my cry came before him, into his ears.*
- 7 The earth trembled and quaked, and the foundations of the mountains shook; they trembled because he was angry.*
- 8 Smoke rose from his nostrils; consuming fire came from his mouth, burning coals blazed out of it.*
- 9 He parted the heavens and came down; dark clouds were under his feet.*
- 10 He mounted the cherubim and flew; he soared on the wings of the wind.*
- 11 He made darkness his covering, his canopy around him— the dark rain clouds of the sky.*
- 12 Out of the brightness of his presence clouds advanced, with hailstones and bolts of lightning.*
- 13 The LORD thundered from heaven; the voice of the Most High resounded.*
- 14 He shot his arrows and scattered the enemy, with great bolts of lightning he routed them.*
- 15 The valleys of the sea were exposed and the foundations of the earth laid bare at your rebuke, LORD, at the blast of breath from your nostrils.*
- 16 He reached down from on high and took hold of me; he drew me out of deep waters.*
- 17 He rescued me from my powerful enemy, from my foes, who were too strong for me.*
- 18 They confronted me in the day of my disaster, but the LORD was my support.*
- 19 He brought me out into a spacious place; he rescued me because he delighted in me.*



Job 37:1-13

Theophany as a Storm

- 1 *“At this my heart pounds and leaps from its place.*
- 2 *Listen! Listen to the roar of his voice, to the rumbling that comes from his mouth.*
- 3 *He unleashes his lightning beneath the whole heaven and sends it to the ends of the earth.*
- 4 *After that comes the sound of his roar; he thunders with his majestic voice. When his voice resounds, he holds nothing back.*
- 5 *God’s voice thunders in marvelous ways; he does great things beyond our understanding.*
- 6 *He says to the snow, ‘Fall on the earth,’ and to the rain shower, ‘Be a mighty downpour.’*
- 7 *So that everyone he has made may know his work, he stops all people from their labor.*
- 8 *The animals take cover; they remain in their dens.*
- 9 *The tempest comes out from its chamber, the cold from the driving winds.*
- 10 *The breath of God produces ice, and the broad waters become frozen.*
- 11 *He loads the clouds with moisture; he scatters his lightning through them.*
- 12 *At his direction they swirl around over the face of the whole earth to do whatever he commands them.*
- 13 *He brings the clouds to punish people, or to water his earth and show his love.*

Job 38:1-18

Theophany as Stormy

- 1 *Then the LORD spoke to Job out of the storm. He said:*
- 2 *“Who is this that obscures my plans with words without knowledge?*
- 3 *Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me.*
- 4 *“Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation? Tell me, if you understand.*
- 5 *Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it?*
- 6 *On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone—*
- 7 *while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?*
- 8 *“Who shut up the sea behind doors when it burst forth from the womb,*
- 9 *when I made the clouds its garment and wrapped it in thick darkness,*
- 10 *when I fixed limits for it and set its doors and bars in place,*
- 11 *when I said, ‘This far you may come and no farther; here is where your proud waves halt’?*
- 12 *“Have you ever given orders to the morning, or shown the dawn its place,*
- 13 *that it might take the earth by the edges and shake the wicked out of it?*
- 14 *The earth takes shape like clay under a seal; its features stand out like those of a garment.*
- 15 *The wicked are denied their light, and their upraised arm is broken.*
- 16 *“Have you journeyed to the springs of the sea or walked in the recesses of the deep?*
- 17 *Have the gates of death been shown to you? Have you seen the gates of the deepest darkness?*
- 18 *Have you comprehended the vast expanses of the earth? Tell me, if you know all this.*

