

WD October 3, 2022

“The Right Conditions”

Last week’s hurricane, Hurricane Ian as we all know hit Florida’s East Coast. We will remember that many were predicting storm surges of over twelve feet. Even if your house has been battle hardened with hurricane strength shutters, a better roof, shatter proof windows, etc. none of those things can do anything from a storm surge. That’s because water is being pushed onto the land by the 150 plus mph winds. The surge that everyone talks about causes major flooding and even the best prepared homes have no way to avoid getting flooded. And we saw the pictures of major flooding and people being rescued from the flood waters.

Something else happened during this hurricane that happened with Hurricane Irma just five years back in 2017. That something is reverse storm surge. Turns out that a big storm may not only surge water into land but also push water away from land too. Hurricane Ian turned counter clock-wise over Tampa Bay meaning the winds were blowing outward. The storm came during low tide and lowered the water in the bays and inlets. Some say 5 feet while others say as much as twelve.

I saw a picture of the bay that the convention center sits on where I was at the Synodical Convention a few years ago. People were out walking where water should be. Other pictures were of Hillsborough Bay also show people meandering about where the water should have been. But hours of hard winds pushed the water out into the Gulf in a reverse surge.

For Christians this should be of interest to you and familiar to you. In Exodus 14 we will remember how the Lord helped the Israelites escape the Egyptians by crossing the Red Sea. Consider vs. 21-22.

²¹ Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the Lord drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. The waters were divided, ²² and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left.

We know from recent experience that large amounts of water can be pushed back by powerful sustained wind. Vs 21-22 tell us of a strong “East wind”. The Lord made the east wind blow all night much like Ian which blew for a whole day. And let’s not forget that the Lord was very specific about where to take the Israelites. Vs 2 tells us, “Then the Lord said to Moses, ² ‘Tell the Israelites to turn back and encamp near Pi Hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea. They are to encamp by the sea, directly opposite Baal Zephon.’”

This does two things. First, it sets up Pharaoh who will believe the Israelites are vulnerable. He will pursue and eventually the Lord will use the incident to wipe out his army. Second, the land itself most likely lends itself to how the Lord would save the Israelites. We don’t know exactly where this was but the Lord knows what He is doing. And He knows the land better than any. In the hands of our Creator the Lord uses something of creation itself to push back the water, one element against another to accomplish His goals. In the Lord’s hands, exactly the right conditions are made possible to deliver His people from Egypt to the wilderness, from death to life. Makes me think of Galatians 4:4 which tells us that Jesus came in the fullness of time; meaning that the Lord knows how to create the perfect conditions in order to save His people.

What about the walls of water? Two things here too. First, the walls could have been far apart, miles perhaps. Such walls would build up as the water is pushed back just like a surge is bunched up and causes flooding. Secondly, the wall of water becomes the weapon in which Egypt’s army would be destroyed. For those who were walking out in the inlets of Tampa Bay many warnings were put out. The warnings suggest that the water could surge back in as a surge of water. It seems the water would not just ease back in but surge in by nearly 4.5 feet. Therefore, the wall of water that closed over the Egyptians could have been a surge. Water that had been pent-up all-night builds and builds and then released rushed back in literally crushing Pharaoh’s army. It wouldn’t have to be that deep either. We’ve seen what a twelve-foot surge can do to homes and marinas. Houses are pushed off their foundations and marinas are wiped out. It’s such a picture of Baptism. The people of God pass through the water from one side to the other. The enemy is drown and God’s people emerge on the other side set to enter the Promised Land.

It’s interesting to watch storms like Ian. People were walking in the Bays where water should have been. They shouldn’t be able to do that. But given all the right conditions they could. The cross is so much like this. Jesus used death to destroy death. The conditions of history, the local politics of Rome and the

Religious Leaders, of culture, and even the land of Jerusalem were exactly right to deliver God's people from sin. Jesus used a wooded cross, on a hill of rock, and died in human flesh.

The right conditions are often questioned by many for one reason or another. We may question the wisdom of storms like Ian or why Jesus would allow our lives to be impacted by storms, or illness, or trouble. People today still question how the Israelites crossed the Red Sea in the manner in which they did. Those Israelites themselves that crossed certainly questioned it in Exodus 14:4ff.

But then the Lord answers us in the same way He answers the Israelites. ¹³“Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. ¹⁴The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still.” The Lord sets the conditions in which His people are saved and His enemies are destroyed.

At the end of 1 Corinthians 15 Paul wraps up His argument about the resurrection in the same way. “Brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves full to the work of the Lord because you know that your Labor in the Lord is not in vain.” Our enemies are overcome by the same thing that saves us. The cross overcomes this world and all of its tribulation while at the same time delivers us from our sin. Death itself is used to destroy our last enemy, which is death. The Lord has fought for us and won. The Lord fights for us now. And so, He invites us to be still and to trust the Lord with all of our heart. I pray that we can take note of what the Lord has done and learn to do trust in Jesus even as the winds of this world's trouble blow all around us.

Pastor Matthew Woods
John 3:30

<https://www.fox13news.com/weather/hurricane-ian-drains-water-across-tampa-bay-area>

<https://www.tampabay.com/hurricane/2022/09/29/water-returns-tampa-bay-after-ian-driven-reverse-storm-surge/>