

# Rise Up And Build

---

*"So They said, 'Let us rise up and build,' Then they set their hands to do this good work," Neh. 2:18*

---

## Lessons Learned From Hurricane Irma

Hurricane Irma has come and (thankfully) departed. Suffice it to say, it captured the attention of much of the world, and especially of Floridians, before its arrival. The damage it wrought as it ripped through the islands of the Caribbean was especially devastating well before it approached Florida. Irma wrecked havoc in the Florida Keys, on Marco Island, on Naples, on Jacksonville, and many other places as well. It even caused a devastating tidal surge in Charleston, S.C., some 200 miles away from its path. Tampa, though hit hard, was spared a "worst case scenario" when Irma veered slightly to the east, and then went in a northward direction, thereby sparing this area those dangerous outer bank winds and the storm surge which would have occurred if it had veered slightly to the west. Even so, millions have been affected by power outages, damaged buildings, fallen trees, standing water, etc., etc., etc.

But this article is not intended to be a review of Irma's storm track, the intensity of its winds, or the overall damage it wrought. I will leave that to others far more knowledgeable in these matters. My purpose is to try to provide some biblical insight on this very timely matter. It is my belief that hurricanes such as Irma (and recently by Harvey) can, as a side issue, teach us many important lessons. We shall now consider some of them.

### Irma's Lessons

**1. Man is not in control!** Yes, man is able to build powerful nuclear and hydrogen bombs, build huge cities, and even send men to the moon and back, but man has his limitations! Weather forecasters can study the atmospheric pressure, wind patterns, ocean water temperatures, and make educated guesses regarding the path of a storm. But man is unable to prevent storms from developing! God is the "*Almighty God*," Gen. 17:1; with Him "*all things are possible*," Matt. 19:26, and He (ultimately) controls the weather. "*He causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth; He makes lightning for the rain; He brings the wind out of His treasures*," Psa. 135:7. God is the One "*Who covers the heavens with clouds, Who prepares rain for the earth, Who makes grass to grow on the mountains*," Psa. 147:8, and Who "*gives snow like wool; ...scatters the frost like ashes...casts out His hail like morsels*," Psa. 147:15. God "*makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust*," Matt. 5:45. It is as Paul proclaimed to his hearers in Lystra regarding "*the living God*;" "*He gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness*," Acts 14:15,17.

**2. In Old Testament times, God often used the weather to punish sinners, and/or to get man's attention.** In Noah's day, God sent "*the flood on the world of the ungodly*," 2 Peter 2:5; cf. Gen. 6,7. God sent 10 plagues upon Pharaoh and the Egyptian people which were intended to force their hand

and allow Israel to leave that land of bondage. With regards to the 7th plague, “*the Lord sent thunder and hail,*” and “*the hail struck throughout the whole land of Egypt, all that was in the field, both man and beast; and the hail struck every herb of the field and broke every tree of the field,*” Ex. 9:23,25. On different occasions, as punishment to His people who refused to heed His instructions, God sent droughts and famines, Lev. 26:18-20; 2 Sam. 21:1-2, etc.

**3. We need each other.** “No man is an island.” “*..none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself,*” Rom. 14:7. There are countless examples of family, friends, and neighbors “pitching in” and helping those who were victimized by the wind, the rain, and the storm surges.

**4. Storms like Irma tend to bring out the best in people.** It is in such instances that we learn that our “*neighbor*” is anyone needing our help (Luke 10:29-37), and those possessing in their hearts “the milk of human kindness” naturally rise to the occasion and go out of their way, often risking their lives, exerting tremendous effort, and sacrificing their means to help those victimized by storms. It reminds us of the fact that of humans it can be said that God “*put eternity in their hearts,*” Eccl. 3:11, or “an abiding awareness of something outside the boundaries” of our earthly existence.

**5. Storms like Irma also tend to bring out the worst in people.** Though they are relatively few, there are reports of people looting the flooded homes of some who evacuated before the storm. This adds “insult to injury,” and it reminds us that the devil is still alive and well, and that “*the love of money*” which is “*a root of all kinds of evil,*” I Tim. 6:10, continues to be a dominant force in too many hearts.

**6. Government is designed to benefit citizens.** Though God has not specified a particular form of government, it is a fact that such “*authorities...are appointed by God,*” and as God intended, they are “*not a terror to good works, but to evil,*” and that such serves as “*God’s minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil,*” Rom. 13:1,3,4. Countless government officials, from the President, the governor, to city mayors have used all the powers within their command to assist those victimized by this storm. And this follows in the wake of Hurricane Harvey, when similar actions were taken.

**7. It helps to be on praying terms with God!** In Elijah’s day, when Israel’s sins were so horrific, Elijah “*prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months, and he prayed again, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit,*” Jas. 5:17-18; I Kings 18. Notwithstanding the damage wrought by Irma, we ask how many lives were spared and how many homes were left intact because God’s people remembered to pray? Of course, there is no way I can answer that question, but I fully believe the prayers of the righteous made a difference. At least, by faith, I do know that “*the fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much,*” Jas. 5:16.

**8. Eternity is coming; it pays to be ready!** In the long ago, the prophet Amos addressed an apostate people, and warned them, saying, “*Prepare to meet your God, O Israel,*” Amos 4:12. Jesus is coming, Acts 1:9-11. He will judge every person of all nations, including you and me, Matt. 25:31-33; Rev. 20:10-15, using His word as the standard, John 12:48. Friend, if you have not obeyed the gospel, or if you have fallen away from God after obeying the gospel, you need to heed God’s will, and you should not delay further, for tomorrow may be too late!

**Conclusion:** There are many more lessons that could be learned from Irma, but we have run out of space. We should thank God for the Irmas and Harveys that come our way, for without the uncertainties that comes with such, we tend to forget our need for God. —BW

\*\*\*\*