

A BIBLICAL VIEW ON  
**CLIMATE CHANGE**



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# CLIMATE CHANGE



If you ask people what they think about the issue of climate change (previously described as global warming) you get a wide range of responses. Some activists are convinced we are on the edge of an environmental apocalypse. Others on the other side believe this is nothing more than hype and fear-mongering in order to expand the scope of government over our lives. Most of us lack the scientific background to sort out all the issues, but that doesn't mean we can't apply some logic and discernment.

What are the few areas of agreement between those who believe that man-made global warming is taking place and those who are skeptical? There is agreement that the earth's temperature (what is called the globally averaged temperature anomaly) has increased about a degree since the 19th century.

Skeptics point out that we were emerging from a little ice age that occurred from the 15th to the 19th century. Proponents point to the fact that as the industrial era began, there was an increase in greenhouse gases (such as CO<sub>2</sub>, methane, and nitrous oxide). The main greenhouse substances in the earth's atmosphere are water vapor and high clouds. Skeptics point out that even a doubling of CO<sub>2</sub> would only upset the original balances between incoming and outgoing radiation by about 2 percent.

The UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) believes that there is a link between an increase in greenhouse gases and observed warming. Skeptics disagree and point to the

fact that although the concentration of CO2 has been increasing, global temperatures have been decreasing.

## **Discounting Critics**

Let's look at some of the tactics used to debate the issue. Climate change alarmists often try to win the debate merely by discounting any critics and calling them names. Meteorologist Dr. Roy Spencer recently wrote about this. Alarmists claim that anyone who disagrees with them is a "climate change denier." This has a sound very much like "holocaust denier." Spencer says this is a "straw man argument" where you argue against something your opponent never claims.

Spencer says he "cannot think of a single credentialed, published skeptical climate scientist who doesn't believe in the existence of climate change." This includes Dr. Pat Michaels, Dr. Richard Lindzen, and others who have been labeled "climate change deniers." You can even find a YouTube video where Lord

Monckton asks a room full of these scientists if any of them believe what their critics say they believe. His interaction with them shows that this is a “straw man argument.”

In the past, I have suggested that the climate change debate is really about percentages. Consider people who are labeled “climate change deniers.” Even these people believe the climate changed in the past (we’ve had an ice age, a medieval warming period). They just don’t believe that human activity is the major driver for climate change. But they will usually admit that some small percentage of human activity might be influential.

On the other side are activists who are deeply concerned about climate change. But I doubt any of them believe that human activity is responsible for 100 percent of the change in climate. We have had variations in the climate long before the industrial revolution. So really the debate is between percentages. Some believe the percentage is low, others believe it is higher.

Sometimes the discussion is framed as a debate between those who believe in science (climate change) and others who are anti-science (the deniers). But consider this recent quote from geologist Ian Plimer who believes in evolution and is anything but an anti-science proponent. "Climate change has taken place for thousands of millions of years. Climate change occurred before humans evolved on Earth." He says he cannot find any correlation between temperature change and human emissions of carbon dioxide. Therefore, he concludes that, "Without correlation, there can be no causation."

## **Past False Alarms**

One of the major problems in evaluating environmental claims has been the sad history of past environmental alarmism. None of these warnings ever occurred. When we hear such urgency from activists, we need to at least remember some of the past false alarms.

During the first Earth Day in 1970, for example, the environmental concern was not global warming but global cooling. Environmentalist Nigel Calder warned that “The threat of a new ice age must now stand alongside nuclear war as a likely source of wholesale death and misery for mankind.” C.C. Wallen of the World Meteorological Organization said, “The cooling since 1940 has been large enough and consistent enough that it will not soon be reversed.”

Also back in 1970, Harvard biologist George Wald predicted “Civilization will end within 15 or 30 years unless immediate action is taken against problems facing mankind.” A few years later, the Environmental Fund took out full-page ads warning, “The World as we know it will likely be ruined by year 2000.”

At about the same time, Stanford biologist Paul Ehrlich predicted there would be a major food shortage in the US and that “hundreds of millions of people are going to starve to death” in the 1980s. He

went on to forecast that 65 million Americans would die of starvation between 1980 and 1989. He had even gloomier predictions for England. He said, "If I were a gambler, I would take even money that England will not exist in the year 2000."

And the last two decades have been full of dire warnings. In his Oscar-winning documentary, Al Gore warned that sea levels would rise by 20 feet "in the near future." So far, his prediction has been off by 20 feet or so. A 2005 conference of climate scientists and politicians meeting in London, warned that the world has as little as 10 years before it would reach "the point of no return on global warming."

## **Reducing Carbon Dioxide**

Something else you should consider is which nation has been doing the best at reducing carbon dioxide. Most people would assume that it would probably be a country in Europe. Actually the country reducing greenhouse gas emissions more than any other country is the United States of America.

Most people do not know this. Most of the mainstream media made a big deal out of the fact that the US withdrew from the Paris Accords. And they continuously reminded us that the US never ratified the Kyoto Protocol. What they rarely (if ever) tell us is the US has been very successful in reducing CO2 emissions.

What country leads the world in total CO2 emissions? Most people guess that would be the United States. They would be wrong. China is the world's largest emitter of carbon dioxide, and India is the third largest emitter.

This also illustrates the problem of trying to curb the United States when we don't have the ability to curb other nations. For every ton of reduced CO2 emissions in the US, China and India produce nearly 10 more tons. In other words, they cancel out any reduction by the US by ten times.

## **Environmental and Economic Priorities**

Sometimes it is helpful to put all the possible threats and problems on a scale

to see how significant they are and what we can do about them. We do not have enough money or manpower to solve every problem in the world. It makes sense to rank the cost-benefit of these problems so we can make the greatest positive impact. Many years ago Bjorn Lomborg brought together economists and leaders to calculate those costs.

He is the author of *The Skeptical Environmentalist* and *Cool It: The Skeptical Environmentalist's Guide to Global Warming*. In the second book, he argues that global warming may be a concern, but the programs put forth would be prohibitively expensive. Thus, they should not be implemented. This is quite a conclusion for someone who used to be a Greenpeace activist.

He pulled together what has been called the Copenhagen Consensus. The meeting included Nobel laureate economists who evaluated the costs and benefits of different solutions to world problems.

They have found that just \$60 million spent on providing Vitamin A capsules and therapeutic Zinc supplements for under-2-year-olds would reach 80 percent of the infants in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. The annual economic benefits (from lower mortality and improved health) would be \$1 billion. That means doing \$17 worth of good for every dollar spent.

They have found other ratios that were equally promising. For example, spending \$1 billion on tuberculosis would prevent one million deaths. The annual benefit would be \$30 billion. This is a \$30 return on every dollar.

The economists and leaders at the Copenhagen Consensus found many places where the cost/benefit ratio is excellent. They have also found that the proposed programs to deal with climate change have a terrible negative ratio. The last time they met, the economists and leaders placed these programs at the very bottom of their list.

The current solution to climate change is the Green New Deal. It would empower the government to implement draconian measures in order to reduce CO2 emissions to the point the country might be carbon neutral. That is not even possible for lots of political and economic reasons. But even if it was possible, the climate sensitivity models predict it would only affect the world temperature by about 0.137 degree Celsius by 2100. Even if all the countries adopted a similar policy, it would only cool the earth by about 0.278 degree Celsius by the end of this century.

These are just a few facts to keep in mind the next time you hear a heated debate or even a rational discussion about climate change.

## **Additional Resources**

Calvin DeWitt, ed., *The Environment and the Christian* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1991).

Bjorn Lomborg, *The Skeptical Environmentalist* (Cambridge University Press, 2001).

Jennifer Marohasy, *Climate Change: The Facts 2017* (Institute of Policy Affairs, 2017).

Francis Schaeffer, *Pollution and the Death of Man: The Christian View of Ecology* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale Publishers, 1970).

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