

A Perspective on Global Warming

Not many years ago, we began to hear that the carbon dioxide (CO₂) gas, produced by man and accumulating in the atmosphere, was causing the earth's surface temperatures to rise. CO₂ is produced when people and animals breathe; but it is also produced when carbon-based fuels such as coal and gasoline are burned in power plants and cars. Almost every process related to industry can be tied to the production of CO₂ in some way, because industry requires energy, and most of the energy we use is produced by burning carbon-based fuels.

If CO₂ were to cause a temperature increase in the earth's atmosphere, some fear it would bring widespread misery for mankind and creation as a whole. With higher temperatures, ice caps on the poles might melt, causing sea levels to rise and overwhelm coastal cities with rising tides. A rise in earth's temperatures would affect all kinds of ecosystems, from rain forests to coral reefs. If ecosystems changed, the plants and animals in them would also be affected, possibly leading to the extinction of many species. On the other hand, species such as the Malaria-carrying mosquito might become more widespread, thus increasing the incidence of disease. Not only that, hurricanes, tornadoes, and other storm phenomena might intensify as a result of global warming. In short, global warming is predicted to be the great spoiler of the earth as we know it.

In light of such dire predictions, the United Nations along with many governments and non-government organizations have been pushing an agenda ostensibly aimed at limiting the production of man-made CO₂ with the goal of curbing global warming. If mankind was able to reduce CO₂ emissions to a sufficient degree, we would be able to stop global warming and its horrible consequences; so goes the thinking of global warming proponents.

Most would agree that the earth warmed somewhat in the 1990s. But much disagreement exists concerning the cause of that warming, specifically whether or not mankind is responsible for it. As believers, we are thus confronted with the question as to what is a proper biblical and informed response to the idea of global warming. Below are a few thoughts.

What if CO₂ pollution from mankind is truly causing global warming, and dire consequences are likely to follow? How should we respond as believers?

In the first place, whether man-induced global warming is happening or not, it behooves us to be responsible stewards of God's creation. Therefore, if we believe that mankind is responsible for global warming, we ought to limit those activities which increase CO₂ in the atmosphere. However, we do need to be careful that we not fall into the worship of creation. Our care of creation must always be subservient to our worship and service of God. Matthew 6:33: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." Yes, we should be good stewards of creation; but, it is not our place to go on crusades to stop global warming. It is our place to seek first the spiritual kingdom of Christ.

Secondly, if and when laws are made that seek to curb global warming, we ought to submit to those laws knowing that God has placed that authority over us. As long as obedience to government does not cause us to sin against God, it is our duty to obey. 1 Peter 2:13-14: "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well."

In the next place, if we believe that man-made global warming is occurring, we must not be anxious about events that may or may not be unfolding. That might be a temptation if and when disasters begin to occur around the world. We need to remember these things form part of God's plan to bring about the goal of all creation. Jesus himself predicted such things would happen as the end approaches. Matthew 24:7-8: "For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows." If indeed, the earth warmed to unprecedented levels and weather chaos resulted in famines and pestilences, we must see all these things as part of God's greater purpose in history.

The four horses of revelation do not ride through the earth doing their own will and pleasure; rather, they all have riders who direct them according to God's glorious plan to save his people. Two of the horses especially, the black horse and the pale horse, have to do with the growing of crops and the lives of people, which things might be affected by global warming. Revelation 6:5-8: "And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine. And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see. And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth." The black horse controls famine and plenty, which many believe would be affected through

global warming. Similarly, the pale horse represents death in all its forms. Should a great world-wide famine occur, the pale horse could oversee the deaths of millions upon millions of people. The fact that the black horse was not allowed to hurt the oil and the wine shows that the horses are carrying out God's will of decree, not going beyond it in any way, shape or form.

Finally, as regards the possibility that global warming might be occurring, we must keep in mind that there will be no global warming (or cooling, for that matter), but what God himself has decreed. And, since we belong to Jesus Christ body and soul, in life and in death, we can have comfort even if the most dire predictions came to pass. Nothing shall separate us from the love of God, which is ours in Christ Jesus (cf. Rom. 8:35-39).

Another response to global warming is to look at it more skeptically. We must be careful that we not simply believe something because the mass media declares it and the majority of people believe it. "He that is first in his own cause seemeth just" (Prov.18:17a). An argument presented, when it is not rebutted, often sounds quite believable. Especially is that the case when a seemingly great number of scientists, government officials, and the mass media by and large put forward the same message. It must be admitted that hearing almost exclusively one side of the debate tends to pull us in the direction of believing that global warming is an established fact. "But his neighbour cometh and searcheth him" (Prov.18:17b). When open debate is encouraged, when differing opinions are allowed to be aired, when the other side of the argument is fairly presented, the picture might change dramatically. This biblical principle applies to many areas of life. We do well to make sure that we do not unquestioningly receive every opinion endorsed by so-called experts. For example, the vast majority of scientists and government officials believe in evolution, which Scripture clearly shows to be false, not to mention the scientific evidence that thoroughly refutes the lie of evolution. We ought to be cautious about what we accept as fact.

When we examine the issue of global warming, there are in fact indications that global warming is not so thoroughly proven as it is often portrayed to be.

Amazingly, the "hot" issue in the mid 1970's was not global warming at all, but global cooling! The June 24, 1974 issue of *Time* magazine made a compelling assertion that global cooling was a serious threat to the planet.^[18] The article, "Another Ice Age," detailed how cooling threatened to bring about a global ice age, supposedly caused by man-made pollution. The article asserted, "Since the 1940s the mean global temperature has dropped about 2.7° F." Although such a figure was

admitted to be an estimate, such a temperature drop was boldly claimed to be “supported by other convincing data.” Further, the drop in temperature was suggested to be responsible for “the Midwest’s recent rash of disastrous tornadoes.” As with the current global warming scare, global cooling was suggested to be man’s fault: “Man, too, may be somewhat responsible for the cooling trend.” Just how serious was the threat of global cooling? The article goes on to say, “Whatever the cause of the cooling trend, its effects could be extremely serious, if not catastrophic. Scientists figure that only a 1% decrease in the amount of sunlight hitting the earth’s surface could tip the climatic balance, and cool the planet enough to send it sliding down the road to another ice age within only a few hundred years.”

Newsweek followed the next year with a similar article entitled, “The Cooling World” in which the author had this to say: “There are ominous signs that the Earth’s weather patterns have begun to change dramatically and that these changes may portend a drastic decline in food production—with serious political implications for just about every nation on Earth. The drop in food output could begin quite soon, perhaps only 10 years from now.”^[19] If we consider that the idea of global cooling was purportedly supported by “convincing data,” what makes us think that scientists can be more certain today that global warming is occurring? In light of previous dire predictions, which have failed to materialize, today’s language of imminent catastrophe should be taken with a grain of salt.

In addition, claims that we are in the hottest period since the beginning of the century seem to be overblown. The documentary, “An Inconvenient Truth,” featuring Al Gore, stated that 1998 was the hottest year in the last century. This statement, however, was apparently based on faulty data. According to one source, the hottest year in the United States in the last century was actually 1934, before CO₂ build-up was even considered to be an issue. Furthermore, of the ten hottest years in the last century, six occurred between 1920 and 1953. Only 4 of the hottest years occurred between the years 1990 to 2006.^[20] Moreover, history indicates that temperatures some 1000 years ago were much warmer than current temperatures. Records show that ancient Norsemen cultivated the land in Greenland, indicating they experienced warmer temperatures than they do in modern times.^[21]

Global warming skeptics also point out that man-made CO₂ comprises less than 1% of all greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Water is by far the most abundant greenhouse gas, but strangely is not dealt with in global warming models.

Furthermore, recent evidence suggests that the real cause of global warming and cooling has mostly to do with the influence of the sun, which should hardly be surprising. Sunspot activity on the Sun’s surface actually correlates very well with earth’s temperature fluctuations.^[22] Apparently, the Sun’s magnetic field influences

the amount of cosmic rays reaching the earth. Cosmic rays, in turn, have much to do with the formation of low-level clouds and these clouds may then moderate the earth's climate.

Other evidence could be mentioned that casts doubt on global warming.^[23] The point is not that we should put our faith in every alternative source of information. Rather, the point is that caution is in order when it comes to accepting what we hear from the mass media and the so-called experts. There are reasons to doubt whether global warming is actually occurring.

One prominent theme that comes out of the camp of the skeptics points to man-induced global warming as a hoax being used for political purposes.^[24] Jacques Chirac, former French president, is reported as saying the following at a United Nations climate-change meeting: "For the first time, humanity is instituting a genuine instrument of global governance, one that should find a place within the World Environmental Organization which France and the European Union would like to see established...By acting together, by building this unprecedented instrument, the first component of an authentic global governance, we are working for dialogue and peace."^[25] That global warming might be used as a means to establish a global government should at least be considered to be a possibility.

But, even if this scenario turned out to be true, believers should not fret about this either. Psalm 37:1-4: "Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb. Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart." God will judge the wicked and he will save his church. No scheme could ever change that. Proverbs 19:21: "There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand." God is pleased to use even the wicked to accomplish his purposes. His counsel will surely be accomplished. The machinations of Satan and of men are nothing in God's sight. God will allow nothing to happen that does not serve for the advantage of his people.

Believers will likely hold differing opinions about global warming. Some have thoroughly embraced the idea of global warming. Others are more skeptical. No doubt we could find a multitude of other issues that believers disagree about. But, no matter which side is the correct perspective on global warming, we must keep our eyes fixed

upon our Lord Jesus Christ and seek first his kingdom and his righteousness as we see the day approaching.