A Hot Topic

We are hearing a lot about global warming. Earlier this year scientists from all over the world met in Paris, France to discuss this issue and it was reported that a vast majority of participants at that conference agreed that global warming is a fact that no intelligent person can deny. Unless drastic action is taken we are headed for a great disaster in the near future. Therefore governments are urged to cut down drastically on carbon monoxide and other harmful emissions, no matter what the cost, even if it will greatly harm the economy.

Why We Cannot Ignore it

What should be our response to this issue? Must we take the global warming issue seriously or can we afford to shrug off the many doom’s day scenarios that the new media are reporting on an almost daily basis?

Let me state first of all that the Bible clearly teaches that we must be concerned about our environment and the effect human beings may have on it. God appointed man to be the stewards of this world (Gen.1:28), not the destroyer of it. However, we should not let ourselves be intimidated by environmentalists, many of whom do not believe in God or His Word. They may be excellent scientists and experts in their field but in many cases they proceed from the wrong presuppositions and therefore their conclusions are questionable at best. These people often have an idolatrous regard for planet earth or “Mother Nature,” as they call it. The apostle Paul says in Romans 1 that such people worship the creature more than the Creator (v.25).

Global Warming: Fact or Fiction?

With global warming, as with any other topic, it is crucial to understand what the facts are, who presents them, how they are interpreted, and what implications are drawn from them. A careful look at global warming shows that there is a lot of disagreement about the facts and implications of climate change.
According to most scientists, the earth’s temperature is definitely rising. This increase in temperature amounts to about 0.4-0.8 °C (32.72-33.44 F) over the last 100 years. Reliable scientific data before that period are hard to come by and the methods used to obtain historical temperature records are controversial. What is even more controversial is the role man has played in the current changes in the earth’s temperature.

Although the vast majority of scientists maintain that man is the culprit, a small minority of climatologists and experts in related disciplines strongly disagree. Among the latter are Professor Ian Clark of the Department of Earth Sciences at the University of Ottawa, Professor Tim Patterson of Carlton University, also of Ottawa and Dr. Tim Ball, professor of climatology at the University of Winnipeg. What these recognized scholars maintain is that there have always been and always will be fluctuations in earth’s temperatures and that human activity has little or no impact on such changes.

They point out that:

1. Global temperature changes from past millennia were far larger and faster than the current trend, raising doubts about man’s effect on global temperature. That is, the current climate change is quite small in comparison to past changes.

2. Carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is thought to be the biggest contributor to temperature change, yet 97% of atmospheric CO2 comes from volcanoes.

3. Given the small percentage of human-produced CO$_2$, human impact on global temperature may be as little as 1%.

4. Global temperatures are known to be influenced by other, non-human-controlled factors, such as changes in sunspot activity.

5. Most of the global temperature increase of the last 100 years occurred before man-made CO2 became a serious factor.
6. In the 1970s, global temperatures had actually been dropping since 1945, causing many scientists to be concerned about a “global cooling”  

The Basic Error of Environmentalists

While we, as Christians, ought to treat God’s creation with respect and good stewardship, we must not allow politically and ideologically driven hysteria to dominate our view of the environment.

The basic problem with extreme environmentalists like former U.S. Vice-President, Al Gore, and Canadian earth scientist David Suzuki, is that they ignore the biblical teaching that this present earth is not destined to last forever. This world is not our eternal home. “Here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come,” the apostle to the Hebrews says (Heb.13:14) In 1 Corinthians 7 Paul writes, “the fashion of this world passeth away,” or, as we can also translate, “this world and all it contains will pass away”(1 Cor.7:31).

The Bible and Global Warming

It cannot be denied that global warming is occurring. This should not surprise us because the earth is undergoing a process of deterioration and decay. This process did not just begin with the industrial revolution or the machine age but it started right after Adam sinned. The entire creation has been in a state of decay since the fall, and perhaps what we are seeing today is a speeding up of this process.

Scripture also mentions a form of “global warming.” In 2 Peter 3:7-13, the apostle writes: “But the heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word [of God] are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.” When Peter speaks of the present heaven and earth he is contrasting it with the one that existed long ago. That first world was destroyed by the waters of the Great Flood. But the present earth will be destroyed, not by water, but by fire. Remember the rainbow? This present
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earth that the environmentalists are so concerned about will continue until Christ will come to judge this wicked world.

Judgment by Fire

People laugh at the idea of a judgment to come, just as the people in Noah’s day ridiculed him when he warned his contemporaries that the Flood was coming. The Creator will destroy the earth again; but this time by fire. He reserves it for that purpose. The word “reserved,” in the Greek is thesaurizó, from which we get the word thesaurus, a treasury in which words are stored up for future use. Like a woodpile in the garage is kept for the fireplace, so God is keeping the earth and all that is in it for the day when he will burn it all up. Talk about global warming! There will be a global heating so intense that the very elements of which the earth is composed will melt down.

The old world, Peter says, was destroyed by water coming from above and below. But this present world will be destroyed by fire that will also come from above and below. The heavens or the sky is the source of tremendous heat. Think of the sun and the stars. These will come down and incinerate everything in sight. There will also be fire coming from below the earth’s surface. The earth’s core is one huge furnace of fire, the temperature of which is 12,400 degrees F. (6,871 C.) and there is only a thin ten-mile crust that separates us from it. Every once in a while volcanoes belch forth molten lava that is hot enough to melt even the hardest metals. The highest melting point of any metal known is tungsten that melts at 6,500 degrees; so 12,400 degrees will liquefy anything. The conflagration referred to by Peter could also come through the splitting of the atom. A worldwide nuclear explosion may set off a chain reaction that will have enough force to incinerate the earth and heavens. But whether the end will come by way of a nuclear reaction or whether the fire will come from inside the earth’s core, the apostle says that there is a reservoir of fire waiting to be released at a time appointed by God. “It is kept,” Peter says, “for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.”

Who Will Escape?

When God flooded the world, He spared Noah, his wife, their three sons and their wives--eight souls in all. Similarly, when the Lord comes again in judgment by fire, not all human beings will be burnt up. When this whole world goes up in smoke, and is burned to a crisp, believers in
Christ will escape the universal holocaust. The Day of Judgment will not harm God’s people. When this earth and its wicked inhabitants will be destroyed by fire a new heaven and earth will arise from its ashes.

When is all this going to happen? Scoffers from Peter’s day to our own say “never; you Christians are waiting for something that will never come. Look how long the earth has been in existence. Every morning the sun comes up and every evening it goes down again.

As Christians we are sometimes tempted to think the same way. Generations come and go but the earth continues and may do so forever. Not so. Remember what Psalm 102 says: “Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed. But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end” (vv.25-27).

Why The Judgment is Delayed

Judgment Day will come. If it seems a long way off it is because it is delayed. Why? What’s the purpose of delaying this dreadful day? Peter’s answer is both clear and hopeful: “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Pet.3:9). The reason for the delay is that the Lord wants to give sinners time to repent. Remember how long it took Noah to build the ark. One hundred and twenty years and the whole time he warned his contemporaries about the judgment to come. That was God’s patience. “The patience of our Lord leads to salvation,” Peter says in verse 15. It is because He does not want anyone to perish, but that all may come to repentance that He waits to unleash His judgment. Calvin’s comments on this passage are worth noting: “This is His wondrous love towards the human race, that he desires all men to be saved and is prepared to bring even the perishing to safety.” But, perhaps anticipating the question some of his own disciples would raise in this connection, he adds,

If God does not want any to perish, why do so many in fact perish? My reply is that no mention is made here of the secret decree of God by which the wicked are doomed to their own ruin, but
only of His loving-kindness as it is made known to us in the Gospel. There God stretches out His hand to all alike, but He only grasps those (in such a way as to lead to Himself) whom He has chosen before the foundation of the world.

Calvin is saying that we must always go by God’s revealed will and not His secret or hidden will. That revealed will says: “Seek the Lord while He may be found. Call upon Him while He is near, Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.”

The Sinner’s Only Hope

Here is hope for sinners, even for neo-pagan environmentalists who worship the creation rather than the Creator and are more concerned about preserving planet earth than saving their own souls. But here is hope also for those who know the way of salvation but are still going their own way. Is the Lord perhaps waiting for you to repent? Do so at once and the Lord will spare you on the Day of the universal meltdown.

But here is also an exhortation to believers who by God’s grace have come to repentance and faith in Christ. As Peter concludes, “Therefore, seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved and the elements shall melt with fervent heat Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness” (2 Pett.3:11-13).

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1. For a more detailed report of the findings of the above-mentioned dissenting scientists go to http://splatto.net/blog/?p=379