

1. CLIMATE CHANGE

QUESTION: Do you think climate change is real? Will the World be destroyed from climate change?

BIBLE READING: Romans 8:18-22

TEXT: ‘... in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God’ (Romans 8:21).

When I was a teenager, I remember reading in the *Readers Digest Atlas of the World* a depressing statement that the whole universe would, in a few billion years, either implode or explode into destruction. Even then it seemed to me a pretty hopeless view of the future. Bertrand Russell once wrote ‘all the labours of the ages, all the devotion, all the inspiration, all the noontday brightness of human genius, are destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system, and that the whole temple of Man’s achievement must inevitably be buried beneath the

debris of a universe in ruins' (*A Free Man's Worship*). Again, pretty hopeless.

I thought of that when I came across a group of teenagers in Sydney city centre campaigning against climate change. When I began discussing with them – they got both angry and afraid. 'Don't you care? The world is going to end in twelve years!' It was a somewhat apocalyptic view – and yet I could see one that they genuinely believed in. A couple of decades ago the people you saw on the street corners with the sign 'the end is nigh' were often Christians of an apocalyptic persuasion – now it's Green activists. Do they have a point? What does the Bible have to say on this issue?

I love Romans 8. Indeed, it is a chapter of the Bible that I most often reflect on. Not least because in the passage referred to, we are given real hope for the creation. Yes, I do believe that there is such a thing as climate change and that what humanity does has an effect upon the climate. It is a matter of considerable debate just how much effect, and what is the best way to deal with that. But, as regards your question – no, the world will not be destroyed from climate change. In *ASK* we looked at the question of the end of the world (*ASK* 23) and saw that it is God who will bring about the end of the world, not humanity. He does so not in order to destroy all things but to renew them.

Now in this passage we are told that the whole creation is waiting. Waiting for what? The creation is frustrated. It is in bondage to decay. It groans as in the pains of childbirth. That is what the earthquakes, diseases and extreme weather events are. And the creation is waiting for these to be removed and its rebirth to take place. That will only happen when the children of God will be revealed. That is an amazing truth. It

means that the best thing you and I can do for the creation, is to communicate the Good News of Jesus Christ, so that more people will believe and become the children of God. It is good for us to take care of the environment – to avoid as much pollution as we can and to be good stewards of what God has placed us in charge of. After all, he does warn us that on the day of judgement, he will destroy those who destroy the earth (Revelation 11:18). But the best way for us to take care of the creation is to proclaim the Creator.

Gus Speth was a climate scientist founder and a former chairman of the Council on Environmental Quality. He gave this remarkable testimony: ‘I used to think that the top environmental problems were biodiversity loss, ecosystem collapse, and climate change. I thought that thirty years of good science could address these problems. I was wrong. The top environmental problems are selfishness, greed, and apathy, and to deal with these we need a cultural and spiritual transformation. And we scientists don’t know how to do that.’ But God does.

CONSIDER: Are you concerned about the environment and climate change? What do you think you can do? How can you help your friends who do not have the assurance that God has got the whole world in his hands? What is the bigger picture?

RECOMMENDED FURTHER READING:

A Different Shade of Green – Gordon Wilson

Apocalypse Never: Why Environmental Alarmism Hurts Us All – Michael Shellenberger (This is not a Christian book but it is full of stimulating information and practical ideas)

PRAYER: O Lord, we bless and praise your name that the earth is yours, and everything in it; the world, and all who live on it. (Psalm 24:1). We thank you that it is in your hands not ours. We ask O God, that you would enable us to be good stewards of your creation and that we would seek to communicate the Gospel all over the world so that your children will be revealed, and the creation ultimately set free, in Jesus Name, Amen.