

Global warming update July 2019

Network for Revival is based on a call by God to “make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” It is a call to seek to grow in holiness, faith and intercession, in preparation for Revival. But this is meant to be in a prophetic context: seeing the trends in our society and the world in the light of Jesus’ predictions about trends in the End Times and his Return, whilst avoiding naïve assumptions about fulfilment of prophecy. This article is about one of the serious trends in our society and the world. It should encourage us to re-double our prayers for Revival which will cause important changes in public opinion.

Some people don’t accept that major global warming is taking place or that it will lead to devastating consequences in the long run. However, as we shall see, the evidence seems overwhelming. Others might feel confident that we will be able to stop global warming. If that is the case, it is a temporary phenomenon and so not an ultimately devastating sign of the End Times. However, given the failings in human nature: selfishness, putting profits and economic benefits above human welfare, together with powerful climate change deniers, it would be very unwise to think devastation will not happen.

Economic opposition to climate change reports

One example is that Donald Trump has pulled the USA out of the Paris Climate Change Treaty. In June 2019 White House officials were reported to have cut out several pages of a report on global warming because it contradicted the administration’s view on the subject.

Saudi Arabia (together with the US, Russia and Iran) succeeded in getting an important report from the UN’s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) removed from international negotiations about limiting global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees. Yet the report included the results of more than 6,000 scientific studies. These countries, of course, have huge investment in fossil fuels.

On a similar level, it was revealed in 2018 that the Shell Oil Company knew from its scientists back in 1984 that global warming was happening and that the company was responsible for 4% of global carbon emissions. They predicted radical changes in sea level and weather. But at the time they said that “by the time the global warming becomes detectable it could be too late to take effective countermeasures to reduce the effects or even to stabilise the situation.” However in the 1990s Shell stressed the weaknesses of the scientific case.

Climate Change denial

Nigel Lawson, a leading British climate change denier, claimed that global temperatures have fallen in the last decade. But his think tank, the Global Warming Policy Foundation, has now admitted that his claim was based on an “erroneous” temperature chart.

For a long time, climate change deniers have pointed out that satellite data shows lower temperatures than those taken on the ground. However new research has now explained this. The orbit of satellites gradually decays due to friction with the earth’s orbit and this changes the time they pass over a particular spot. Scientists have discovered that some satellites have fairly large orbital drifts, going from measuring temperatures at 2pm to 6pm or 8pm, which, of course, affects the temperatures.

It has long been claimed that the rate of global warming has slowed down in recent years. But after re-evaluation, scientists have said that what looked like a pause in temperatures between 1998 and 2014 didn’t seem to have happened at all.

Effects of Global Warming

It is clear that drought, extreme temperatures, storms, floods, landslides and wildfires are rising in frequency. But there are other effects as well.

Rises in sea level

Scientists are warning that global warming is moving towards temperatures last seen in the interglacial era when sea levels were 20-30 higher than today. Over 90% of the heat caused by global warming has been absorbed by the seas.

If greenhouse gas emissions are not halved by 2030 we could lose every coral reef, the Arctic ice and see many island communities destroyed. Even London could be flooded.

Experts at Liverpool University who have analysed lake sediment in Cumbria say that the floods of 2009 and 2015 were the worst for 550 years.

Arctic ice melting

One of the main indicators of global warming is, of course, the melting of Arctic ice. The US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration reports that parts of the Arctic were some 11 degrees C warmer than they were in the late 20th century because the region experienced “extreme record temperature anomalies.” They added “Arctic temperatures continue to increase at double the rate of the global temperature increase.” This affects the weather in the northern hemisphere and could have catastrophic results. Scientists predict that this century the Arctic could be more or less free of ice for the first time in 100,000 years.

Permafrost in the Canadian Arctic has been thawing at levels between 150-240% above historic levels. When permafrost thaws, it allows dead vegetation and the dead bodies of countless millions of animals contained in the ice to decompose. This releases methane and carbon dioxide which adds to global warming, causing more permafrost to melt.

Professor Peter Wadhams, of Cambridge University, said a far bigger threat is posed by methane trapped in the frozen sea bed of the Arctic, which is already being released as the sea ice on the surface melts.

However Mike Pompeo, US Secretary of State, told a meeting of the Arctic Council in May 2019 that melting of the ice caps presents “new opportunities for trade” as it reduces the travel time between Asia and the West.

Extreme weather

For a long time scientists have been predicting that climate change would cause extreme weather and now they say this is coming true. There have been extreme storms and heatwaves in many places. Prof Michael Mann of Penn State University, a very eminent climate scientist, said “This is the face of climate change. We literally would not have seen these extremes in the absence of climate change.” Prof Rowan Sutton, of the University of Reading agreed: “No one should be in the slightest surprised that we are seeing very serious heatwaves and associated impacts in many parts of the world.” Paulo Ceppi, of Imperial College London, predicted more severe storms. “There is a direct link between global warming and cyclone intensity.” In March 2019 Cyclone Idai, which ravaged Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe, was described as the worst weather-related disaster to hit the southern hemisphere. More than 2 million people were affected. Storm-surge floods up to six metres high caused widespread devastation.

17 of the 18 hottest years recorded since 1850 have occurred since 2000. There have been unprecedented wildfires, superstorms and floods. Record temperatures have scorched countries in the Middle East. Climate experts warn that there is worse to come. U.N. officials and climate scientists predict that the region’s rapidly growing populations will face extreme water scarcity and temperatures almost too hot for human survival.

The Lancet medical journal says there has been a 46% increase in extreme weather disasters since 2000

Social effects of global warming

David Attenborough has said about global warming “If we don't take action, the collapse of our civilisations and the extinction of much of the natural world is on the horizon. The people have spoken: leaders of the world, you must lead, the continuation of our civilisations and the natural world upon which we depend are in your hands. For many people, regions and even countries, this is already a matter of life and death.”

Many more refugees

A report from Cornell University predicted that by 2100 2 billion people (one-fifth of the global population), who live on coastlines, could become refugees because of rising sea levels. The World Bank predicted that by 2050 over 143 million people could become refugees in sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and Latin America because of water scarcity, crop failure, sea-level rise and storm surges, all of which are linked with the changing climate. Barack Obama has warned that climate change could create a refugee crisis that is “unprecedented in human history.”

Danger of war

Military activity has increased in the Arctic for two reasons. One is the new potential for quicker trade routes now the ice is receding. The other is that there are huge natural resources beneath the currently frozen surface. Russia has already claimed an area beneath the North Pole which is rich in oil and gas. The Global Military Advisory Council has stated “Climate change is the greatest security threat of the 21st century.” A 2015 UK Foreign Office report predicted the increased risk of terrorism when states fail as a result of the effects of global warming.

A NATO special report called climate change the ultimate “threat multiplier.” It pointed out that droughts cause serious shortages in poor, arid countries and this could lead to disputes and violent conflicts over scarce resources. Scientist Peter Gleick, who co-authored the report, noted that “migrating populations in search of more benevolent environmental and social conditions may undermine regional peace and security ... the era of the Cold War may soon be replaced by the era of environmental conflict.”

Crop failure

The London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine warns that the crops of vegetables such as soy beans and lentils could reduce by over a third by 2050 because of climate change, and this could have a negative effect on public health. Prof Chang-Eui Park of the Southern University of Science and Technology in China has produced a report predicting that up to 30% of the Earth’s surface could become arid if global temperatures rise 2 degrees C.

Heat deaths

Christiana Figueres in the Lancet medical journal writes that climate change is already adversely affecting the health of millions of people. She outlines the causes - rising temperatures are hastening the spread of infectious diseases; crop yields are becoming uneven and unpredictable, worsening the hunger and malnourishment for some of the most vulnerable people on the planet; allergy seasons are getting longer; and at times it is simply too hot for farmers to work in the fields.

Scientists in the European Commission, chaired by Professor Camilo Mora, of the University of Hawaii at Manoa, predict that over 150,000 people could die as a result of climate change each year in Europe by the end of the century because of heatstroke, heart and breathing problems, and flash flooding.

Disease

We have already noted that when permafrost thaws, it allows dead vegetation and the dead bodies of countless millions of animals contained in the ice to decompose. This can spread disease. In 2016 an anthrax outbreak in Northern Russia came from a 75-year-old caribou carcass thawing out. It caused the death of a 12-year-old boy and his grandmother and put 90 people in the hospital. The anthrax spores (not seen in the Arctic since 1941) also spread to 2,300 caribou. Russian troops trained in biological warfare were sent to evacuate hundreds of the indigenous, nomadic people and quarantine the disease. There has also been concern that smallpox – eradicated in 1977 – could return after the virus’s DNA was found in the frozen bodies of historic victims.

Conclusion

We do not know how well humanity will respond to the dangers of global warming but it would be naïve to assume all will be well. The signs are not very encouraging. It could very easily become apocalyptic – a word used by scientists and others to describe it, and appropriate to the NT predictions of the End Times.