

# Climate Change

A biblical perspective  
on the controversy



**Answers**  
IN GENESIS®

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Interior Design: Michaela Duncan

Editing: Ryan Freeman

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# Introduction

Climate change is a controversial subject that is often misunderstood, both by scientists and the public. There is no doubt that it has become the number one environmental issue of the twenty-first century. But what is a Christian to think of climate change? Does the Bible have anything to say about environmental issues? What does the science actually tell us about climate change? Are we on the brink of global disasters and irreversible damage to our environment? Should we take immediate, drastic measures to decrease our “carbon footprint”?

This pocket guide answers those questions. Here you will find a discussion of what the Bible has to say about our relationship with creation and how a Christian should approach environmental issues such as climate change. We will also examine the evidence for and against man-caused global warming.

More than ever, Christians need to think biblically about every area of our lives. We must examine everything carefully in light of God’s Word and respond appropriately. It is our prayer that this pocket guide will help you do just that.



# Global Warming— Normal in an Abnormal World

by Ken Ham

We live in an abnormal world because the once-perfect creation is now affected by sin and the curse: “For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now” (Romans 8:22).

Whether a person is a Christian or non-Christian, a creationist or evolutionist, all believe in various (even dramatic) times of climate change over the earth’s history.

However, there are disagreements—not over the fact of climate change, but over other questions:

- When did the change(s) occur?
- What type of change(s) occurred and to what extent?
- What caused the change(s)?
- Can humans do anything to stop or reverse the effects of such climate change?

Today scientists and politicians heatedly debate man’s role in climate change (d, above). But if their starting assumptions about (a), (b), and (c) are wrong, there is a very real danger that they will make very bad decisions. The problem is especially acute if they assume that climate has changed slowly over millions of years until man’s recent appearance on earth (especially modern industry) dramatically sped up the change.

As a biblical creationist, let me give a big-picture overview of climate change based on earth's history as revealed in God's Word. I postulate that the earth's climate has gone through four major periods of change, and a fifth change is coming. In every case, humans did not produce the change directly.

## **Original Creation: Perfect Harmony**

God created a perfect world in six days (Genesis 1:31; Exodus 20:11). This took place about six thousand years ago.

On the fourth day of the creation week, we read: "And God said, 'Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years'" (Genesis 1:14). Now, the primary reason for today's four seasons is the earth's tilt as it revolves around the sun. Assuming the earth had a similar tilt when created, such seasonal changes would have occurred from the beginning.

Although the word for "seasons" in Genesis 1 encompasses various special times, such as harvest and festivals, it can also include the periods we call seasons today (summer, fall, winter, spring). Presumably, had the earth remained in its perfect state, there still would have been the four seasons, but regular and in perfect harmony, with no extremes that would cause harm to life or the earth.

## **First Change: Groaning Creation**

However, the situation did not remain perfect because the first man, Adam, rebelled against the Creator, resulting in all of creation suffering from the effects of sin and the curse (Genesis 3:17; Romans 8:20–22).

The Bible does not reveal much about the world before Noah's flood. We don't know to what extent the climate



was affected. No doubt changes did occur since our Creator God no longer upheld the world in a perfect state.

## **Second Change: Global Flood**

The most significant climate change recorded in the Bible occurred during the time of Noah (and we could postulate this to be the second climate period in biblical history).

The fountains of the deep burst forth, and the windows of heaven opened to pour rain on the earth (Genesis 7:11). Such a dramatic, global flood would not only revolutionize the earth's climate at that time but also have an ongoing effect on the climate ever since. New mountain ranges (Psalm 104:8–9) and the rearrangement of the continents, for example, would result in different weather patterns.

Those who reject the reality of the global flood will never understand most of the conditions that produced the major climate changes in the past and their influence upon the present.

Even though Noah's flood dramatically changed the earth's climate, at the end of the flood God made a promise to future generations: "While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease" (Genesis 8:22). Nothing that happens to the climate, and nothing man can do, will change this. God's promise will remain true (see Jeremiah 33:20–21).

So regardless of what climate change occurs, day and night and seasons will continue until the final judgment.

## **Third Change: Cooling Earth**

The next major climate change occurred over the next few hundred years as a result of the flood of Noah's day: "From

whose womb did the ice come forth, and who has given birth to the frost of heaven?” (Job 38:29).

Biblical creationists believe the unique conditions of the flood generated earth’s one and only ice age. At the end of the flood, cool land, warm water, and ash in the atmosphere from volcanic eruptions caused a cooling effect.<sup>1</sup> Creation scientists estimate that this ice age peaked around 500 years after the flood.

## **Fourth Change: Warming Earth**

After the ice age peaked, and as the earth began to settle down from the devastating effects of the flood, the earth began to warm, and the ice age receded. The melting ice caused the ocean level to rise. The oceans eventually reached a relatively stable temperature so that climate fluctuations became less severe.

We currently live in a period of relatively minor fluctuation.

Ever since the flood, we have seen an unsettled earth in its sin-cursed state. Many smaller climate changes have occurred, such as seven years of drought and famine in Joseph’s day.

Many people consider that mankind has contributed significantly to climate change—though a proper understanding of the evidence does not favor such a suggestion.

Even if mankind’s impact on climate is small, this does not mean that we should not look after our environment. To the contrary, we need to do the best we can to use the environment for man’s good and God’s glory as stewards of what God has entrusted to us. Good stewardship requires us to avoid rash decisions based on inconclusive evidence.

## Final Change

A fifth period of major climate change is coming—the final and most dramatic change: “But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed” (2 Peter 3:10).

After this time Christians will live in new heavens and a new earth that will remain perfect forever (2 Peter 3:13). No more will climate hurt the earth and life, for the Lord will again uphold the earth in a perfect state (Revelation 21:4, 22:3).

Those who reject the Bible cannot truly understand how climate change fits into the real history of the earth, including the biblical timeline over six thousand years and God’s judgment during the flood. Climate change is normal in an abnormal world. Until people are prepared to accept why this world is abnormal—because of sin—they will not be able to properly understand climate change and respond appropriately.

**Ken Ham is CEO and founder of Answers in Genesis–US, the highly acclaimed Creation Museum, and the world-renowned Ark Encounter. He is one of the most in-demand Christian speakers in North America.**

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1 For details, see “A Dark and Stormy World,” *Answers*, Oct.–Dec. 2008, [AnswersInGenesis.org/geology/catastrophism/a-dark-and-stormy-world/](http://AnswersInGenesis.org/geology/catastrophism/a-dark-and-stormy-world/)



# Science Confirms Climate Change!

by Avery Foley

Did you know that what you believe about origins will affect how you view climate change?

Up until recent times, we heard certain politicians and others warning about global warming. But one hasn't heard that term for quite a while now—and with the recent wintery weather in the United States, global warming would not be the way to describe what's happening. The term we hear now is “climate change.”

Over the last few decades, there has been much debate over the topic of climate change.

Is it real? What or who is causing it? Should we be concerned? There is evidence that climate change is indeed a real phenomenon. There was a period of global warming during the medieval days which dropped into a cooling trend known as the “Little Ice Age.” For the past 400 years, temperatures have been slowly climbing up from that chilly dip. But, while the evidence<sup>1</sup> shows that there has been and still is change in the climate, the evidence does not speak for itself about what this change means. The data must be interpreted. How should Bible-believing Christians interpret this evidence?

## Your Worldview Determines Your Interpretation

We have emphasized many times the vital distinction between observational and historical science in the creation-evolution debate. But this contrast is also

foundational to properly understanding the climate change debate. Observational science works in the present. It is observable, testable, and repeatable. But historical science deals with the past and, therefore, is not directly observable, testable, or repeatable. How you interpret the observational science will be based on what you believe about historical science. Do you start with man's word that the universe has been around for billions of years and that the present is the key to the past? Or do you start with God's Word that teaches a young universe and an earth that was radically altered by a recent global flood? Which worldview you start with is going to determine how you view and interpret the observational science.

This is certainly true in the climate change debate. The observational evidence shows that climate change is real. But how we interpret the data about climate change will be influenced by our starting point: man's word or God's Word?

## **According to Man's Word**

Secularists believe that earth has existed for billions of years and that earth's temperature has been stable for over 10,000 years, since the end of the last supposed glacial period. Since the observational science shows that earth's climate is now changing, these secularists assume that human activity must be the cause of this change. If this is true, then a changing climate is understandably a concern for them. But this model is built on unprovable assumptions about earth's history. The methods such as tree ring<sup>2</sup> and ice core<sup>3</sup> dating that are used to give these stable temperature readings are also fraught with unprovable assumptions. These assumptions reject the eyewitness account of earth's history that God has given us in his Word.

## According to God's Word

If we start with God's Word, we get a very different picture of earth's history. According to the Bible's history, the earth is not billions of years old but only about 6,000 years old. Originally, there was a perfect creation (Genesis 1:31), which would have included a perfect climate. However, this climate was radically changed when the surface of earth was destroyed, reshaped, and rearranged by the global flood of Noah's day around 4,300 years ago. As the earth was settling from the flood, there was a transitional climate which included an ice age<sup>4</sup> that covered 30% of the earth's surface in ice. This transitional climate slowly gave way to the present climate as the earth evened out from the aftereffects of the flood. Therefore, starting with a biblical model for earth's history, we should expect variations in climate and temperature.

So should we be alarmed about climate change? Not at all. Yes, climate change is real, but according to the true history book of the universe, we should expect it as a consequence of the cataclysmic flood. Also, earth—and earth's climate—was designed by the all-knowing, all-wise Creator God. He built an incredible amount of variety into the DNA of his creatures so that they could survive and thrive as earth's environments change. Surely the God who equipped life to survive on a changing earth also designed earth with the necessary features to deal with environmental changes. After the flood, God even promised Noah that the climate would remain within acceptable ranges:

While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease.  
(Genesis 8:22)

Starting with God's Word, variations in the climate should not alarm us. If you start with man's assumptions about the past, man must be directly responsible for recent

changes in climate. But starting with the Bible's history, it's obvious that man's recent activity is not directly responsible for global climate change issues. However, man and his wickedness were responsible for bringing God's judgment of the flood that radically changed the climate. So, in a sense, people who lived over 3,000 years ago are at least in part responsible for climate change. But we shouldn't be overly concerned about climate change because it has been happening since the time of the flood.

## **So Do Creationists Deny Climate Change?**

While here at Answers in Genesis we have made it clear in articles and in media interviews that we do not deny climate change, secularists are constantly accusing us of refusing to acknowledge climate change. We do not deny climate change. The observational evidence for variations in temperature is real. What we do deny is the worldview-based assumptions that determine secular scientists' interpretations and conclusions about the evidence. Just like in the creation-evolution and age-of-the-earth debates, your starting point determines your interpretation of the evidence. If you start from the perspective that earth is billions of years old and that earth's temperature has been stable for over 10,000 years, you will reach an entirely different conclusion than if you start with a belief in a young earth radically reshaped by a global flood.

## **What Should Our Response Be?**

Mankind was given dominion over the earth (Genesis 1:28), but proper stewardship of what God has given us means that we need to take care of the earth. But we should never regard caring for the earth over caring for the people that inhabit the earth. Mankind—not the earth—is made in God's image (Genesis 1:27) and is therefore precious. God cares about nature but cares far more about



people (Matthew 12:6–7). Many of the measures that climate change alarmists propose, such as drastic changes in energy uses, will have far-reaching effects on the less fortunate. It is therefore vital that we examine the worldview-based assumptions behind the interpretation of climate change before we make decisions about human behavior.

As Christians, we need to start with God's Word, not man's word, when it comes to earth's history. God was there in the beginning, and since he does not lie (Titus 1:2), we know that the record that he has given us in his Word is the true account of earth's history.

Yes, your starting point for your worldview (God's Word or man's word) will affect how you view climate change!

**Avery Foley is a writer for Answers in Genesis from Ontario, Canada. She holds an MA in theological studies from Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary.**

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- 1 See [answersingenesis.org/environmental-science/climate-change/should-we-be-concerned-about-climate-change/](http://answersingenesis.org/environmental-science/climate-change/should-we-be-concerned-about-climate-change/).
  - 2 See [icr.org/article/tree-rings-biblical-chronology/](http://icr.org/article/tree-rings-biblical-chronology/).
  - 3 See [answersingenesis.org/environmental-science/ice-age/do-ice-cores-show-how-many-tens-of-thousands-of-years/](http://answersingenesis.org/environmental-science/ice-age/do-ice-cores-show-how-many-tens-of-thousands-of-years/).
  - 4 See [answersingenesis.org/environmental-science/ice-age/where-does-the-ice-age-fit/](http://answersingenesis.org/environmental-science/ice-age/where-does-the-ice-age-fit/).

