
Climate Change: How Should We Respond as Disciples?



For many young people, and many older people too, the threat of climate change is certainly concerning. For young people especially, the prospect of environmental destruction is most alarming when it threatens our prospects of enjoying long and stable lives. Some have even questioned whether it is appropriate to raise children, knowing the dire state of the climate. Australia's Bureau of Meteorology reports that warming of up to 1.75 degrees Celsius over the last century has caused significant heat events over land and sea. NASA estimates that sea levels along the United States coastline could rise by 12 inches (30 centimetres) by 2050, posing challenges for coastal communities, anxious about the risk of increased flooding. These are just some examples of the consequences of man-made environmental change.

Despite these worrying statistics, there appears to be little effort to change from those with real decision-making power. Business CEOs and politicians alike continue to endorse unsustainable and damaging practices and policies; such people do not care about the planet, but instead care about lining their own pockets. Worse still, the capitalist system itself can be seen to preference methods which damage the environment. It is the most efficient who are rewarded, not necessarily the most conscientious.

I have often been stunned by the carelessness with which people act. How many people can so flippantly, and knowingly, damage the environment, in the name of profit. I find it saddening that the world which God designed has been discarded so readily.

How are we to respond? Is there comfort for us who are anxious about the environment? The environment has value, not only for the utility it provides for us, but also in and of itself. Creation, as the Psalmist David records, declares God's glory (Psalm 19:1). Being exposed to the wonders of nature can be truly sublime; it can inspire a keen sense of awe and wonder. **How are we to respond to the planet's careless destruction?**

First, I should establish that I firmly believe we do have a responsibility to care for the environment. God instructed Adam and Eve, in Genesis 2:15, to tend and keep the Garden of Eden. The Hebrew word for 'keep' is *shaw-mar'*, meaning to protect, or guard. God instructed Adam and Eve to protect His creation. I see no reason why this commandment cannot also extend to us; we too should strive to keep and protect God's creation. It is clearly something worth cultivating and safeguarding.

Furthermore, I believe that when we consider God's intention for His creation, that He wanted it to be respected. In the Book of Job, Chapters 38 to 41, God presents His creation to Job, a *tour de force*. God

outlines the majesty and intricacy of His handiwork, and the precision and care with which He designed it. I am sure God does not want us to exploit and abuse the environment, but instead, treat it with respect.

Interestingly, God's care for the environment is hinted at in the Book of Jonah. What we often dismiss as a 'throw away line' in Chapter 4:11, actually reveals God's love for the environment. God speaks to Jonah, asking why he should not care for Nineveh, when it contained some 120,000 people, "and also many animals." God relented from destroying Nineveh because of the people's repentance, but also because of his compassion for the people *and animals* within the city.

This leads well into the second point for consideration. **How can we alleviate our anxieties about our planet's future?** Well clearly from this verse in Jonah, God does care about the environment. We should not be mistaken, and think the planet's destruction does not go unnoticed. God clearly does consider the environment. Christ says so in Matthew 10:29 – "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care."

We should first take comfort in knowing that God does care for his planet.

We can find comfort also in knowing God's plan for restoration. We should not think God will sit idly, and leave his creation to be destroyed. The Book of Revelation makes clear how God will restore the earth. Chapter 22:1-3 reads:

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

When God establishes his Kingdom, however it is manifest physically, these verses indicate how God will restore the Earth to its former state. There will be clean flowing water, and flowering trees. There will no longer be the greed which has led to so much environmental degradation. We will no longer fear for our planet's future. It will be made perfect again, as God had intended. We long for that day.

Included below are some additional articles which may be of interest in those who wish to read further about our Christian duty to the environment.

<https://www.pressjournal.org/tom-gaston>

Also, published exclusively in Adelphicare, is an article by Brother Carl Bundesen about his relationship with the environment, and its significance to him. I hope in reading this piece, you will be come to a greater appreciation of the environment, and marvel further at the wonders of God.

https://www.adelphicare.org/documents/072_water.pdf

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