

Climate Change and the Way of Jesus

Genesis 1:26-28 | Dave Geldart | November 14, 2021

1. (Show edited Radical Jesus intro vid)
 - a. That was weird!
 - i. If you've been with us through this series, you know that's not the typical background music we've used for that intro video.
 - b. This piece was uncomfortable.....Disorienting
 - c. As we've engaged with topics in this series from vaccines to women leading and racism
 - i. It's likely that at some point you've felt disoriented
 - ii. Maybe even anxious or nervous
 - iii. That's OK!
2. That piece of music was composed a few years ago by a sonification artist named Chris Chafe
 - a. He's the director for Stanford's Center for Computer Research in Music and Acoustics
 - b. He, together with 3 UC Berkeley grad students, took 1200 years of annual average global temps and CO2 concentrations in the atmosphere starting in the middle ages 850ad
 - c. And turned that data into notes, help us process it in a different way (numbers can be jellifying)
 - d. Let's listen again, now knowing what we're listening to.
 - e. The plucky notes are the temperatures, and the background drone sound is the CO2 concentrations
 - f. For the sake of time, we're cutting 850AD-1675 since it sounds nearly monotonous. Things were fairly stable that 800 yrs. Music don't really start changing until the late 1700s with the industrial revolution. And widespread deforestation in Europe.
 - i. The biggest shift occurs in the late 1900s as the tune becomes a chaotic high-pitched wail
 1. Not because of the artist's bias, but based on simple peer-reviewed data
 - ii. Video begins at 1675, 55 years after the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock
 - g. PLAY video
 - i. <https://www.kqed.org/science/1918660/listen-1200-years-of-earths-climate-transformed-into-sound>
3. Today we're looking at the topic of Climate Change and the Way of Jesus.
 - a. A topic that can be extremely disorienting!
 - b. I grew up with both Captain Planet AND an "it's all going to burn anyways" mentality – generally from church messaging (not sure if I ever specifically heard that though).
4. Outline: Roadmap:
 - a. To help us understand this topic a little better, we're going to begin by looking at the current issue surrounding climate change and Global warming. Understanding the major factors .
 - b. Then we'll dive headlong into the Bible, to see what God says, so we can discern how to follow the way of Jesus with Climate Change.
 - i. Because we believe that God has actually spoken to us through his World – timely and timeless truth that applies to our life today.
 - ii. **Isaiah 40:8 – The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.**
5. Basic Issue:

- a. The climate is changing.
 - i. Weather = local short term, variable. Changes all the time. Hard to predict.
 - ii. CLIMATE is longer term, global in scope, and is relatively easy to predict.
- b. Global temperatures are increasing at a rapid rate not seen in the last 500,000 yrs. Since the Industrial Revolution and especially in the last 50 yrs.
- c. At the same time, greenhouse gasses like CO₂ and methane are increasing in the atmosphere at historically unprecedented rates
 - i. Last time CO₂ levels were this high was 3 million yrs ago (pre-humans!)
- d. Greenhouse gasses are driving the change.
 - i. Biggest are CO₂ and Methane
 - ii. Both significantly traps more heat in from the sun and reflects it back to earth
- e. All or nearly all of this CO₂ spike is from human activity, specifically the burning of carbon-rich fossil fuels. Which when burned, combines with oxygen to make CO₂ gas.
- f. The current warming rate is alarming because of how it will affect not only the environment, but also humanity.
 - i. Even a few degrees of global warming has significant impact (much like a fever in your body)
 - ii. Biggest: hotter temperatures lead to
 - 1. Melting polar ice which raise in sea levels
 - a. Leading to widespread flooding of lower lying populated areas
 - 2. Greater frequency of severe weather
 - a. Once in a 100 yrs storms now coming once every 10 yrs.
 - b. Moving the bell curve to the right**
 - c. Longer and hotter heat waves and droughts
 - i. Less fresh water access for regions that rely on snowmelt
 - ii. More water needed for crops
 - iii. Disruption to food sources
 - 3. Disruption to crop and wildlife
 - a. Many crops not resistant to change
 - b. Oceans absorb 30% of CO₂ in atmosphere – acidification
 - i. Killing coral reefs and disrupting habitats for 1000s of marine species
 - ii. Including the fish we eat
 - iii. Its complex and interrelated. And it will affect countries and societies unevenly
 - 1. Both geographically and socioeconomically
 - 2. Richer societies will be able to adjust much easier than poorer societies
- g. And all of this leads to significant social and welfare disruption globally with projected mass displacement and migrations away from unsafe or unsustainable residences to other regions.
 - i. A recognized threat to national security and global stability identified by the Dep of Defense
- h. In fact, the majority of world governments see climate change and its likely effects on humans to be a significantly pressing issue.

- i. The United Nations Climate Change Conference, COP26 global summit just concluded
 - ii. Major aim is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions so that the rate of change slows and levels out before we experience most of the major environmental effects
- i. In short, if most world governments think climate change is a real and pressing issue that they're willing to put significant moneys behind, that's worth paying attention to.
- 6. My main goal is NOT primarily to convince you that climate change is real or human caused (though there seems to be good evidence for this). But it is important that we seriously investigate these things so we can engage well and factually with others. Especially those not in the household of faith. Many don't investigate credible evidence from experts in the field with peer reviewed and reproduced research, and can unwittingly put a stumbling block in the way of others taking seriously the claims of Jesus and the Bible. Especially when Scripture is brought in.
- 7. St Augustine famously said it well, around 400 AD, writing about the need for Christians to be basically scientifically aware and competent for intelligent discourse:
 - a. "Usually, even a non-Christian knows something about the earth, the heavens, and the other elements of the world... about the kinds of animals, shrubs, stones, and so forth.... Now, it is a disgraceful and dangerous thing for an infidel to hear a Christian, presumably giving the meaning of Holy Scripture, talking nonsense on these topics; and we should take all means to prevent such an embarrassing situation, in which people show up vast ignorance in a Christian and laugh it to scorn. The shame is not so much that an ignorant individual is derided, but that people outside the household of faith think our sacred writers held such opinions, and, to the great loss of those for whose salvation we toil, the writers of our Scripture are criticized and rejected as unlearned men. If they find a Christian mistaken in a field which they themselves know well and hear him maintaining his foolish opinions about our books, how are they going to believe those books in matters concerning the resurrection of the dead, the hope of eternal life, and the kingdom of heaven...?"

8. WHAT IS THE WAY OF JESUS as we consider Climate Change?

- a. Genesis 1:26-28 (NIV)
- b. 26 Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."
27 So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.
28 God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."
- 9. God's word says here and throughout scripture that humans are the pinnacle of creation.
 - a. Special, uniquely created in God's image.
 - b. Not another smart animal, but categorically different. Greater in value.
 - i. Jesus himself teaches in Matthew 6:26 → Humans are more valuable than animals.

1. Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?
 - a. And are charged to be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it. Expand human civilization. And rule over all the creatures.
10. There's a common ditch – an unbiblical application of this:
11. (1) Humans are all that matters. It's all FOR US. We're justified in using the natural world/resources for whatever we want – NO MATTER THE COST
 - a. This has led to the much maligned Christian caricature as a selfish tyrant, wantonly paving over whatever habitat they are presented in order to build a strip mall. Dumping pollution in the rivers and driving gas guzzling trucks over top of bunny rabbits.
 - b. After all, we're in charge of creation, right? We're supposed to subdue it to our needs. It's for us!
 - c. But this would be a biblically impermissible interpretation
 - i. This passage comes right after God created everything out of nothing. As Psalm 24 states, the earth is THE LORDS and everything in it.
 - ii. God has charged humans to be STEWARDS over creation. Ruling and subduing it according to HIS PURPOSES
 1. Not like wrestling down a bucking bronco
 2. But gently, lovingly → cultivate
 - a. Kabash – gentle, nonviolent subduing → for greater good and shalom
 - iii. Additionally, God over and over affirms his care for earth's creatures
 1. Ps 50 – all the animals are MINE
 2. Prov 12:10-the righteous CARE FOR THEIR BEASTS
 3. God desires to preserve even animal life from the punishment due humans
 - a. Jonah 4:11, Gen 7:15
 - d. Our primary responsibility as good stewards of creation is to rule WELL to both promote the beauty and sustainability and care for the earth and plants and animals AND promote human flourishing.
 - i. Must be a BOTH AND --Not a 0 sum game!
12. (2) The flip side is its opposite: Humans are subservient to nature. Not special. In fact, humans are a plague to the planet! It's better off without us. The ideal is to reduce our footprint to 0 and let nature return to its virgin state – NO MATTER THE COST
 - a. I have some extended family that fall into this category
 - i. So concerned with keeping their carbon footprint a 0 that they won't ever travel to visit family.
 - ii. Won't let kids receive presents
 - iii. Berate others for traveling or using much electricity.
 - iv. Refuse to be hospitable in the name of "energy reduction"
 - v. They're thoroughly unloving and borderline abusive – all in the name of protecting the earth

- vi. This is essentially the character of the hyper-environmentalist. Putting environment ABOVE EVERYTHING – including relationships and care for others
- b. Some pro-environmentalist views are essentially anti-human. Seeing humans as a drain or cancer on the land. There is no foundation for this in Scripture. In fact the opposite is continually shown.
 - i. However, humans are rebuked and punished at times for their cruelty to animals and for failing to obey God’s commands to let the land rest periodically.
 - ii. The essential dignity of humans and the goodness of human life must be maintained as we pursue wise environmental stewardship.
 - 1. Dignity and value not just SOME humans
 - 2. But for all!
 - iii. Some who reject this vision as anthropocentric or speciesist
 - 1. Thinking it akin to racism – intolerantly promoting our species above any other
 - iv. Those who hold this view instead promote a biocentric alternative. But this humble sounding view is fatally flawed. Without human stewardship as biblically revealed, humans are merely another animal, no more important than any other. And thus retain NO stewardship. No authority nor responsibility to care for the environment or other creatures.
 - v. No, God’s called people to thrive and fill the earth, AND steward creation WELL
- 13. So clearly humans are tasked by God to steward and care for creation well, for the flourishing of both the earth and humanity.
 - a. That should be enough to get us actively engaged with the current concern over climate change and creation care!
- 14. I’d like to offer you an angle on this that’s been helpful to me personally as I continue to grow in engagement with the topic of climate change and environmental stewardship: HANG WITH ME:
- 15. Did you know that God’s plan for you isn’t to float around like an angel in heaven for eternity?
 - a. That your eternal destiny isn’t to leave the earth?
 - b. THIS IS A THOROUGHLY UNBIBLICAL IDEA! → though its tragically prevalent
- 16. Our eternal state is actually HERE.... On this planet. Forever.
 - a. In a physical embodied state in many ways as we live now.
 - b. On THIS earth. It will not be utterly destroyed, poofed out by Jesus at his return, and a new planet created again from scratch.
 - c. Do you see how this has SIGNIFICANT importance for our question about climate change and environmental stewardship!
- 17. Where do I get this from God’s Word?
 - a. Our eternal state is on THIS EARTH – not destroyed completely
 - i. “The righteous will possess the earth, and they will live forever on it.”—Psalm 37:29.
 - ii. “[God] has established the earth on its foundations; it will not be moved from its place forever and ever.”—Psalm 104:5.
 - iii. “The earth remains forever.”—Ecclesiastes 1:4.

18. But wait, what about the scriptures that say the earth will be destroyed by fire before Jesus returns to establish his eternal kingdom? And that he'll create a new earth?

Heaven & Earth seem to be destroyed:

- a. *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. (Revelation 21:1)*
 - b. *In the beginning you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. Like clothing you will change them and they will be discarded. (Psalm 102:25-26)*
 - c. [Jesus said,] "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away." (Luke 21:33)
 - d. 2 peter 3:6-7 6 By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. 7 By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.
 - e. ...10 The day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.
19. The word destroyed is the same word used in the hyperlinked passage about Noah's flood
- i. Destruction/destroyed -> same APOLEIAS
 - b. Earth's surface destroyed – by calamity/disaster
 - c. AND THE DESTRUCTION OF UNGODLY MANKIND
 - i. Evil/violent Human civilization wiped away
 - ii. But same planet!
 - iii. The world continued to EXIST after the flood, though dramatic destruction changed the surface and wiped out life (LAID BARE), many recognizable natural features
 - iv. But a family was saved through this destruction, to live on and refill the earth
 - v. Same after fire at the Day of the Lord
 - d. 3:10 – heavens will pass away
 - i. Pass away – pass out of sight, disappear (perspectival)
 - ii. Not annihilated, but changed, REDEEMED, RESURRECTED
20. Theologian Herman Bavnick, writing around 1900, said "God's honor consists precisely in the fact that he redeems and renews the same humanity, the same world, the same Heaven, and the same earth that have been corrupted and polluted by sin. Just as anyone in Christ is a new creation in whom the old has passed away and everything has become new (2 Corinthians 5:17), so this world passes away in its present form as well, in order out of its womb, at God's word of power, to give birth and being to a new world."
- a. *Alcorn, Randy. Heaven (Alcorn, Randy) (pp. 112-113). Tyndale House Publishers. Kindle Edition.*
21. So then, if this planet is our eternal home, it would be wise to do our best to steward it well now
- a. Secure in the knowledge that ultimate we can trust Jesus for complete restoration
22. And at the same time, THESE ARE TRAINING DAYS
- a. We're becoming who we'll be

- i. 1 Tim 4⁷⁻⁸ train yourself for godliness; ⁸for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.
 - b. In light of these realities, believers should do their best to live and steward NOW
 - i. 2 Tim 2:12 → if we endure, we will REIGN WITH HIM
23. We're training now to exercise our stewardship over creation WITH JESUS on the Renewed Earth
- a. YES, jesus is coming back
 - i. Yes creation is groaning
 - ii. Yes there is a great calamity coming
 - iii. And yes Jesus will put all things right
 - b. But we're right now. Right here. Charged with exercising Christlike reign NOW, to the best of our abilities
 - i. We are NOT called to resign ourselves to despair
 - ii. Nor to base gluttony that selfishly and hedonistically lives for self at all costs
 - c. NO, we're called to practice our godly stewardship NOW
 - i. To the best of our abilities
 - ii. To do our best to wisely care for creation NOW, based on the best information we have
 - iii. To care of the poor and disadvantaged now
 - iv. And for the responsible care of future generations
 - v. To make Christ proud, as it were
24. So circling back around to the original question, what does it look like for Christians to engage well with this climate change issue?
25. First, bring your eco-anxiety to God and let him teach you true Gospel-founded non-anxious living
- a. Could be eco anxiety from your fear that it's all real
 - i. OR fear that its not real!
 - b. Phil 4:6-7
 - i. Don't be anxious about anything, but (SINCE YOU ARE) BRING YOUR ANXIOUS THOUGHTS TO GOD THROUGH PRAYER
 - ii. So that you can live rooted in and guarded by his peace
 - iii. In the light of the truth of his ultimate care for you and creation
 - iv. Only from a place of God's peace and perspective will you be able to effectively steward creation well through the complex challenges
26. No matter what you believe about climate change, I believe we can all agree that Jesus would want us to prioritize care and concern for the poor and disempowered
- a. Locally and globally
 - b. This is a yesable proposition (#6 on the TIPS FOR WORKING ACROSS FACTIONS sheet)
 - c. A good heart-check question:
 - i. Would you be proud before Jesus about your engagement on this topic? About your decisions to care for the poor and oppressed

- ii. Micah 6:8 He has told you, O man, what is good;
and what does the LORD require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God?
 - d. A lifestyle of humble walking with God NECESSARILY INCLUDES DOING JUSTICE –
disadvantaging yourself for the advantage of others
 - i. And loving kindness
 - ii. More than mere humanly keepable niceness
 - iii. DEEP rich weighty kindness that looks in the eyes, holds a fragile heart, and meets
needs
 - iv. BEWARE that your perspective about the extent of climate change would cause you
to unwittingly neglect God’s call on your life to embrace self-giving justice and
kindness, especially toward the disadvantaged
27. For some this will include activism, advocating for justice and care for our fellow man through
environmental policy
- a. For others it may look like more directly caring for the poorer in more ecologically unstable
areas around the world
 - i. Giving what we can, so that everyone has enough
 - b. Others might feel led to engage more directly with poorer and disadvantaged in our
community
 - c. There will be MANY WAYS you can exercise your Christ-empowered creative stewardship.
ALL ARE NEEDED!
28. Since the majority of scientific evidence leads to genuine concern about global warming and how it
will adversely effect people around the world for generations to come, we’d be wise rulers-in-
training to take steps to help understand and mitigate the risk, especially in light of the poorer
around the world who won’t be able to adjust to climate change like us rich westerners.
29. Over 20% of US carbon emissions are directly connected to the home
- a. The biggest portion being utilities – heating and cooling
 - i. Changing your ac or heater settings by a few degrees makes a significant difference.
 - ii. Less electricity (or gas), less fossil fuels burned to provide it
 - b. Transportation is also a big slice
 - i. Drive a little less (carpool more)
 - c. 40% of all food produced in the US goes to waste
 - i. Spoilage or overages tossed in the trash
 - ii. Reduce your food waste!
 - 1. Order smaller portions (more realistic)
 - 2. Use leftovers
 - 3. Shop smaller more frequently
 - a. And get perishables that can freeze well
 - d. Recycle well
 - i. Its not the end all silver bullet we’d hoped, but it is worth it, especially since it’s such
high cost-benefit ratio
 - ii. BUT learn how to do it WELL

1. Check with your provider for instructions
 2. LOTS of the inefficiencies in recycling are connected to ppl recycling things that their facilities can't process.
 - a. Jams up the machines, takes lots of time and energy to sort
30. Consider consciously reducing (even slightly) your consumerism.
- a. What and how much you buy
 - b. Helps you practice the heart of a steward vs an owner
 - c. Also indirectly cuts down on climate change factors.
 - d. Could try skipping a few purchases a month – saving that money instead and sending it to help the poor around the world.
31. Plant a garden
- a. Surprisingly the benefits of even a small garden are profound, practically and psychologically
 - b. In our modern urbanized, supplychain world, cultivating a garden, planting, growing, and eating the fruit of the ground, helps reconnect us to the reality of our miraculous dependence on the earth for our sustenance. Helps you grow in awareness of and gratitude for the earth as God's gift that we'd be wise to nurture – for our own good!
 - i. Talk more with Taylor or Mary McFall about this one!
32. Cultivate a biblical perspective about the resurrection – of humanity and the earth!
- a. SHARE THAT HOPE with others – the GOSPEL
 - i. For many without a relationship with God through Jesus, their only hope is in the earth. They have no higher power.
 - ii. So as the climate changes and the environment gets disrupted, this is a great window of opportunity to show them the hope we have in Christ
 - b. That God's heart is for salvation and redemption
 - c. He doesn't want to toss away, but to heal and redeem
 - d. Not just the earth
 - i. BUT YOU. Them
 - ii. The greatest gift you can give your neighbor is the hope and DEMONSTRATION of the Gospel of Jesus through your peace and your passion!
 - iii. → Invitation to respond today!
 - iv. Phil 2:3-11
 1. ³Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.
 - a. REGARDLESS OF WHAT YOU THINK ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE!
 2. ⁵Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

v. THIS is what it means to be a good ruler.

33. This is the way of Jesus. May God grant us the courage and compassion to follow him today in our world.

34. Apostles Creed

- a. **I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,**
- b. **who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,**
- c. **born of the Virgin Mary,**
- d. **suffered under Pontius Pilate,**
- e. **was crucified, died, and was buried;**

- f. **On the third day he rose again;**
- g. **he ascended into heaven,**
- h. **he is seated at the right hand of the Father,**
- i. **and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

- j. **I believe in the Holy Spirit,**
- k. **the holy *catholic Church,**
- l. **the communion of saints,**
- m. **the forgiveness of sins,**
- n. **the resurrection of the body,**
- o. **and the life everlasting. AMEN**

35. Lord's Supper

- a. We are united across time and place with Christfollowers not only in the creed but also in celebrating the Lord's Supper
- b. By taking the cup and the bread, you're publicly proclaiming your trust in Jesus's body and blood shed on the cross to save you from your sins, reconnect you with the Father, and resurrect your body to live forever with God and other believers, on the new merger of heaven and earth.
- c. Come down the center aisles in two lines and return to your seats on the side
- d. Once you've reflected and thanked God, you can take the cup and bread on your own.
- e. I encourage you to keep your eyes open, to also remind you how you're vitally connected with brothers and sisters in Christ.
- f. We're in this together!