

Our Changing Climate

***“Have you entered
the storehouses of
the snow, Or have
you seen the
storehouses of the
hail, Which I have
reserved for the
time of distress,
For the day of war
and battle?”***

***—Job 38:22,23, New
American Standard
Version***

GOD ANSWERED JOB OUT

of the whirlwind (Job 38:1) with wondrous and unsearchable wisdom, by asking whether his servant was present to witness the foundations of the earth as they were being laid, or if he was there when the seas were ultimately contained in their basins. (vss. 4,8) Job evidently understood and appreciated the impor-

tance of these, as well as the other questions posed to him in the context of this scripture, as it is revealed in his answer which was given later. “I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee.” (Job 42:2) In the words of this ancient scriptural passage, we see the eternal and manifest purpose of God as it describes the preparation of earth as a home for the human family. Its inspiring message is directed to the inquiring and reverent mind of his servant Job.

SYMBOLS USED IN THE BIBLE

Various elements of the earth are used in the Holy Scriptures to serve as symbols. They are often used to describe prophetic events, and particularly those events that are to occur at the end of the present Gospel Age. Students of the Bible have noted that hail is frozen water, and is thus used to describe, in symbol, a time when ‘hardened truth’ will ultimately be rendered upon mankind. Truth, when it is revealed to the world, will serve to teach important and valuable lessons during the period when Christ’s kingdom will be established over the earth. John the Revelator was moved by the Holy Spirit of God to further emphasize this symbol of hail when he wrote, “There fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great.”—Rev.16:21

GLOBAL WARMING

In the light of Bible prophecy, we continue to closely watch the events of our day with increasing interest. During the past few decades scientists have drawn our attention to the alarming and widespread environmental changes that are occurring throughout our world. Specialists who study weather patterns have confirmed that these disruptions are producing a cycle of global warming that could result in catastrophic upheavals. This is not only true in the short term, but also with more serious and long-term effects for the world and its people. These disturbing patterns have greatly contributed to the melting of long-established glaciers, rising

sea levels, floods, increasingly catastrophic storms, and droughts in other areas of the globe. Scientists foresee that a sustained increase in temperature is very likely to continue, and that a disruption to the global climate has now become a reality. From man's standpoint earth's future looks uncertain and grim!

CHANGING WEATHER PATTERNS

Andrew Revkin, writing for the *New York Times* (Feb. 10, 2005), reported on this global warming in a news article entitled, "NASA: 2004 Saw Record Warming." In this report he noted NASA's studies under direction of Dr. J. E. Hansen who said, "Last year was the fourth warmest since systemic temperature measurements began around the world in the 19th century. Particularly high temperatures were measured over Alaska, the Caspian Sea region of Europe, and the Antarctic Peninsula, while the United States was unusually cool. But the global average continued a 30 year rise that is due primarily to increasing greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. The main source of such gases is smokestack and tailpipe emissions from burning coal and oil. The highest global average was measured in 1998, when temperatures were raised by a strong cycle of El Nino in the Pacific Ocean; 2002 and 2003 were second and third warmest. A weak El Nino pattern was likely to make 2005 at least the second warmest year and could push it beyond 1998 and set a record."

Global warming has alerted scientists to the accelerating changes that are taking place in earth's weather patterns. It has become apparent

that this is causing great concern, and is becoming increasingly serious. These alterations will dramatically affect the lives of many people in many ways, as well as with various plant and animal species that are presently under study.

THE ARCTIC

In the northern hemisphere, and particularly in the region immediately surrounding the Arctic Ocean, there are tremendous and spectacular changes taking place. These abnormalities indicate some of the most rapid and severe warming transitions that have ever occurred on the planet in recorded history. This warming of the climate has resulted in the melting of ocean ice in much of the area which, in turn, is affecting widespread wildlife and plant species as well as certain historical aboriginal cultures. This sudden melting of the ice cap at the top of the world is not only touching the lives of the people who live in the immediate areas of concern, but it is also having its effect on the whole human family with many and very serious long-term consequences.

EIGHT-NATION REPORT

In 2004, a 140-page report was released by an eight-nation Arctic Council that had studied and completed a comprehensive assessment of earth's fragile northern ice cap region. The study, which was a four-year effort involving many scientists from Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden, and the United States, identifies the impending environmental catastrophe. Usha Lee McFarling, a staff writer for the *Los Angeles Times* (Nov. 9, 2004) said, "Climate change is accelerating

sharply, spurred by human production of greenhouse gases, which have increased in the atmosphere by nearly 30% since the Industrial Revolution. Average temperatures there have risen nearly 2 degrees Fahrenheit in the last century—twice the global average—while winter temperatures have risen nearly 4 degrees. Parts of Alaska and Russia have seen average winter temperatures rise 11 degrees since the 1970's and are at their highest in 400 years, according to the report. The amount of ocean covered by ice over the last three years has been the lowest ever recorded.”

THE HUMAN COST

A large portion of the Arctic Council's study deals with the many perplexing problems that are facing the northern people who reside in these remote areas. They speak of hunters who have fallen through the melting sea ice, and the difficulty of traveling in regions where there are only winter roads available during the period of long freeze-up. Buildings, pipelines, runways, and roads all are giving way as the permafrost thaws and becomes less stable. Accidents occur more frequently and there is growing concern for the livelihood among many who reside in the area.

THE ANTARCTIC

In the southern hemisphere, signs are also being detected that indicate changes are taking place. A recent and alarming news item, submitted by Jenny Hogan, *NewScientist.com* (Feb. 2, 2005), entitled “Antarctic Ice Sheet is an Awakened Giant,” reports, “The massive west Antarctic ice sheet, previously assumed to be stable, is starting

to collapse, scientists warn. Antarctica contains more than 90% of the world's ice, and the loss of any significant part of it would cause a substantial sea level rise. Scientists used to view Antarctica as a slumbering giant, but now see it as an awakened giant."

It has been further noted that glaciers on the Antarctic peninsula, which protrude from the continent toward the north, are beginning to retreat. Also, glaciers on the much larger western ice sheet are recently disappearing. Hogan notes, "If the ice on the peninsula melts entirely it will raise global sea levels by 0.3 meters, and the west Antarctic ice sheet contains enough water to contribute meters more. The last report of the *Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*, published in 2001, said that the collapse of this ice sheet was unlikely during the 21st century. That may now need to be reassessed. Changes on the peninsula, where 75% of the 400 mountain glaciers are in retreat, have provided new insights into the way that ice sheets may disintegrate."

FLOATING ICE SHELF COLLAPSES

One such incident concerns a particularly huge floating ice shelf on the peninsula, called Larsen B, which collapsed in 2002 and shattered into numerous icebergs. Hogan writes, "This turned out to have the effect akin to pulling a cork from a bottle. With Larsen B no longer impeding movement, the ice floes that fed the shelf began moving faster towards the sea and started to thin. The findings took scientists by surprise when it was first revealed in September 2004, and now modelers are working to

include such mechanisms in their predictions.” These sorts of changes which are taking place at the bottom of the world, the historical storehouse of the world’s ice supply, will have significant long-term effects on the whole planet.

MAJOR GLACIER SHRINKING

Another report, published by *Inter Press Service*, confirms the rapidly and irregular events that are taking place in Antarctica. Daniella Knight, whose article appeared under the title “Major Glacier in Antarctica is Shrinking, Say Scientists,” writes, “A major glacier formation in Antarctica is shrinking, according to a new scientific report which is likely to heighten concerns that global warming is causing the world’s ice cover to melt. The Pine Island Glacier is the largest of all the ice streams that feed into the ocean, and could therefore be a key indicator of any larger changes afoot in the ice sheet’s interior, according to researchers. Scientists have taken an interest in monitoring the West Antarctic Ice Sheet because it contains enough water to raise global sea levels by approximately five meters if the ice melted.”

Scientists say that if the melting conditions in the area around the south pole continue to accelerate, the resulting increase in sea levels around the globe could be significantly higher within a much shorter period of time than had been previously anticipated. It is also noted that with the disappearance of earth’s ice cover there would be inevitable changes to the overall climate. Ice reflects large amounts of solar energy back into space which helps keep the planet cool. With the removal of this ice cover, land and

water surfaces that retain heat are thus exposed. These conditions would further lead to even greater melting along with overall warming cycles.

GLACIERS MELTING FASTER NOW

Related to these ominous predictions the above subheading, “Glaciers Melting Faster Now,” is the title of a news article submitted by Charles Hanley of the *Associated Press*, and which appeared in the *Los Angeles Daily News* (Jan. 30, 2005). Reporting from Chacaltaya Glacier, Bolivia he writes, “Up and down the icy spine of South America, the glaciers are melting, the white mantle of the Andes Mountains washing away at an ever faster rate.”

The Chacaltaya Glacier was once a grand ice floe high in the thin air of the Bolivian mountains of South America. La Paz, a two-mile-high city is located in the nearby area and has survived on the melting water that has been available from this supply of ice. “The glacier is a frozen storehouse of such water, and it will be gone in seven to eight years” according to Edson Ramirez, a Bolivian glaciologist who accompanied Hanley. He said, “Some small glaciers have already disappeared and in the next ten years many more will. They’ll disappear far beyond Bolivia. From Alaska in the north, to Montana’s Glacier National Park, to the great ice fields of wild Patagonia at this continent’s southern tip, the rivers of ice that have marked the landscape from prehistory are liquefying, shrinking, retreating. In east Africa, the storied snows of Mount Kilimanjaro are vanishing. In the icebound Alps and Himalayas of Europe and Asia, the change has been stunning. From South America to south

Asia, new glacial lakes threaten to overflow and drown villages below.”

THE KYOTO PROTOCOL

In 1997, a meeting was held in Kyoto, Japan, by representatives from 141 countries, who met to find ways to cut emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases that many scientists believe contribute to global warming. The accord came legally into effect February 16, 2005, with demands that greenhouse gas emissions from industrialized countries be cut by 5.2 % by 2012. These emissions are blamed largely on heavy industrialization and traffic that traps the earth’s heat.

At issue is how mankind should deal with global warming, the risks of which, although alarming, are still not fully understood. The 141 nations account for approximately 55% of all greenhouse emissions on the planet, and Russia’s entry into the accord in November 2004 was vital because that figure had finally been met for the agreement to be ratified.

The world’s foremost polluter, however, is the United States, which has not signed the treaty. President George W. Bush pulled the United States out of Kyoto in 2001 believing that the accord’s demands would be too costly to meet, and that it wrongly excluded large developing nations, including India, China, and Brazil, from cutting emissions until 2012.

Although Bush admits there are serious problems from global warming, he believes that more research is necessary before going ahead with very expensive stopgap measures to confront the issue.

The major uncertainties concerning global warming yet remain: How much more warming will occur? How fast will these conditions come upon us? What are the potential adverse or beneficial effects of these alterations to our environment?

MAN'S EFFORTS UNCERTAIN

The Kyoto protocol, and other efforts by man to find ways to remedy earth's perplexing environmental changes, is a matter that only God can remedy. He created earth as a home for mankind and surely has all things under his control. From man's standpoint, the rapidly deteriorating weather patterns, along with melting glacial ice, increased intensity of storms of all kinds, devastating floods, droughts which destroy crops and cattle, and other natural disasters, are problems too large and too difficult for man to deal with. Top weather scientists can barely cope with the impending transition that is forecast to come upon the earth in the next few decades. Yet these irregularities continue to accelerate at an ever-alarming and increasing rate. The future is clearly uncertain, the risks remain ominous, and we must put our total trust in God to bring order out of what seems to be potential chaos.

PEACE BE STILL

In God's eternal purpose and providence for his human family, he has promised to put into action his wonderful plan of reconciliation for their recovery from the ravages of sin and death. We believe that this time is soon at hand. Under the administration of Christ's kingdom, all mankind will be lifted up from the depths of death and despair. The wastes of time and disease will be repaired, and the

earth, together with its inhabitants, will ultimately all be at peace. We realize the tremendous power that our Lord Jesus exercised, even during his earthly ministry, over the elements of this earth. On one occasion he was accompanied by some of his disciples as they made their way across the sea in a boat. "There ariseth a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the boat, insomuch that the boat was now filling. And he himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they awake him, and say unto him, Teacher, carest thou not that we perish? And he awoke, and rebuked the wind and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. And he said unto them, Why are ye fearful? have ye not yet faith? And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?—Mark 4:37-41, *American Standard Version* (1901)

THE UNFINISHED EARTH

Since the early days of creation, when our first parents disobeyed God's law, sin and its penalty death resulted in their being banished from their perfect surroundings which they had enjoyed in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve were thus driven out of the garden, and into the unfinished earth where they would experience the dying process. After their expulsion from Eden, they became aware of the cyclical nature of the seasons. "While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease." (Gen. 8:22) The seasons as arranged by God provided nature with a period

of dormancy in which even ‘mother earth’ could also rest. It was not until sin had entered the earth that severe climatic changes became more evident, especially after the flood of Noah’s day.

THOU RENEWEST THE FACE OF THE EARTH

The psalmist, writing under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, put into perspective the necessity of placing our trust in God’s everlasting plan and purpose to provide a perfect earthly home for his children. He wrote, “Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled: thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust. Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth.”—Ps. 104:29,30

During the future time of Christ’s kingdom, the people of this world will learn righteousness, having experienced firsthand the consequences of the sentence of death. They will learn to dwell in peace, and the earth itself will have undergone a total transformation to perfection and will also be at peace. The wonderful words of the psalmist will have come true, for surely ‘the face’ of the whole earth will be renewed by God’s wonderful hand of providence which will then be exercised on behalf of the entire earth and his human family. ■

“O Lord God of hosts, who is a strong Lord like unto thee? or to thy faithfulness round about thee?”

“The heavens are thine, the earth also is thine: as for the world and the fulness thereof, thou hast founded them.”

—Psalm 89:8,11