



Should Christians be concerned with pollution and climate change?

With soaring, record high global temperatures, floods, fires, droughts, melting ice, sea level rise, and other climate extremes and disruptions in the news every day, should Christians be concerned about pollution and climate change? Some Christians feel that they are definitely saved, and bound for heaven, and that God will destroy the earth with fire, wrongly interpreting **“fire”** in **2 Peter 3:7,10** literally. Therefore, they feel no sense of responsibility to take care of the earth. Others feel so strongly about the climate change problem that they become climate activists, and protest about climate change in various ways, even going to extremes in some cases, even to the point of risking their lives for the climate. Is this how God wants us to think and act? While the Bible does not use the terms “climate change,” “pollution,” “global warming,” etc., we can gain insight into God’s thinking by examining various Bible statements and principles.

We should keep in mind that the apostle John saw a vision of the future, in which **“the new Jerusalem”** comes **“down from God out of heaven”** and **“God’s home is now among his people,”** and then **“God . . . will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever”** (**Revelation 21:2-5 NLT**). This means that God, in his due time, will solve all the problems plaguing humanity, including pollution, and climate change!

“The Lord God Almighty” (**Revelation 4:8**) can do things very quickly. An example of this regarding weather was demonstrated by Jesus when there was **“a furious squall”** on the

Sea of Galilee (**Mark 4:37 NIV**). “Jesus . . . rebuked the wind . . . **Suddenly the wind stopped, and there was a great calm**” (**Mark 4:39 NLT**). The Bible thus shows that God can control the weather on earth whenever he chooses to do so.

Why hasn't God already solved the climate crisis, then? For the same reason that he hasn't yet solved other problems plaguing humanity. Satan claimed that God was a liar who was withholding good things from humans, and that his way, that is, rebellion against God, would be better for humans (**Genesis 3:1-5**). Climate change is an indirect result of Satan's influence over humans to rebel against God. Similar to what God told the ancient Egyptian Pharaoh, “**I have spared you for a purpose-to show you my power and to spread my fame throughout the earth**” (**Exodus 9:16 NLT**), God has allowed Satan to continue his existence until God's purpose is served.

Of course, the impact that each individual human has on earth's climate is minuscule. Some nations fight wars that destroy the earth, some large corporations have been known to have greedy, vested interests in selling and/or producing products that pollute this planet, and it is difficult, if not impossible, for most people, to live without using or doing, things that pollute, such as electricity, transportation, consumer goods, etc. So, it's easy to conclude, “What's the use?” Do these facts mean that Christians individually should simply do nothing? Let's look at some Bible principles that can help guide Christians in making their individual decisions in these matters..

“Everything that was written in the past was written to teach us.” (**Romans 15:4 NIV**) This means the entire Old Testament is instructive to Christians. We can learn something from every Old Testament verse.

“For Christ is the end of the law.” (**Romans 10:4 CSB**) The “**first covenant**” (**Hebrews 8:7**), the Old Law Covenant, or Mosaic Law, was “**cancelled**” (**Colossians 2:14 NIV**) and “**replaced**” (**2 Corinthians 3:11 NLT**) by “**a second one**” (**Hebrews 8:7 NJB**), the “**new covenant**” (**Hebrews 9:15**). So not everything in the Old Testament literally applies to

Christians. For example, we don't sacrifice animals through the Levitical priests.

"Don't assume that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill." (Matthew 5:17 HCSB) While the everything in the Old Testament does not have literal application to Christians, we can, at least, draw principles to apply in life today from many scriptures in the Old Testament.

"Yahweh God took the man and settled him in the garden of Eden to cultivate and take care of it" (Genesis 2:15 NJB). We're not in the Garden of Eden, of course, but we are here on God's earth. We can draw a principle from this that God wants us not only to work, but to do our part to take care of his earth.

"To Yahweh belong the earth and all it contains" (Psalm 24:1 NJB). "Everything under heaven is mine" (Job 41:11 NIV). The Bible repeatedly reminds us of who owns this planet and everything in it. Since Yahweh owns the earth, his principles and rules apply.

"If you make it [the land] unclean, will it not vomit you out as it vomited out the nations there before you?" (Leviticus 18:28 NJB) Pagan and immoral practices made the land unclean. Drawing a principle from this that we can apply — filthy physical practices would also make a land unclean. Those who are responsible for knowingly, willfully pollute physically are accountable to God.

The Bible seems to predict something else that God will do about the pollution and climate change problems. **"The nations were in uproar and now the time has come for your retribution, and for the dead to be judged, and for your servants the prophets, for the saints, and for those who fear your name, small and great alike, to be rewarded. The time has come to destroy those who destroying the earth" (Revelation 11:18 NJB).** People here are depicted as being on opposite sides. On one side, there are God's prophets, holy people, and those fearing his name. On the other side are **"the nations"** and **"those who are destroying the earth."** The Greek word used here

for “earth” is *ges*, meaning the literal, physical earth. It is not *kosmos*, which means the people of this world. Those who deliberately pollute God’s earth will be destroyed by God. This applies to all willful polluters of earth’s air, land, water, etc., **“who are destroying the earth.”** On the other hand, it is not a Christian’s job to **“judge”** exactly which individuals fall into this category (**Matthew 7:1-5**). **“The Father . . . has entrusted all judgment to the Son” (John 5:22 NIV).**

“Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor? ... The one who showed mercy.” (**Luke 10:36,37 HCSB**) We can be like the priest and Levite in Jesus’ parable and not be concerned about the plight of others. Climate change affects the poor, marginalized people of the world more so than the more affluent ones. We can feel like it’s not our job to worry about it. After all, it is a fact that God will take care of everything and make everything right in the end. Or, a Christian could be a “good Samaritan” and do what they personally, reasonably can to mitigate climate change. However, the Bible cautions Christians to avoid **“passing judgement . . . on one another” (Romans 14:13 NJB)** regarding these issues, and individual actions.

“Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.” (**Matthew 25:40 NIV**) Climate change causes increased hunger (“hungry” - **Matthew 25:35**), dehydration and drought (“thirsty” - **Matthew 25:35**), displacement, homelessness, and refugees (a “stranger” - **Matthew 25:35**), resource loss (“needed clothes” - **Matthew 25:35**), disease (“I was sick” - **Matthew 25:36**), injustice (“in prison” - **Matthew 25:36**), and much more. The principle of helping those in need can apply directly, as well as indirectly.

“There was a rich man who... lived in luxury every day. At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores, and longing to eat what fell from the rich man’s table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores.” (**Luke 16:19,20 NIV**) Many people in the more affluent areas, such as the United States, are like this “rich man,” at least in some ways, such as living relatively unconcerned, even oblivious to the poor, especially the poor in the third

world. While it's true that we can't change the world, and "you will always have the poor among you," as Jesus said, "you can help them whenever you want to." (**Mark 14:7 NLT**) Just as Mary "did what she could" by anointing Jesus while he was on earth, Bible principles indicate that Christians may want to feel concern to do what they reasonably can to minimize their personal impact on climate change.

We live in a sinful world under the control of Satan and his demons. (**1 John 5:19; Ephesians 6:12**) We are not going to stop bad things from going on in this world anymore than Jesus did when he lived here. (**Luke 4:6-8**) Additionally, Jesus said that a Christian's "**duty is to go and spread the news about the kingdom of God**" (**Luke 9:60 NJB**).

"As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: 'Be holy, because I am holy.' Since you call on a Father who judges each person's work impartially, live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear." (**1 Peter 1:14-17 NIV**) God has called us to be his holy people, no longer conformed to our former ignorance, but with the fear of God in us. He sees everything, even our inmost thoughts and motives. If we formerly deliberately polluted the earth, we should repent (**Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; 3:19**). Bible principles seem to indicate that a Christian should do what they reasonably can now to "take care of" the earth (**Gen 2:15 NIV**), by not deliberately polluting, within a "**reasonable**" degree (**James 3:17 NASB**).

God, not Christians, will, through Christ, clean up the earth and its atmosphere, and stop human-caused climate change, global warming, etc. (**Revelation 11:18**). A Christian's main job now is, not the environment, but "to be obedient to Jesus Christ." (**1 Peter 1:18 NIV**)