

Al Gore Owes Us All An Apology

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(Psalms 104:1–25, 30 NRSV) Bless the LORD, O my soul. O LORD my God, you are very great. You are clothed with honor and majesty, {2} wrapped in light as with a garment. You stretch out the heavens like a tent, {3} you set the beams of your chambers on the waters, you make the clouds your chariot, you ride on the wings of the wind, {4} you make the winds your messengers, fire and flame your ministers. {5} You set the earth on its foundations, so that it shall never be shaken. {6} You cover it with the deep as with a garment; the waters stood above the mountains. {7} At your rebuke they flee; at the sound of your thunder they take to flight. {8} They rose up to the mountains, ran down to the valleys to the place that you appointed for them. {9} You set a boundary that they may not pass, so that they might not again cover the earth. {10} You make springs gush forth in the valleys; they flow between the hills, {11} giving drink to every wild animal; the wild asses quench their thirst. {12} By the streams the birds of the air have their habitation; they sing among the branches. {13} From your lofty abode you water the mountains; the earth is satisfied with the fruit of your work. {14} You cause the grass to grow for the cattle, and plants for people to use, to bring forth food from the earth, {15} and wine to gladden the human heart, oil to make the face shine, and bread to strengthen the human heart. {16} The trees of the LORD are watered abundantly, the cedars of Lebanon that he planted. {17} In them the birds build their nests; the stork has its home in the fir trees. {18} The high mountains are for the wild goats; the rocks are a refuge for the coney. {19} You have made the moon to mark the seasons; the sun knows its time for setting. {20} You make darkness, and it is night, when all the animals of the forest come creeping out. {21} The young lions roar for their prey, seeking their food from God. {22} When the sun rises, they withdraw and lie down in their dens. {23} People go out to their work and to their labor until the evening. {24} O LORD, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures. {25} Yonder is the sea, great and wide, creeping things innumerable are there, living things both small and great. {30} When you send forth your spirit, they are created; and you renew the face of the ground.

It has been interesting being a part of a barrage of e-mails going back and forth about the concern for swine flu or should I say H1N1 flu. Only one person in the group is what I would call an “expert”, but the voices of those who shout the loudest tend to be the ones heard, whether they really know anything or not.

The same seems so true when we talk about Global Climate Change. I am using that phrase, rather than the often used phrase Global Warming, because I think it is a more accurate descriptive word of what is going on.

I loved during the winter when we were in the midst of our really cold spell --- people all over --- here at Ridge church as well as on the media would say → “global warming, huh - right!”

I came across this “article” from the satirical newspaper *The Onion*, it is from November 7, 2007 it is titled: “Fall Canceled After 3 Billion Seasons.”

Fall, the long- running series of shorter days and cooler nights, was canceled earlier this week after nearly 3 billion seasons on Earth, sources reported Tuesday.

The classic period of the year, which once occupied a coveted slot between summer and winter, will be replaced by new, stifling humidity levels, near - constant sunshine, and almost no precipitation for months.

"As much as we'd like to see it stay, fall will not be returning for another season," National Weather Service president John Hayes announced during a muggy press conference Nov. 6. "Fall had a great run, but sadly, times have changed."

Said Hayes: "Frankly, we're amazed it lasted as long as it did."

Though it came as a surprise to many, the cancellation was not without its share of warning signs. In recent years, fall had been reduced from three months to a meager two-week stint, and its scheduled start time had been pushed back later and later each year. . . .

Though disappointed by the cancellation, a number of Americans have admitted that the last few seasons of fall were "completely underwhelming" and often lacked the trademark mood and temperatures of earlier years.

Kinda funny - but unfortunately as I look around it seems apparent to me that we are entering, or should I say, have entered a new climate era.

Now I understand that not everyone is going to agree with me on this issue of Global Climate Change. And it seems to me that there are three basic varieties of those who fall into the category who discount, or don't believe that we are experiencing Global Climate Change.

First, are those who have a vested interest in doubting the data about Global Climate Change. Often these are people who work for, or are paid by fossil fuel companies and the company line is to deny that global warming is a serious human caused problem.

Second, a small minority of scientists, who have looked at the data and concluded for different reasons that the rapid and extensive increase in greenhouse gas emissions since the Industrial Revolution is not a major threat to human existence on our planet.

The third group tends to be people (often labeled conservatives --- but that is not really fair) who simply refuse to accept the reality of climate change. Some have studied the scientists who agree with their position; others just take the position at face value. Their internal reasoning for denying the reality of climate change has more to do with their dislike of the most likely needed solution -- -- more government regulation and intervention.

Unfortunately, because Al Gore was the one who became the global spokesman for the climate change position - and he is seen as such a polarizing political figure - it was easy for climate change deniers and skeptics to argue that this was not a debate between science and politics but between politics and politics.

But this is not politics.

Global climate changes are a reality of science. The questions that we must continue to discuss and debate are what causes the changes and what role humanity has in those causes and changes. And what can we do to slow down the damage.

Thomas Friedman in his provocative book *Hot, Flat and Crowded* notes:

Because Gore, not a celebrity scientist, was the messenger, and because he presented his facts in an intentionally alarming way, enormous time and energy have been wasted debating about Al Gore rather than climate change. The debate has diverted way too much public discussion from the current reality - which is that not only is the climate changing

because of human activities, but there is also mounting evidence that it is *changing considerably faster* than even the most worried climatologists were predicting just three or four years ago, and may unfold in an even more unmanageable and disruptive manner than they expected.

We could spend the next couple of hours talking about CO₂ levels and how they are increasing and what is potentially causing this increase, and what moving from our historic (last 10,000 years) level of about 280 ppm to 389 ppm as of March of 2009 might mean?

Levels of CO₂ have risen from that 280 ppm level since the dawn of the industrial revolution when the world began to seriously burn fossil fuels and cut down the forests of the world.

According to the website: CO₂Now:

At least since the 1958 start of atmospheric CO₂ measurements with high-precision instruments, the rate of increase in atmospheric carbon dioxide concentration has accelerated from decade to decade. The latest atmospheric CO₂ data is consistent with a continuation of this long-standing trend.

The problem is – nobody is really to sure what a safe level of CO₂ is. And the main reason for that is – we have never seen levels this high.

Again, According to CO₂Now:

The upper safety limit for atmospheric CO₂ is 350 parts per million (ppm). Atmospheric CO₂ levels have stayed higher than 350 ppm since early 1988.

The latest studies suggest that CO₂ will continue to head up to 450 ppm by the middle of this century.

There is one major problem with all of the current projections. Bill Collins, senior scientist in the Earth Sciences division of Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory says:

Nobody captured in their energy economy models the acceleration of emissions from China in the last five years. That is what is so scary. A lot of the IPCC (United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) math was developed when emissions from China were going down in the

1990s, and the Soviet Union was collapsing. What is happening now is worse than the worst case projections that went into the IPCC model.

Nate Lewis of the Californian Institute of Technology:

The earth is not on an average path . . . we just don't know yet which one it is. But there is more and more evidence that this path could be at the high end of climate-change models in speed and scope especially if some of the nonlinear runaway feedback effects start to kick in . . . Would 450 ppm be safe? Would 550 ppm turn out to be safe? We don't know. The only level of CO₂ that we know is safe is the one that we have been at for the last 10,000 years - 280 ppm - and we have left that behind. Would you feel good about leaving your kids a 550 ppm world? I wouldn't. It may be fine - but it is a world no humans have ever lived in.

That is kinda scary if you ask me.

The problem is - the way that we often look at this issue is as if we were to go to our doctor and have them tell us:

"If you don't stop smoking there is a 90% chance that you will die of lung cancer."

"Are you telling me Doctor that you are not 100% sure? Then I will keep on smoking."

We can't be sure --- that is just the reality - but are we willing to take that risk.

It is funny to be talking about this with the Swine / H1N1 flu scare going around. If this doesn't turn into a disaster the cries of why did we go to such great lengths to get ready will be screamed.

The flu was no big deal.

But was it no big deal because of the measure made?

Or, what was the cost that being cautious really cost us?

Maybe we washed our hands a few more times?

It sure didn't stop me from going to see a play at Munster High School on Friday or Saturday night.

But what if we didn't prepare?

What might have happened?

Same with the environment.
We can't afford to be wrong.

What is the cost in taking global warming or climate change seriously?
If they are wrong – what do we lose?

If we choose to do nothing and the majority of scientist are right – we are in big trouble.

We better hope that Jesus will return.

John Holdren, professor of environmental policy at Harvard and director of the Woods Hole Research Institute:

The way that I like to put it is that we're driving in a car with bad brakes in a fog and heading for a cliff. We know for sure now that the cliff is out there, we just don't know exactly where it is. Prudence would suggest that we should start putting on the brakes.

Why does Al Gore owe us all an apology → because he completely underestimated global warming!