

Is God Cooling Off Our Climate?

Unusual weather patterns have brought the question of Climate change to the attention of the world. As Christians, we know that it is God who controls our climate, but at the same time we should search out the truth about changing climate.

We believe that the climate has grown much warmer during the last part of the 20th century, but now there is evidence that the climate may be cooling off. The reason comes from the science of sunspots, which are areas of intense magnetic activity on the face of the sun.

For many years scientists have known that there was a relationship between sunspots and climate. There is an 11-year sunspot cycle during which it is warmer in the high sunspot portion of the cycle and cooler in the low sunspot portion. This is because an increase in numbers of sunspots is evidence of increased energy output by the sun. In addition, during times of higher energy output the solar wind blocks more cosmic rays, which play a role in cloud formation and have a cooling effect.

Not only are there variations in sunspot numbers during the 11-year cycle, but there are also variations in sunspot numbers between cycles. Scientists observed that during the coldest time of the "Little Ice Age," from 1645 to 1715, there were virtually no sunspots. This period is known as the Maunder Minimum, and was named after the scientist who discovered the lack of sunspots. Beginning with the 1712-22 sunspot cycle, the recorded daily sunspot numbers began rising, averaging 52 from 1712-1788, and the temperature also began rising. Temperatures and sunspot numbers reached almost to the modern levels by the two cycles of 1767-88, only to fall again as sunspot numbers went down to 31 from 1799 to

1832.

Worldwide temperature data collected for the Global Historic Climatology Network, going back to the mid-19th century, shows a correlation between sunspots and temperatures. The warming period from 1833 to 1898 (6 Cycles) saw daily sunspot numbers increase from 31 in the previous cooling period to 51, and an increase in temperature of 0.4 degrees (F). The cooling period which followed from 1899 to 1932 (three cycles) saw a drop in daily sunspots to 37 and a decrease of 0.2 degrees (F). Then came the modern warming period, from 1933-1997 (six cycles), when sunspot numbers almost doubled to 71 and the temperature rose by 1.3 degrees (F).

This recent period from 1933-97, showing a dramatic increase in sunspot numbers and global temperatures, has produced a global warming concern among scientists, who blame the increased temperatures on man-made causes and expect the increases in temperature to continue. However, it appears that a new cooling period has begun, with the sunspot number for 1998-2008 dropping to 59 and the projected number for 2009-2020 being half that number, 29, about equal to the sunspot number at the beginning of the 1899-1932 cooling period. If this trend continues, global temperatures could return to levels seen in 1899-1932, resulting in a reduction in temperatures of 1.3 degrees (F) by the end of the third cooling cycle in 2030.

However, in 2017, evidence began appearing which may suggest a much more severe cooling period. For the first two months of 2017, there were four weeks with no sunspots, and astronomers began talking about a return of the Maunder Minimum. Unfortunately, we do not have reliable temperature data back to the beginning of the Maunder Minimum, but temperature data gleaned from secondary sources shows what happens when a warmer period gives way to a much colder period. This happened at the beginning of the Little Ice Age, in 1315, when much cooler temperatures came with 7 years of floods, leading to

famine, plague and war. People living at the time saw it as a judgment from God.

The floods come because a cooler atmosphere holds less water vapor and the diminished solar wind of a sunspot minimum allows more cosmic rays into our atmosphere to cause cooling clouds and rain. The massive hurricanes of 2005, 2008, and 2017, all occurring at or near minimums in the 11-year sunspot cycle, may be harbingers of a severe period of global cooling.

In the end, only God knows what the future climate will be, and our understanding of climate and solar cycles is very limited. For example, when scientists saw a brief drop in sunspot numbers and temperatures in the mid-1960s some began worrying about a return of the Ice Age. This during the middle of the greatest temperature increases in modern times. Similar exaggerated fears about global warming should be viewed with a grain of salt.

One area of concern is public policy prescriptions based on extreme predictions of future climate. Government actions to limit carbon emissions will cause economic hardship in the developed world and keep billions in poverty in the third world, all admittedly without making a real change in global warming projections. The only beneficiaries are big government which expands its power and crony capitalists who profit from government programs. The world was, in fact, this warm in the Middle Ages with only beneficial results, and it was the cooling of the Little Ice Age, not global warming, which brought harm.

As people of prayer, we have access to the real master of the climate (Ps. 135:7). We understand that climate change and the actions of foolish men who think they can control it may be judgments allowed by God. But we also understand that God sends judgment to bring repentance (Isa. 26:9), so we should humble ourselves, seek His face and repent. We can then ask God to relent from sending calamity (Joel 2:13), whether it be

by global warming or global cooling.

As we wait for His answer to be revealed, we must not let fear steal our peace. Remember that God knows how to protect His people in times of judgment (2 Pet. 2:5-9).

God gave Isaiah a vision of God's people gathering in unison in Zion (Isa. 4:5-6) during turbulent times. They experienced God's leading through a cloud by day and fire by night, and they entered into His glory. But above it all was a canopy which sheltered them from the heat and the storm. Let us come into a canopy of prayer, entering into the intimacy with God in His glory and praying for His protection.

The climate in God's presence is always good. {eo}

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