

Are Biblical 'End Times' Ushering in Rise of Natural Disasters?

Despite the wails of despair you hear from some quarters, Americans as a whole rank climate change dead last on a list of important issues.

Only 5 percent of Americans say climate change is the most important issue facing the United States today. The issue of climate change and its effects on the environment ranks behind the lack of jobs (22 percent), the increasing gap between rich and poor (18 percent), health care (17 percent), the budget deficit (13 percent), immigration reform (10 percent) and the rising cost of education (9 percent).

All this is according to a survey conducted by the Public Religion Research Institute and posted in a report on .

But when the survey narrows in on what people who believe were are in the "end times" think about the relationship of the last days to the rise in natural disasters, some interesting statistics pop out. While five out of eight Americans (62 percent) say that recent natural disasters are the result of climate change, almost half (49 percent) believe the biblical end times are playing a role.

The number of Americans who believe natural disasters are evidence of the apocalypse has increased since 2011, when only 44 percent agreed.

White evangelical Protestants are much more likely to attribute the severity of recent natural disasters to the biblical "end times" (77 percent) than to climate change (49 percent), according to the Public Religion Research Institute survey.

Most Americans do not believe that God would intercede to prevent humans from destroying the earth. Approximately four in 10 (39 percent) Americans believe that God would *not* allow humans to destroy the earth, while a slight majority (53 percent) of Americans disagree.

“Americans generally reject the idea that God intended humans to use the earth strictly for their own benefit. Nearly 6 in 10 (57 percent) Americans say God gave humans the task of living responsibly with animals, plants and other resources, which are not just for human benefit. By contrast, about one-third (35 percent) of Americans believe that God gave human beings the right to use animals, plants and all other resources of the planet solely for their own benefit,” the report said.