

Solar Supercharge: God's Power Displayed

Last month, the sun sent a reminder that it is still in control of Earth's climate.

A powerful solar flare supercharged the outflow of solar particles, known as the solar wind, and overwhelmed Earth's protective magnetic field. As a result, the Aurora Borealis, which usually surrounds the North Pole, moved farther south than it has since 1859.

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Earth's magnetic field normally shields it from the solar wind and cosmic rays. If it is overwhelmed, more harmful radiation reaches the Earth's surface. At the same time, more cosmic rays enter the atmosphere, playing a significant role in cloud formation and rain. The magnetic field is also weakening, as it does periodically, letting in more space weather to affect Earth's weather.

The sun's magnetic field creates solar flares and giant magnetic storms known as sunspots, which increase in number with increases in solar energy. Over the past 400 years, when sunspots have been measured, a low number was associated with the cold of the Little Ice Age and higher numbers led to a warming climate, which ended the Little Ice Age. During the last half of the 20th century sunspot numbers reached record levels, contributing to, if not causing, global warming, which raised Earth's temperatures back to those seen 1,000 years ago in the medieval warming period. Sunspot numbers have decreased recently, but it is too early to tell if global cooling will follow.

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We know God controls the weather and may use it for His purposes. A notable example is the drought Elijah prayed for (James 5:17). A future event, the fourth bowl judgment, sounds somewhat like the consequences of a vanishing magnetic field:

“The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and the sun was given power to scorch people with fire. They were seared by the intense heat, and they cursed the name of God, who had control over these plagues, but they refused to repent and glorify Him” (Rev. 16:8-9, NIV).

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