

Publishing Editor's column

ONE OF the world's foremost environmental scientists is James Lovelock. Thirty years ago he advanced the idea that the earth has an advanced control system which keeps the environment sufficiently stable for life to continue. We have here a basic idea which makes sense to believers in the Bible's account of the creation of the earth. A finely balanced environment, suited to all the myriad forms of life upon our planet, presupposes creation by an infinitely wise and powerful Being.

James Lovelock has now come to the conclusion that this finely balanced mechanism is being severely damaged by man's activities (that is, global warming causing climate change), to the extent that the process cannot be reversed. His conclusions were summarised in an article published in the Online edition of the *Independent* on 18 January 2006. The article says that Lovelock's view is that "The world has already passed the point of no return for climate change, and civilisation as we know it is now unlikely to survive . . . efforts to counter global warming cannot succeed . . . The world and human society face disaster to a worse extent, and on a faster timescale, than almost anyone realises". Lovelock himself sees the future as follows:

"Over the coming decades soaring temperatures will mean agriculture may become unviable over huge areas of the world where people are already poor and hungry; water supplies for millions or even billions may fail. Rising sea levels will destroy substantial coastal areas in low-lying countries such as Bangladesh at the very moment when their populations are mushrooming. Numberless environmental refugees will overwhelm the capacity of any agency, or indeed any country, to cope, while modern urban infrastructure will face devastation from powerful extreme weather events, such as Hurricane Katrina".

Though somewhat extremely put, Lovelock's warning is echoed by others, such as Baroness Young, the chief executive of the UK's Environmental Agency, who said early in 2006:

"We are running out of road on decision making. Unless we dramatically change the use of fossil fuels then we will be committing future generations to the most severe impacts of climatic change. We now know . . . that we are walking off a shorter plank than we

had previously thought . . . research shows far more dangerous and dramatic climate-changing effects appearing much earlier than previously predicted".

Such talk is a remarkable confirmation of Bible prophecy, for Revelation 11:18 speaks of the time of the end as follows: "And the nations were angry, and Thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that Thou shouldest give reward unto Thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and to them that fear Thy name, small and great: *and shouldest destroy them that destroy the earth*". These words were recorded by the Apostle John about 1,900 years ago when there was no way in which man could "destroy the earth". God's saints now live in a world in which men are speaking seriously of life as we know it being effectively destroyed.

Jesus spoke of "distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth", prior to his "coming in a cloud with power and great glory" (Lk. 21:25-27). If James Lovelock is right and we have reached the point of no return on global warming, then this will become increasingly apparent, and we can readily see how this would lead to "distress of nations" and "men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth". As for "perplexity", W. E. Vine, in his *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, says this means literally "at a loss for a way", and says that examples have been found in papyri of it being used in the sense of "being at one's wit's end" or "at a loss how to proceed".

The believer in God's Word is not pessimistic about the future, however, for the Master said that "when these things *begin* to come to pass" (v. 28), his followers should lift up their heads in hope and expectation of his return. Even if James Lovelock is right, and it is too late for man to change the course he is on, God can and will reverse the process when He intervenes through His Son to undo man's evil work, "destroy[ing] them that destroy the earth" in the process. The outcome will be a peaceful, happy world in which people will use the resources of the world in accordance with the great Creator's laws under the beneficial guidance of the saints.

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