

A New Heaven and a New Earth

Weather forecasters rarely receive praise for their good work and more often than not, they are a target of criticism and a subject of jokes. But there are two passages in the Bible which show that even Jesus did not spare them. Obviously there was no official meteorological agency then, but amateur weather forecasting seems to have been a popular occupation.

The first passage is as follows:

The Pharisees and Sadducees came to Jesus and tested him by asking him to show them a sign from heaven. He replied, "When evening comes, you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red,' and in the morning, 'Today it will be stormy, for the sky is red and overcast.' You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times. A wicked and adulterous generation looks for a miraculous sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah." Jesus then left them and went away.¹

The second passage is as follows:

He said to the crowd: "When you see a cloud rising in the west, immediately you say, 'It's going to rain,' and it does. And when the south wind blows, you say, 'It's going to be hot,' and it is. Hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of the earth and the sky. How is it that you don't know how to interpret this present time?"²

¹ Matthew 16:1-4

² Luke 12:54-56

The science of meteorology has undoubtedly made great strides since Jesus' times and the skills of weather forecasters have certainly improved a lot. But when it comes to predicting the future climate, the situation is different.

The scientists' vision of the future climate is a product of climate models. These models can make projections at best for the next hundred or two hundred years, on the basis of what are called emission scenarios. These different scenarios imagine different ways in which human society is likely to evolve in the coming decades or centuries, which is the most difficult thing to do. For example, no one can be sure what will be the global population say in the year 2100, or in how many years from now would the earth's stock of fossil fuels get exhausted. No country can tell when it would succeed in eradicating poverty among its people. All that can be done is to assume certain conditions and work out projections on those assumptions which are quite likely to go wrong.

However, the final and most beautiful scenario that the Bible paints before us, is of that heavenly land supplied by God with boundless energy, watered by the ever-flowing river of life. On its either side will stand the trees of life and they will give their fruits in due season.¹

These are the new heaven and the new earth that will be unveiled by God for his people at his appointed time. John, who was given a glimpse of the new heaven and the new earth, writes: *I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their*

¹ Revelation 21:23-24, 22:1-2,4

eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!"¹



¹ Revelation 21:3-5