

Rain

An Image of God's Abundant Providence

Richard T. Ritenbaugh

Given 20-Oct-07; Sermon #851

In the hustle and bustle of our fast paced lives we take a great many things for granted. While we are running the rat race, all we see is the exercise wheel whirling in front of us. Everything else is just a blur. We do not see the around and the about anymore. We are just too busy. We spend all our time trying to make ends meet, working a couple of jobs, or one very tough job with long hours, and we come home to a pile of housework, or a very long list of unfinished projects. We would probably miss anything that is not pertinent to our needs and goals.

Frankly, that is how many of our lives tend to be these days. It seems that there is not enough hours in a day. We go from Sabbath to Sabbath, and then just drop because we have been so busy.

For instance, I just spoke about the weather and the drought that is going on here in the southeast United States, and unless we work outside for a living, most of us take the weather for granted. And certainly we take the climate for granted because it occurs over extended periods of time. You may know that the Old South is known for its heat and humidity in the summer. You may know that the Southwest is known for its desert conditions. But, maybe that is all we really know—just some generalities in some general localities. We do not care about it a great deal either. We have too much on our plate. So we just go on with our lives.

We may listen to the weather report on the radio, or morning television. We may turn on the Weather Channel. And it is only to figure out what we need to wear to work that day. But beyond that we do not think very deeply about it. It is just another part of the backdrop to our lives in our environment. It attracts our attention only when it might adversely affect our personal plans.

Now, for us as children of God, and expecting the second coming of Jesus Christ, and the end of the age in the near future, we should pay weather and climate some heed. We know from the reading of the Scripture, that some of the signs of the times involve weather.

But, not the so-called warming hysteria. In a word, Al Gore, check your facts. The global climate is not changing at an alarming rate. Nor will the current warming trend be disastrous, destructive, or deadly. In fact, warming (if you could talk to any meteorologist

Rain by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

or climatologist who is not affected by this hysteria) is generally beneficial to mankind. It moderates colder regions in the extreme north, or the extreme south. And by doing so, it opens up more land to cultivation and settlement. And it lengthens the growing season. Perhaps you could get another crop in.

Now, there are some other things too, like it dries out certain areas, and makes other wetter. But over time, those things and changes are adapted to. They always have been.

But there is no sudden dramatic climate change.

However, the Bible shows that the weather is an element at the end time that man will have to deal with.

I want to show that weather plays roles within the plan of God, including at the end.

Turn to Revelation 6. If you remember in chapter 6 are the first six seals. And, they refer back to the words of Christ at the beginning of Matthew 24, and explains what they are, and gives us their interpretation. I need to pick out only the third seal of famine, here.

Revelation 6:5-6 When He opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, "Come and see." So I looked, and behold, a black horse, and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not harm the oil and the wine."

This is a picture of scarcity. Some people think it is scarcity in the midst of plenty, that they have oil and wine, and they are not to be harmed because of the people of higher station, but everybody else has to buy their grain at inflated prices because they are short in supply to them.

Now, this has been interpreted, normally, as the result of the second seal of war. Famines often come on the heels of war. This is due to several factors, such as the warfare has ruined the crops, or the land, and the stores were either depleted or destroyed. Perhaps the men were all lost in battle, so there are too few of them to plant, tend, and harvest. Perhaps there are crops already harvested, or livestock ready for market, but there is much difficulty in getting them to market because areas are restricted, buildings are demolished, fuel is scarce, transportation is unavailable, or

Rain by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

unusable. Perhaps thieves have taken much, or hoarding by those who have, are keeping foodstuffs from the general public.

So, there are many factors.

It may be that weather plays a part in this seal, too. There could be a widespread severe drought, or widespread severe flooding. Either one would intensify the already existing problems. It would be quite an important factor.

Now, as those seals have opened over the past two thousand years—we feel that they began to be opened right after Christ spoke about them—they have been ongoing. We have always had wars, religious deception, famine, and death. But, as it has been opened and revealed to us the past two millennia, we have seen weather play a large part in fulfilling this seal—famine.

Now, in Revelation chapter 8, the time sequence is down to the trumpet plagues. This chapter has the first four of them. And in verse 7 is the first.

Revelation 8:7 The first angel sounded: And hail and fire followed, mingled with blood, and they were thrown to the earth. And a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up.

This first trumpet plague has a weather element—a hailstorm. This is just rain in a severe thunderstorm that has been drawn up high into the top of the storm and frozen, and then falls down toward the ground getting a coat of rainwater on the frozen drop, but then it is caught back up by updrafts, and a new layer is frozen, and then down, and then up again, etc, until the updrafts are not strong enough to keep it circulating in the cloud top any more, and it falls as a frozen ball called a hailstone.

Now in this plague, it is a uniquely bad storm. It has a super natural element to it because not only does hail fall, but it produces fire when it hits. This is very much like the seventh plague on Egypt in which the same thing happened.

If you will recall the old Ten Commandments movie, they were out there on the porch, and it began to hail, and fire began leaping up also. According to the plague in Revelation 8:7 this hail-initiated-fire burns trees and grass. This will be quite a storm.

Now in the vials [bowls] of God's wrath in chapter 16, the judgments that take place during the Day of the Lord are God's judgments upon the earth. Here is what it says

regarding the fourth vial:

Revelation 16:8-9 Then the fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and power was given to him to scorch men with fire. And men were scorched with great heat, and they blasphemed the name of God who has power over these plagues; and they did not repent and give Him glory.

What we see here in the fourth of the seven last plagues is true global warming! What we have today is a natural warming trend. What is in the fourth plague is very quick global warming because of God's sovereignty. God takes a hand in it, and He allows the sun's heat and radiation to be intensified. We do not know how this is going to be done, but the effect is that men are horribly burned. They are scorched. Think of a really bad sunburn from being at the beach for hours in your bathing suit; but instead of this being for many hours, here almost instantly you are burned.

Now whether God removes the ozone layer, or increases sun-spot activity causing this extreme heat possible, or what ever it is, nothing like this has ever happened before. But, it is prophesied to occur during the Day of the Lord.

There is another weather related event during the seventh plague down in verse 21:

Revelation 16:21 And great hail from heaven fell upon men, each hailstone about the weight of a talent. Men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, since that plague was exceedingly great.

There is some dispute about how much this talent actually weighs. Various talents had various weights in various places. But, if we go by the King James Version, it is a hundred weight—it weighs one hundred pounds. I have also heard that it may only be half this. Who knows? It is a big hailstone, and if it hits you in the head you are dead whether it is 50 or 100 pounds. It is a killing hailstorm.

But, it seems not to do any good. They still do not repent. They still blaspheme God. That is entirely the wrong attitude. He sends this weather gone wild for them to repent, and they will not heed.

So, here we see in the book of Revelation just a smattering of prophetic weather phenomena. These weather related events are still future.

Rain by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

My subject today is a bit more mundane. We are going to look at the Bible's perspective on rain. For some of you, you have had an overabundance of rain this year. There are some places from Pennsylvania and Ohio back down through Texas who received a great deal of rain this year. But, for those of us in the southeast, we have gone through months of almost no rain, which is very rare for this area; and over the past fourteen years or so, we are actually in an extended drought period. We had only one year of normal rainfall in 2006.

Right now in Charlotte, North Carolina, I believe we are about thirteen or fourteen inches below normal for the year. That is about mid-range for North and South Carolina, and Georgia. It is a pretty bad year for us. And it is just extending our long drought out for this many more months.

We are going to look at rain as a biblical image—a symbol. And historically we will see how rain affected Israel.

The Bible is the book of Israel. It talks about Israel from beginning to end. Israel is its primary subject matter in terms of people. It is not just the people of Israel, it is also the land of Israel. The Bible's focus is centered on that little area on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. So the metaphors and the images that we see in the Bible always originate with the environment of that area of the world. That was the setting in which these events first took place, and over time, these happenings turned into ingrained symbols in the Israelite's psyche.

And rain is one of these symbols.

The Israelite view of rain is entirely dependent upon the climatic conditions of the land of Canaan. They do not look at it from the viewpoint of Egypt where they lived for several hundred years, but they look at it in terms of the Promised Land. Their view of rain is what happened day after day, year after year in Canaan itself, in the Promised Land.

I am going to have to give you a basic geography lesson to begin with so that we can understand why they see rain the way they do, and because we are a nation that we believe is a descendant of ancient Israel. And because this nation was founded and the people believed in the words of the Bible at that time, then we have taken up many of these images ourselves. Even though we live in a nation that is thousands of miles away from this tiny corner of the Mediterranean, our psyche uses these same images because we use the same Book.

We will get our real start here as God is giving them a pep talk as they are about to

enter the land.

Deuteronomy 11:8-12 "Therefore you shall keep every commandment which I command you today, that you may be strong, and go in and possess the land which you cross over to possess, and that you may prolong your days in the land which the LORD swore to give your fathers, to them and their descendants, 'a land flowing with milk and honey.' For the land which you go to possess is not like the land of Egypt from which you have come, where you sowed your seed and watered it by foot, as a vegetable garden; but the land which you cross over to possess is a land of hills and valleys, which drinks water from the rain of heaven, a land for which the LORD your God cares; the eyes of the LORD your God are always on it, from the beginning of the year to the very end of the year.

Now we see here that Moses was very adamant that the Promised Land was not like Egypt at all. Egypt was entirely dependant upon the Nile River for its existence. The Nile is a huge river. It brings a great deal of water from the highlands of eastern Africa. Otherwise, Egypt was just desert. If there was no Nile, there was no Egypt. It gets no rain, except maybe trace amounts. So, every bit of their water came from the Nile.

On the other hand, Israel is almost entirely dependent upon rainfall. The other little bit they depend on is dew, which they have in fairly large amounts. But, it is the rainfall they need the most. Even the springs and their wells in Israel must be recharged with rainfall every year or they will fail.

Elsewhere Moses describes Canaan as a well-watered land, particularly in the story where Lot was leaving Abraham. He chose the spot near Sodom and Gomorrah.

But, the destruction that later happened to that area some little time after Lot went there has changed the whole geography. Now it is just only the salt Dead Sea. So, it is not the same that it was.

But, that image of Israel being a well-watered land is a true one. The whole land was. Perhaps at the time that plain was more inviting to Lot than the rest of Israel. But still, Israel is a very fertile place when it gets the water that it needs.

It is very interesting here that Moses uses the image, "the land drinks water from the rain of heaven." What a beautiful image. What a true image that is.

Rain by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

The land of Israel is almost entirely underlain with a fractured dolomite limestone. And when rainwater falls on the land and the rock, it acts like a sponge and drinks most of it all up. This becomes their ground water stored in the fractured limestone structure. Even though there is a bit of evaporation, if it did not have this porous fractured stone structure, it might all runoff back to the sea quickly, and there would not be a store for them to use. The substratum acts as an aquifer year by year.

Also, the tilt of the angle of the fractured rock is from west to east, and a bit downward. And so when the rainwater hits the sides of the land and the mountains, it goes into the formations and follows these fractures from west to east. Therefore, on the eastern side of the mountains that hardly gets any rain, it is watered by springs. That water has traveled through that rock to the other side and comes out as springs which water the land and feeds the Jordan River.

God crafted this land to be a very habitable, fertile, well-watered land.

We also need to talk about Israel's climate for a moment. Just about every type of climate the earth has can be found in the land of Israel—cold and snow, heat and desert, high alpine elevation, to lush subtropical lowlands—it is all there.

I need to back up a moment and tell you about Israel's variation in rainfall patterns. In the far north toward Lebanon, almost 40 inches of rain falls every year. That is quite a bit of moisture. However, in the far south in what is known as the Negev they barely receive an inch of rain. It is a land of extremes in rainfall amounts.

Jerusalem receives about 24 inches of rain a year. This is about the same amount of rain that London England receives. However, Jerusalem has this 24 inches in about 50 rainy days a year. London has their 24 inches in about 150 days. London gets their rain in very small amounts over a longer period of time, whereas Jerusalem gets theirs in their distinct rainy season.

Generally rainfall totals diminish as one travels south. It also decreases from west to east. So the northwest is wetter, the driest is in the southeast. But, there is another fact involved also. Rainfall is more plentiful the higher one goes in elevation. So, the central mountains on the western slopes are better watered than the coastal plain back toward the Mediterranean Sea.

Then, the eastern slopes of the mountains which run down through central Israel is basically dry. They are in a rain shadow. As the prevailing winds from the west have picked up moisture from the Mediterranean and they bring it inland over Israel, it begins

Rain by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

to rise up toward the mountain slopes. As it rises toward the peaks, it begins to cool. It begins forming showers until finally raining itself out on the western slopes.

Then as the air comes down over the other side of the mountains, it begins to warm again, and is much drier. And unless it picks up moisture from the Gulf of Aqaba, or the Persian Gulf, it remains dry on and over toward and past Iran.

This is why the northwestern sides of the mountains are so green, while the southeastern sides are drier. This may be why Israelites considered north and west to have positive connotations. That might make an interesting Bible study for you.

One more detail: Israel has only two seasons in the year. There is the warm and dry season, and the cool and wet season. They really do not have what many here would think of as spring, summer, fall, or winter. Their temperatures are fairly moderate, although they cool off quite a bit in winter. But the main differences are whether there is rain or not.

You have read of the expressions, "The early and later rains?" I am going to explain that now. The rainy season begins about mid-October or early November with the "early rains." We Americans might think of the early rains as in the spring of the new year like March or April. But to them, they thought of it as the beginning of the rainy season.

These are usually moderate showers of rain. Israel has almost no misty days, but rather rain falls in showers. What this does is to help sprout the wheat and barley that the farmers have sown. They sow winter wheat, and winter barley in the fall to take advantage of the moderate temperatures and the soft early rains.

The bulk of the rain falls during the months of December, January, and February. These are their winter rains. They tend to be heavy, and provide the bulk of the year's total rainfall.

The latter rains, also known as the spring rains, are from mid-March to mid-April. These are usually lighter rains. These are the rains that help to mature the wheat and barley crops. Without them the crop would not mature properly. They are, then, a great blessing. Bread grains are the staff of life.

So then, the remainder of the year from May until mid-October [from right after the Days of Unleavened Bread, until after the Feast of Tabernacles] was very typically dry. Almost no rain falls then for about five to six months.

Now I have not given this to you just as a lecture. I want to use this.

Deuteronomy 11:10-11 "For the land which you go to possess is not like the land of Egypt from which you have come, where you sowed your seed and watered it by foot, as a vegetable garden; but the land which you cross over to possess is a land of hills and valleys, which drinks water from the rain of heaven,...

These two verses bring out another important point. Yes, Egypt had the Nile, and it overflowed its banks each year. And when it overflowed it lasted about 3 months—100 days. And so they had the benefit of the silt and the water that nourished their fields. But that was for only three months of the year. Nature did that part of the work for them. But the other nine months of the year, in order to have food, they had to draw water from the Nile, and put it in the canals where it might irrigate some of their fields.

Moses mentioned where they watered by foot. What did that mean? Most scholars think that he is referring to a water wheel that was powered by foot, maybe by a bicycling motion, turning a shaft/axle that might draw water up out of the Nile, and deposit it in a canal behind where it then flows into the fields.

But all this was done by manpower. It was not just that they could divert the Nile, but they had to actually draw water out of the Nile by manpower. If they did not use something like this, they had to manually draw it up with pots or buckets and carry them to the canals and fields.

And so, in growing food in Egypt, it took a great deal of manpower—a lot of heavy labor.

However, God watered Israel through rainfall. The contrast here is manpower to produce food, versus God's power to produce food.

The important point is a spiritual one. Whereas the Egyptians were depended upon their own labor, and their own ingenuity, Israel was forced to depend on God's providence—for rain, and thus their abundance. Either God sent the rain, or He did not. And that depended upon the Israelite's obedience. That was the subject of these verses. If Israel obeyed, He would send them rain. But, if they disobeyed, then He would not—sorry, out-a-luck.

The rains were used by God to either bless or curse Israel.

Rain by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

Deuteronomy 11:13-17 And it shall be that if you earnestly obey My commandments which I command you today, to love the LORD your God and serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul, then I will give you the rain for your land in its season, the early rain and the latter rain, that you may gather in your grain, your new wine, and your oil. And I will send grass in your fields for your livestock, that you may eat and be filled.' Take heed to yourselves, lest your heart be deceived, and you turn aside and serve other gods and worship them, lest the LORD'S anger be aroused against you, and He shut up the heavens so that there be no rain, and the land yield no produce, and you perish quickly from the good land which the LORD is giving you.

So, among other factors, God placed Israel in this land for a particular purpose, and a particular reason. He wanted them to be dependent upon Him. And, He wanted this land to be a tool to test them. He wanted their survival to be linked to faith and obedience—their very physical survival to be linked to their faith and obedience.

Think about it. It is a pattern that God uses. He had already used it with them. In the wilderness, what did He do? What is the verb used with manna? "He rained down manna from heaven." "He rained down quail for them to eat." He provided for them directly. He wanted them to see the one-to-one correspondence between Him and the food that they ate—between Him and their ability to live and be sustained.

And so He just continued the same process in the Promised Land.

In this case, after they came into the land, they grew their own foodstuffs, they still needed God to supply them the rain that made the production of food possible. And it was not just for their crops, but also the fodder for their livestock. They were dependent on God to send them the rain so that their pastures would have grass for their livestock.

In May after the rains stop, the grass begins to wither during the heat of the day. How many times have you read in the Bible about how quickly the grass withers? It comes up in the morning, and by the heat of the day it is withered and gone. If they did not have the dew that He sent, there would be no grass at all after the rains stop.

So, they were entirely dependent upon God's providence for both their crops and livestock health.

For a carnal people living in an agrarian society, this rainfall—carrot and stick

Rain by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

method—was an effective tool for God. He was able to teach them lessons this way, and they were able to see very clearly that when they disobeyed, the rain stopped, and when they obeyed, God gave them rain, and they had prosperity.

We will see this when God had told them this in one of the blessings and cursings chapters written forty years before. He, from the beginning of His dealings with them, had laid this out for them: The carrot—meaning obedience, doing well, prosperity—and the stick—meaning disobedience, not doing well, and punishment.

Leviticus 26:3-5 If you walk in My statutes and keep My commandments, and perform them, then [if/then = cause and effect] I will give you rain in its season, the land shall yield its produce, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. Your threshing shall last till the time of vintage, and the vintage shall last till the time of sowing; you shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely.

And the other side of this:

Leviticus 26:18-20 And after all this, if you do not obey Me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins. I will break the pride of your power; I will make your heavens like iron and your earth like bronze. And your strength shall be spent in vain; for your land shall not yield its produce, nor shall the trees of the land yield their fruit.

So, God makes no bones about it. The control of the weather is in His hands, and it is entirely dependent on whether they will obey Him or not.

And God repeats this to them right before they go into the land so that they no doubt about it whatsoever.

Deuteronomy 28:11-12 "And the LORD will grant you plenty of goods, in the fruit of your body, in the increase of your livestock, and in the produce of your ground, in the land of which the LORD swore to your fathers to give you. The LORD will open to you His good treasure, the heavens, to give the rain to your land in its season, and to bless all the work of your hand.

Deuteronomy 28:23 "And your heavens which are over your head shall be bronze, and the earth which is under you shall be iron. The LORD will change

Rain by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

the rain of your land to powder and dust; from the heaven it shall come down on you until you are destroyed.

God makes sure that there is no doubt in the Israelite mind that He controls their weather. If they obey Him, He will give them prosperity through abundant rainfall on their fertile soil. However, if they turn aside to idolatry, and other disobedience, He is going to turn off their heavenly spigot. They will then suffer. He is at the controls. And, it all depends upon them whether they will listen and heed Him doing what He asks them to do, or they will not listen to Him, and go after other gods, spurn Him, and get punished by Him.

The suffering is used as a prod, though, to repent. God does not immediately turn off the spigot, and make them suffer immediately. Typically it is a prolonged thing where it gets worse, and worse. He does not want to hit them with a sledgehammer first thing. He wants to give them time to repent.

As we see, then, in all these passages that God warns them sternly and pleadingly to be careful to observe all His commands so that he can continue to bless them. He does not want to see them suffer. But, He will let them suffer if it will bring about the right result—repentance, and righteousness.

This was a thing that Israel had known for a long time. God was not giving them something new when He spoke Leviticus 26, or Deuteronomy 28. We can look at some examples that are older, such as Elihu's speech to Job, where he tried to get him to remember the greatness and sovereignty of God—something Job forgot during his self-justification and self-righteousness. He had forgotten what God really is. So Elihu in his speech tries to get Job to remember God Himself.

Job 36:24-26 Remember to magnify His work, of which men have sung. Everyone has seen it; man looks on it from afar. Behold, God is great, and we do not know Him; nor can the number of His years be discovered.

He is trying to give Job the idea, "Let's think about God, here, about how awesome He is. We cannot figure out either how long He has existed because He has existed for ever; and the things that He is able to do are just astounding." Elihu then gives some examples.

Job 36:27-29 For He draws up drops of water, which distill as rain from the

Rain by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

mist, which the clouds drop down and pour abundantly on man. Indeed, can anyone understand the spreading of clouds, the thunder from His canopy?

I need to interject here. Meteorologists and climatologists are astounded by clouds. They cannot figure them out very well. They do not know all the ways that clouds affect weather and climate. They are still scratching their heads about what part this has to play in the global climate. So, Elihu's remarks are proven true here.

Job 36:30-31 Look, He scatters his light upon it, and covers the depths of the sea. For by these He judges the peoples; He gives food in abundance.

Elihu knew long before that weather is an instrument that God uses to judge or bless.

Job 36:32-33 He covers His hands with lightning, and commands it to strike. His thunder declares it, the cattle also, concerning the rising storm.

Job 37:5-14 "God thunders marvelously with His voice; He does great things which we cannot comprehend.

"For He says to the snow, 'Fall on the earth'; likewise to the gentle rain and the heavy rain of His strength. He seals the hand of every man, that all men may know His work. The beasts go into dens, and remain in their lairs. From the chamber of the south comes the whirlwind, and cold from the scattering winds of the north. By the breath of God ice is given, and the broad waters are frozen. Also with moisture He saturates the thick clouds; He scatters His bright clouds. And they swirl about, being turned by His guidance, that they may do whatever He commands them on the face of the whole earth. He causes it to come, whether for correction, or for His land, or for mercy.

"Listen to this, O Job; stand still and consider the wondrous works of God.

The weather, and even more—the climate—are prime examples of God's power and providence. We should be able to look up at the sky any time of the day or night, and see God's hand in what is going on up there, whether sunshine or rain, whether wind, snow, ice, hail, or just the movement of the clouds—and the fact that we have air to breathe. You name it, God's hand is in it. He controls the weather.

Rain by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

Now, meteorologists, and climatologists have been trying to understand how weather and climate systems work for centuries. They have been taking readings and measurements of temperature, air pressure, and noticing patterns of weather, from all points of the earth. We now have scientific methods where we can drill into arctic ice and snow packs and determine from its content and appearance what might have been going on at that time from the gasses trapped in it, and the organic compounds contained therein, what the weather was like thousands of years ago. It is all there to see.

But an honest meteorologist or climatologist will tell you that while our climate models may be sophisticated, they are still rather simplistic and speculative regarding what is really going on.

Now this has played a major part in the climate change hysteria. Part of the problem can be laid at the feet of meteorologists who fed their radical assumptions into these computer models. And then, they took the resulting output, not as educated theory, but as bonafide facts. Remember, they really do not know how things affect the atmosphere as much as they think they do, the numbers they plugged into the models that caused all this problem was just astounding. No one in their right mind would believe that carbon dioxide levels would go up that high. That is one of the things that alarm them so. If you listen to Al Gore any at all, he is always going on about carbon dioxide levels.

Well, carbon dioxide is a naturally occurring gas that plants need to grow. Combined with water in the presence of sunlight, the plants make sugar and other carbohydrates from carbon dioxide. Carbon dioxide is not the enemy.

What they did was to plug in these atrocious numbers and produce this "hockey stick" graph that they used to spread their alarm with. It has been entirely debunked.

And so as newer, more accurate climate models come online, the IPCC, the UN climate group, has had to reduce their original numbers because their first numbers were grossly exaggerated. So now they are saying that instead of the great rise in temperature over the next 50 or 100 years that expected will now only probably be less than one degree Celsius. There is not any alarm to be sounded.

So, because of these exaggerations from these climate models that were only assumptions, they were the inspiration for motion pictures like "The Day After Tomorrow," "An Inconvenient Truth," and others that argues for sudden, dramatic, and catastrophic climate change. But, there is nothing to support such stuff.

Rain by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

I know that one of the things that Al Gore has said, that because of this sudden warming up in the arctic ice cap region, that the ocean levels would rise something like 13 to 20 feet. But now, with the new models, the amended output is only a few inches or so.

Things are getting warmer, but it is not this dramatic, catastrophic change. It is a normal thing that has been going on for centuries with fluctuations of global temperatures.

And now, in some circles, a new global ice age is coming. Go figure. But, be aware.

Now, we could have said, had we been thinking about this in a better fashion when this all came about, that this dramatic, catastrophic climate change could not happen without God's approval. God has put so many safeguards and regulators into the earth's systems that unless He takes a direct hand in all of this, conditions would soon return to climatic norms.

A hurricane develops, gets very strong, moves inland with great destruction, and moves on, and then weakening until it dissipates into nothing again—normalcy returns. That does not say that the effects of the hurricane were not bad, because they were, but the hurricane is actually a way for the atmosphere to release a lot of stored up energy. It is a regulator that God has put into the system of climate control on this earth. That energy has to go someplace, so it ends up in a big storm. In the main, most of these storms do not do much damage. Most are not strong, and most occur over the open waters, and do not come near land.

The problem is, though, that humans have put themselves in the path of these cyclical storms by building and living in places that periodically get them.

It is not God's fault that these deaths occur. It is man's fault and foolishness for building and living where they do—on the sand rather than on the rock, as it were.

In the short term, when some big weather event occurs, typically it happens and is over fairly quick. Maybe some tornado develops, maybe hits a barn or home, and then typically dissipates within minutes.

The climate will return to normal. God has built these safeguards in so that we can look over centuries of time and see that the basic climate of some region has not changed within certain small variations.

Longer cyclical warming and cooling trends are so extended—maybe dozens or even hundreds of years—that people readily adapt to them. You do not get the scenario of

Rain by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

the movie, "The Day After Tomorrow," in which suddenly, everything is frozen down to the southern U.S., and people had to flee beyond the Mexican border to find a temperate place to live. Now this just does not happen. New York is not going to freeze up overnight. It is not the way that God made the earth to work.

Perhaps this is a contrary position from what is in vogue these days, but the Bible and history shows that this is true. It does not take much to look back into history and discover that the crusaders reported the same type of weather occurring in Jerusalem elsewhere in the Middle East that we find there today. It is the same in England that it has always been within a certain amount of variation. God has put it within the earth's systems to do this—to make things have a norm.

Weather disasters, though they happen, and it is a terrible thing that they cause death and destruction, are few in number. Usually the extreme death tolls can be blamed on human foolishness.

Now, I want to show how the Bible uses rain as a symbol.

Genesis 2:4-6 This is the history of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, before any plant of the field was in the earth and before any herb of the field had grown. For the LORD God had not caused it to rain on the earth, and there was no man to till the ground; but a mist went up from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground.

As you know I am wont to do, I like to go to a first mention of a thing in scripture. And, this is the first mention of rain. And, in accordance with the rule of the first mention, it provides the foundational understanding of the term. In this case, God gives rain to the earth. God gives rain to the earth—that is foundational understanding of rain in the Bible.

Weather and climate are entirely within His preview. He is in control over His creation. It is a part of His sovereign will. Now whether the subject is global climate systems, or rain, or sunshine over Happytown, USA, God is in charge. He is there on His throne, at work, regulating the atmosphere, and how powerful it is. He has control over it.

I also want to show you that this understanding continues—God is in control of the weather, and rain in particular. This next passage is at the coronation of king Saul. And Samuel is once again warning them about what they have done in asking for a king.

(We will be breaking into the middle of the speech here.)

I Samuel 12:13 "Now therefore, here is the king whom you have chosen and whom you have desired. And take note, the LOORD has set a king over you.

Even though they had asked for the king, God decided that He would do so, and He chose their king.

I Samuel 12:14-19 "If you fear the LOORD and serve Him and obey His voice, and do not rebel against the commandment of the LOORD, then both you and the king who reigns over you will continue following the LOORD your God. However, if you do not obey the voice of the LOORD, but rebel against the commandment of the LOORD, then the hand of the LOORD will be against you, as it was against your fathers.

"Now therefore, stand and see this great thing which the LOORD will do before your eyes: Is today not the wheat harvest? I will call to the LOORD, and He will send thunder and rain, that you may perceive and see that your wickedness is great, which you have done in the sight of the LOORD, in asking a king for yourselves." So Samuel called to the LOORD, and the LOORD sent thunder and rain that day; and all the people greatly feared the LOORD and Samuel. And all the people said to Samuel, "Pray for your servants to the LOORD your God, that we may not die; for we have added to all our sins the evil of asking a king for ourselves."

(I do not think we need to go further today, but you may want to come back on your own and read down to about verse 25 to see how it all turns out.)

Here is an example of God's continuing control over the weather, and rain in particular. At first glance, this seems to be just another miracle, in the same vein as what Elijah, or Elisha might do. But, remember what we learned about the dry and the rainy seasons in Palestine? When is the wheat harvested? Generally near Pentecost. And when is Pentecost? It is no earlier than mid-May, and no later than mid-June. So, when God sends a thunderstorm in the Pentecost season, what was He showing them? He was showing them His control over the earth, the atmosphere, and the weather. It almost never rained in Israel after the beginning of May. And it certainly would not have been thunderstorms. There usually was not enough "juice" in the sky for something like that to naturally happen. It was dry. The climate is typically arid after early May.

But God put some moisture in the air and astounded the people. And beyond that, they were afraid for their crops, because rain in wheat harvest could ruin the crop—make it shrivel, make it lay down and hard to harvest, and even mold and mildew. You do not want rain when the wheat is ripe and dry for harvest. That is a bad thing.

So, God was showing His sovereignty and His ability to bless or curse them depending on their activities and decisions. And it could change on a dime.

What He was showing was that this weather problem was a direct result of their asking for a king.

The question for us, then, is does He still work this way today?

We would be fools to think that God changed His ways. We know from scripture that He says to the sons of Jacob, "I change not!" And that same Yahweh, Jesus Christ, is the same yesterday, today, and forever! He still uses the same patterns. He is still trying to get the attention of His people Israel. Perhaps not as directly as in ancient Israel, because He is spending most of His time trying to get the attention of His own church. But, He is still making a witness against them. Extremes of weather, particularly rain and drought, are still under God's control. And He uses these calamities to bless for obedience, and curse for sin.

There is an end-time prophecy in Ezekiel 13 that will show us how it all comes out.

Ezekiel 13:1-14 And the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel who prophesy, and say to those who prophesy out of their own heart, 'Hear the word of the LORD!'" Thus says the Lord GOD: "Woe to the foolish prophets, who follow their own spirit and have seen nothing! O Israel, your prophets are like foxes in the deserts. You have not gone up into the gaps to build a wall for the house of Israel to stand in battle on the day of the LORD. They have envisioned futility and false divination, saying, 'Thus says the LORD!' But the LORD has not sent them; yet they hope that the word may be confirmed. Have you not seen a futile vision, and have you not spoken false divination? You say, 'The LORD says,' but I have not spoken." Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: "Because you have spoken nonsense and envisioned lies, therefore I am indeed against you," says the Lord GOD. My hand will be against the prophets who envision futility and who divine lies; they shall not be in the assembly of My people, nor be written in the record of the house of Israel, nor shall they enter into the land of Israel. Then you shall know that I am the Lord GOD.

"Because, indeed, because they have seduced My people, saying, 'Peace!' when there is no peace—and one builds a wall, and they plaster it with untempered mortar—say to those who plaster it with untempered mortar, that it will fall. There will be flooding rain, and you, O great hailstones, shall fall; and a stormy wind shall tear it down. Surely, when the wall has fallen, will it not be said to you, 'Where is the mortar with which you plastered it?'" Therefore thus says the Lord GOOD: "I will cause a stormy wind to break forth in My fury; and there shall be a flooding rain in My anger, and great hailstones in fury to consume it. So I will break down the wall you have plastered with untempered mortar, and bring it down to the ground, so that its foundation will be uncovered; it will fall, and you shall be consumed in the midst of it. Then you shall know that I am the LOORD.

God takes full aim at the prophets of Israel for their lies and false visions. This is the ministry that He is talking about—the religious leaders of the modern people of Israel. God sees. He hears what they are doing. He hears what they preach from their pulpits. He sees what they are out there doing. And He tells them, very plainly right here, "You are speaking nonsense! What comes from your mouth makes no sense at all!" Their vision of the future is entirely wrong. It is vain, He says, and futile—worthless, of no account, no good. They call for peace, but they ignore reality. There can be no peace in the midst of sin. And what is there message? "You are okay with God. He loves you. You can go on and do whatever you want, but He will always welcome you back."

As my dad said earlier in the announcements here in Charlotte, "It is what you are, not what you do." This was from Rich Warren in a recent interview.

So, you can do whatever you want to do, basically, "It is what you feel in your heart that is so important." This is utterly bunk. Because, what you do is what you are. It is not some silly intention. We all know where that leads to.

Only true righteousness brings peace. Yet, they have not called for righteousness. That would have filled the gaps in the wall. But they did not ask for it. Their solutions to the problems are weak and shallow—they are window dressing. And when the pressure comes, in whatever form it comes, those defenses will be shown for what they are—nothing. They will collapse, and the underlying problems, their foundations (verse 14) will be exposed, and it will bring on the downfall of Israel.

And who's fault is it? The ministry, along with the fault of the people who did not make

Rain by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

their ministers accountable.

So, the image God uses for this pressure is flooding rain, stormy wind, and hail. These are all elements in His arsenal. He brings on the disasters that expose the moral weaknesses of the Israelites, which He blames a large part upon their ministers.

And He says their teaching did not come from Him, but from their own wicked hearts, influenced by Satan, and his evil world; and they deceived the people away from God.

Now in Isaiah 45:8 rain has another, similar image. But, this one is more positive.

Isaiah 45:8 "Rain down, you heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness; let the earth open, let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together. I, the LORD, have created it.

The image's main attribute, here, is abundance, just like it was before in the negative example above in Ezekiel 13. But this time the abundance is benign. It is a good thing. It does not produce destruction this time, but rather salvation.

Look at this one a bit more closely. Where does this rain come from? The heavens. And, the heavens are the place of God's abode. So, this rain, like the other, comes directly from Him. It comes from Heaven. But, its substance is righteousness. Rain, in this case, is a symbol of righteousness falling down from God, and giving it to His people.

So, God is the source of righteousness, and He provides it abundantly through His Spirit.

Now, it goes on to say, "Let the earth open." Earth is the abode of mankind. And in the image, it opens up to receive the righteous rain. And in doing so, it eventually produces righteousness in itself, and salvation ultimately.

So God declares that this is the Creation that He is doing now. He is raining down righteousness. And those who are willing to open up to it, and use it to produce righteousness in themselves, will ultimately be saved. This is another way of saying that He is working out salvation in the midst of the earth. And He uses the image of abundant rainfall coming from Him. It is His sending of abundant rainfall of righteousness that will produce His crop of sons and daughters for His kingdom.

Rain by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

In conclusion, here is a New Testament reference to the early and latter rains. It is hard to be patient when what we see out in the world seems as if God is withholding the rain of righteousness from the earth. The earth continues to devolve into sin, and all we see is things getting worse, and worse. But, we must persevere and endure to the end. And that is what James says here:

James 5:7 Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain.

That references the beginning of the process, and the end of the process—the righteousness that starts you out on your spiritual adventure with God, and the One who brings you to fruition—the early and latter rains.

James 5:8-11 You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door! My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience. Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.

James 5:17-18 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.

We have the promise that Jesus Christ is at the very door. And we have a relatively short time to wait. So, we have to be like the prophets, and Job, and Elijah, patiently waiting and praying for God to mercifully break the [spiritual] drought and send His life giving rain once again.