

Faith Leaders and Climate Change

Is It Too Late? Looking at our motivation for action for climate justice

The question a lot of people have been asking is, have we left it too late to act against Climate Change? Is the world set on a course for destruction and there is nothing we can do about it?

Stefan Skrimshire, writer and activist responds:

“it is only faith that can truly leave open what is possible in such a world. ...Perhaps to have faith in a time of collapse is to leave open to God what the purpose of our actions are.”

Stefan’s theology is summarised at the bottom of this document. His thinking is distinctively Christian but draws out themes that will provoke thought in a multi faith context.

You are invited to listen to short podcasts from different faith perspectives, then attend a Zoom meeting to discuss the questions below, and pledge to action

- Does an acceptance of uncertainty in this life resonate with your faith?
- Does your faith promote or question the centrality of human life in creation?
- How do you experience the call to act for good in the face of climate catastrophe?
- Are you inspired by the example of other people? Certain Scriptural texts, like the Book of Job? Or particular beliefs, like in a creator God?
- How does your trust in God’s good intention and knowledge of the ‘bigger picture’ impact on your climate activism?
- Are you inspired by hope and trust, or by need and injustice?

Is it too late? By Stefan Skrimshire

Some Christians reflect wider thinking and believe that it is too late to act for climate change. This thinking leads some Christians to say that because it is too late for human action, so the important question is only whether it is too late for God’s action as well (p.97). On this basis, they are passively waiting for God’s act of redemption. Others do act for climate change despite the seeming futility of their actions because they are essentially acting to resist despair rather than to effect climate change (p.98).

As a challenge to both approaches, Skrimshire proposes that Christians question the ‘too late’ belief as a legacy of secular, not religious, thinking. He argues that anxiety about whether it is too late to act is founded on a desire for absolute certainty but Christian faith has a different starting point. Uncertainty is intrinsic to our faith in the future; we look for the coming of the Kingdom of God that we can’t really imagine, indeed one we believe will exceed all human expectation. Christians believe we are called to be part of bringing about this kingdom; that we are to act from faith, and moreover, not to expect immediate visible

success in secular terms. Yet, still we are to strive for something beyond what we currently comprehend.

Just as all our actions in history are done without any certainty of the end times, Christian climate activism does not require the visible and acknowledged success for which secular activism hungers. We act because of our faith, not because we know what comes ahead.

To reinforce this idea, Skrimshire draws on specific biblical resources. He refers to the Book of Job (prophet Ayyub in Islam) who reaches a point in his relationship with God where he surrenders his demand for certainty and acknowledges the greatness of creator God over all things beyond his own comprehension. This knowledge came to Job through suffering and loss.

Skrimshire also points to Matt. 24.42 which exhorts listeners to act in accordance with faith and readiness at all times; “because you do not know on what day your Lord will come”. He argues that attempts to map out the path of humanity and write off climate activism as futile is based on a non-biblical human understanding of our future. In fact only God can claim knowledge of our future; Our role is to do what is right for the here and now.

Time to Act – A resource book by Christians in Extinction Rebellion