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***“Climate Change Prediction and Biblical Prophecy”***  
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The world's two largest energy-producing countries and greenhouse gas emitters signed a deal this week to reduce carbon emissions. President Barack Obama agreed to cut U.S. carbon emissions about a quarter by 2025 and China's President Xi Jinping agreed to increase to 20 percent the share of his country's production of power without the use of fossil fuels by 2030.

This is significant, especially given recent climate reports. This month, the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) revealed that the worldwide mean temperature will increase by more than 3 degrees by 2100. The Pentagon recently issued its "2014 Climate Change Adaptation Roadmap," laying out changes to military strategy needed to address effects of climate change. These include rising global temperatures and sea levels, changing precipitation patterns and increasing frequency or intensity of extreme weather.

Despite the high-level science and the policy changes, a survey taken by Yale University in 2013 indicated only two-thirds of Americans think climate change is happening and only a half think it will affect them.

And American political culture contains a large segment of climate-change deniers, a belief promoted by the media and politicians. Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell's negative response to the American-Chinese agreement is case-in-point.

Why is this? Because climate change is about predicting the future, and that is always an uncertain process. Since the future has not happened, it is imaginary and cannot be proven. While scientists and policy makers can talk about past and present trends, the extension of those trends into the future is a tricky and inexact process.

But, perhaps more importantly, climate change just happens to be the wrong kind of process for effective predictive warnings.

A look at Old Testament prophecy in its historical context indicates the problem: prophets talk about current circumstances. They ask for near-term action. Haggai and Zechariah reveal that God wants the Jerusalem Temple rebuilt, and within 5 years, the governor and high priest build it. Jonah goes to Nineveh, after he escapes from the whale, and prophesies that God

will destroy the city unless its inhabitants repent. They do and God relents.

In 1 Kings 22, the prophet Micaiah prophesies to the allied kings of Israel and Judah they will lose the impending battle if they fight. They ignore him, charge into battle, and are defeated.

So, effective biblical prophecy speaks about the short-term and seeks to bring about a particular action. Climate change prediction does neither of those things.

On the one hand, climate change predictions look too far into the future. Citing temperature rise in 2100, three generations away, does not inspire an immediate response. It is too far away to get worried about it. Even 2025 and 2030 are beyond many people's "worry horizon."

On the other hand, when climate change discusses the short-term, it is too late to do anything about it. The Pentagon's report focuses on how to handle the effects of climate change already taking place. Its tone is "this is happening, deal with it."

When NASA tells us that nine of the 10 warmest years on record have been since 2000, it has already happened. And will reducing carbon emissions now do anything to prevent temperature rise in the next four or five years? No, the carbon that will cause that rise already is in the air.

So, climate change predictions are either too far into the future to inspire action or they are too near-term to affect the outcome. The processes by which human emissions are transformed into climate change simply take too long.

Does this mean that we should do nothing? Of course not. The Chinese-American agreement is important and will set the stage for further agreements at the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris.

This column simply aims to lay out the PR problem facing policy makers who wish to lessen the coming impact of climate change. Perhaps they should take a page from the biblical prophets' playbook. They should promote actions people can take now that will have an impact within the next few years, rather than in the next few decades or centuries.