

Big Q's ?

Part 2: The Green Movement...A Biblical Perspective July 11, 2010

What would Jesus think about the Green Movement?" Would the environment, global warming, recycling and conservation be at the top of His agenda? Is there a connection between your worldview and how you view the stewardship of creation? Should Christians support Earth Day?

I. A little history...

- A. **PP Pix** April 22, 2010 celebrated the 40th anniversary of Earth day in the US. Originally devised as a student-led initiative for promoting environmental causes, Earth Day is now observed globally by over half a billion people according to the Earth Day Network. How did the green movement get to this point?
- B. **1800's: PP Pix** Henry David Thoreau, *On Walden's Pond or Life in the Woods* (1854) advocates simple living and in his book *Maine Woods*(1864), called for the conservation of and respect for nature and the federal preservation of virgin forests. Beginning in the **1860s**, the United States government saw fit to create parks and set aside wild lands for public good. Yosemite was made our first national park in 1872 the same year Audubon Society was founded. John Muir was elected president of the new Sierra Club in 1892. Teddy Roosevelt's visit to Yosemite in 1903 gained national publicity and by 1916 the National Park Service had been established with leadership by Stephen Mather.
- C. **The 40's and 50's:** Focused on land management and dealing with catastrophes. The 1948 disaster at Donora (called the "death fog") prompted national outcry; also during this time David Brower became Executive Director of the Sierra Club (1952).
- D. **The 60's: PP Pix** Rachel Carson's book (1962) *Silent Spring* becomes the environmental cry of a new generation. She is

generally credited with being the founder of the environmental movement and her influence in her advocacy of banning synthetic chemical pesticides is legendary. The Wilderness Act was passed in 1964 to limit the construction of dams and other structures on important lands and landmarks. During these years the Environmental Protection Agency was founded.

- E. **70's:** The early 1970s saw the rise of the modern green movement. The National Environmental Policy Act, the Clean Air Act, the founding of Earth Day, the banning of DDT, the Water Pollution Control Act, and the Endangered Species Act (which the Supreme Court upheld in 1977). Disasters at Love Canal in 1978 and Three Mile Island in 1979 terrified the public with the visible consequences of toxic waste, pollution, and contamination
- F. **80's:** Our first huge oil spill was the **PP Exxon Valdez** in 1989 There is a significant backlash from industry against environmental strictures, and everyday Americans begin to wonder what the real agenda is of the Green Movement is.
- G. **90's:** The face of the radical environmentalism is seen through groups like **PP PETA**, Earth First and ELF. Media plays a part and makes **PP "tree huggers"** look either heroic or idiotic depending on your world view. Passionate young activists famously chained themselves to or took up residence in trees to save them! Climate change, vegetarianism and criminal publicity stunts place Americans in one of two camps.
- H. **2000's:** **PP Al Gore's film**, An Inconvenient Truth seared the global warming into the popular consciousness. Suddenly, the problems were obvious everywhere you looked: our food was chemically treated and genetically modified, our water was contaminated with toxic chemicals, our resources were running out, our wasteful habits were filling landfills, and gas prices were soaring – to name but a few key issues that have spurred millions to “go green”. Coupled with natural

disasters like **PP Katrina**, a global tsunami and the BP oil spill of 2010 and the country finds itself in an agitated state of discontent.

II. What are the Biblical principles for the care/stewardship of the Earth?

A. The **Creator/God** principle:

1. There is a *Creator* ([Genesis 1:1](#), [Exodus 20:11](#)) who made the earth. God created a world that was perfect ([Genesis 1:31](#)), but because of the sin of our ancestor Adam, creation was cursed ([Genesis 3:17–19](#), [Romans 8:20](#)). This is the only reason there is even “room” to improve creation: that it has become *imperfect*.
2. Result: God, the Creator of all things, rules over all and deserves our worship and adoration. Part of that worship is caring for His creation, the world.

B. The **ownership** principle:

1. Since God created the earth and therefore He is the rightful owner. The Earth and all that lives in it are *His* ([Hebrews 2:8](#));
 - *Psalm 95:5 The sea is his, and he made it'.*
 - *Psalm 24:1 The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof'.*
 - *Heb.2:8: Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet.*
2. **Illustration:** If everything we have comes from God, we don't own the creation we are just the groundskeepers. Ex Dodger stadium is cared for by a heads groundskeeper but the stadium is owned by Frank McCourt. **PP Pix**

C. The **Stewardship** principle:

1. He has *commissioned* humankind to care for creation ([Genesis 1:26–28](#), [2:15](#)). Though there will one day be a new Earth, Christians have a responsibility to steward the earth till that day comes.

2. The “Dominion mandate”: Who has the right to rule over the earth? We do! Dominion means to rule, to administer, to work, and to take care of the creation, not to lord over it in a tyrannical manner, or to needlessly destroy it.

Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish [Hebrew: "fill"] the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth (Gen.1:28). And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the Garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it (Gen.2:15).

- We are superior to the animals and therefore have a special responsibility, to care for what has been entrusted to us by our Creator. From the beginning God entrusted man with His creation. **Active human stewardship of the Earth is also recognition of the fact that humans have the most prominent role in God's creation.** Men and women were created in the image of God, given a privileged place among creatures, and commanded to exercise stewardship over the earth.

3. How should we do it?

- Treat animals properly *“A righteous man has regard for the life of his beast; the compassion of the wicked is cruel”.* *Proverbs 12:10*) because God cares for them (*Look at the birds of the air...your heavenly Father feeds them Matthew 6:26.*
- Act as watchful stewards of our natural resources, by managing and conserving resources to ensure they are not wasted. Joseph’s famine planning was brilliant. (Genesis 41:34–36).
- **True “environmentalism” is obedience to God.** How is God concerned for the creation? *He clothes the lilies of the field so that 'even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these'. Not even a sparrow falls without God's knowledge and permission. Matthew 6:28-29.* If God is so concerned about living things, shouldn't we be similarly concerned? We should want to eliminate or

minimize needless harm to the world and its occupants.

D. The **Consequence** principle

1. By disobeying God's Law, humankind brought on itself moral and physical corruption as well as divine condemnation in the form of a curse on the earth. Since the fall into sin people have often ignored their Creator, and abused his creation.
2. The Bible makes it very clear that this Earth is a temporary place that will be destroyed (*2 Peter 3:10, 12*), a specific curse that came as a result of the Fall (*Genesis 3:17–19, Romans 8:20*) and, ultimately none of our actions will “heal” the *Earth (Isaiah 51:6, 65:17; Romans 8:21; Hebrews 1:10–12;*
3. Example: Noah, a man, was responsible for saving the [land] *animals* from God's consequence for *human* sin. In the same way, we, today, have the responsibility to bear the burden of the Fall's environmental consequences, which fall not only on us, but on all of creation (Romans 8:22).
4. Conclusion: We as Christians *do* have an undeniable biblical basis for caring for the Earth. Sadly, non believing evolutionists have largely displaced Christians in the camp of those committed to environmental protection and caring for the Earth. **It is, therefore, our Christian duty to be passionate about this planet and to show a greater, truer and justifiable devotion for protecting the Earth than do non-Christians, most of whom who show no devotion to God!**

E. The **solitude** principle:

1. Numerous men of faith were called away from society to nature, and it was in nature that they communed with God. Consider the great number of Psalms that use metaphors from nature (*Psalms 23*). Throughout the

Bible, lush vegetation and clear streams are used to symbolize God’s love (Isaiah 32:15-17, 35:1-2, 6-7), just as barren deserts symbolize God’s curse (Jeremiah 23:10).

2. Look at how Jesus sought solitude and went away to pray: it was in Gethsemane ... a garden (Matthew 26:36), where He went *often* (John 18:2) went. This responsibility, to worship and seek God through understanding what God has created begins in Genesis, was upheld by Christ, and is our responsibility today.

III. Comparing World Views

- A. The dispute with radical environmentalism is not with the legitimate concern for the environment, but with the world view that is espoused. Stewardship/Creation Care: to protect and even to improve the environment for God’s glory and our benefit.
- B. * Ultimate view of man: “Man is no more important than any other species. It may well take our extinction to put things straight. David Foreman, Founder of Earthfirst! All of life, including man is one. Man is a part of nature, not above it. We therefore are an enemy because we use up resources and pollute the environment.

	Christian Steward	Radical Environmentalist
View of God	God is the owner of the earth. God is to be glorified.	Mother Earth is to be worshipped. Nature itself is deified.
Morality	Moral absolutes	Humanistic Relativism
Nature of Man	Sinful but made in God’s image.	Man is a plague equated with animals and less valuable than trees. *
Man’s role	Producer and Steward. Transform the earth from wilderness (curse) to garden (blessing)	Consumer and Polluter. Reduce human population

Land management Nature	Preserve it but maximize it	Don't touch it...nature knows best. Preserve nature untouched.
Rights	Human rights come first	Animal Rights come first
Resource Management	Reasonable Resource management	Unreasonable resource control
Risk Assessment	Manage the earth with careful stewardship.	Exaggerate Risk...use scare tactics! (ex. Global warming). Use bad science to scare people into doing something!
View of Earth	Enjoy it and use its resources responsibly.	Overly protect it and use its resources sparingly.
Ultimate Objective	Bring glory to God and other people into relationship with Him.	Controller of his own destiny and serve my own agenda.

IV. What can we do?

A. Creation Day vs. Earth Day

1. One step in the right direction could be if the church were to emphasize its desire to be a godly steward of creation through a "Creation Day" that would highlight the Christian view of the environment, rather than elevating the environment to a "godlike" status as Earth Day does. This way, the focus of the day would not be on "The Earth" in some pantheistic sense of "Mother Earth," but rather, the focus would be on *creation* and it's *Creator*. Maybe we can make a dent in the "humanist near-monopoly" on caring for the Earth.
2. A Creation Day could be focused on enjoying God's creation within the framework of Genesis: helping future generations understand the perfection of God's original creation and the consequences of the Fall. We will uphold God's commission for protecting the environment through practical acts of environmental

service: collecting litter, emphasizing recycling, reduction of waste, and planting trees.

B. Practical ways to steward the earth (care for God's creation)

1. Recycle paper, cans, plastic etc.
2. Take shorter showers...conserve water!
3. Walk more drive less
4. Don't litter: pick up your trash. Ex. Backpacking.

C. A Spiritual Approach

1. Make time for solitude, not just busyness!
2. Worship the Creator not just the creation!

D. Our Future...

1. This earth is not our home. And though we are commanded to care for it, we should not be controlled by it. Satan would love to make us in smug in our lifestyles, comfortable in our affluence and distracted by earthly endeavors. Some day we will have a new heaven and earth (**2 Peter 3:13 and Revelation 21:1**).
2. Most of all, we need to continue to adopt and develop a Christian environmental ethic based on the Bible, and we need to practice it. We need to take dominion, ruling over the earth and subduing it, gaining fruit for our labor, all the while understanding that our own sinful nature may blind us, and we must reject wanton and needless exploitation of the creation for selfish gain. There will be no better solution to the environmental crisis until God makes a new heaven and a new earth in which 'righteousness dwells'. Ken Ham, [Creation and conservation](#), *Creation* 17(4):20-23, 1995

Further Resources and Reading:

- ✓ Beisner, Calvin E. *Prospects for Growth: A Biblical View of Population, Resources and the Future*. Crossway Books, 1990.
- ✓ Beisner, Calvin E. *Prosperity and Poverty: The Compassionate Use of Resources in a World of Scarcity* Crossway Books, 1988.
- ✓ Noebel, David A. *Understanding the Times*, Summit Press, 1991.
- ✓ Sabin, Scott. *Whole Earth Evangelism*. Christianity Today, July 2010, p.27 (see www.PlantwithPurpose.org)
- ✓ www.cornwallalliance.org

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