

Why The Environment Matters

Genesis 2:15 [King James] *“And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.”*

There are three words which we need to notice and understand when we consider our approach to the environment in this early statement of the Creator God and the first human beings.

Garden – the fact that Adam and Eve were placed in a garden shows that our Creator God wants us to have “hands on” in the production of one item that is essential for our continued life, food.

It is within such an environment that at least one of the characteristics of the Creator God can be developed – “patience” [Galatians 5:22].

Romans 1:20 [New King James] *“For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,”*

Paul tells us that in God’s physical creation all His spiritual attributes can be clearly seen.

A garden is a place where all the family can work together beginning at quite a young age and become very aware of the dependency we all have on our Creator God.

We might say that the further humanity has drifted away from the garden and small family unit, the further we have drifted away from the Creator God.

Dress – this is the translation of the Hebrew word “*abad*” which means to serve to the extent of being a bondservant of the soil which produces our food.

In many ways the soil directs how we should treat it if we are to be a faithful servant to it.

Keep – the Hebrew word translated is “*shamar*” meaning to hedge about, protect, attend to, observe and preserve.

Adam and Eve must have been instructed as to how they should dress and keep the soil as well as the animals, [**Genesis 1:27-30**].

Part of our final, personal judgement by our Creator God will be on how well we have looked after the earth during the stewardship of a certain number of years each of us has been given over it.

Genesis 1:28 [King James] *“And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish 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 moveth upon the earth.”*

The “*be fruitful*” did not only apply to having their own children, but Adam and Eve were to “*multiply*” and “*replenish*” the animals and the soil.

What humans have overlooked badly to their own detriment is to replenish the soil in a way that the Creator God had designed it should be not only replenished by improved.

The most fertile soil is to be found in a wooded area where humans have left the leaf litter, microbes, fungi and bacteria to work without being disturbed.

It is **only** where humans, in their greed, have **not** replenished the soil in this way that the whole growth cycle has failed and too often humans are only left with a barren desert, or at least with a soil that is all but dead.

Matthew 24:3-8 [King James] *“And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows.”*

Most humans have been deceived not only spiritually but also physically as to what Jesus Christ, the One who created all things [**John 1:1-3, 14**] taught at the beginning of human life and at His First Coming as the human Son of Man.

Note that “famines” are included among the sorrows listed, which are directly the result of humans not dressing and keeping the soil.

It is all too easy for Christians who look expectantly for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, as I personally do, to fall into the trap of thinking that He will reshape the future to conform with His original creation.

It is easy for Christians with an “*other-worldly*” focus to think “*why plan for the long term?*” when it is so hard to counter the flow of the human society that we know is powerfully influenced by Satan, in his deep desire to destroy all human beings, by causing them to sin against their Creator as he did.

Unquestionably, a short-term view by humans, Christian and non-Christian has hastened ecological disasters of the kind the planet is suffering right now.

What would Jesus Christ have us do as His disciples?

The Jesus Christ portrayed in all the four gospels was constantly alert to the ecosystem around Him. He often used word-pictures from the physical creation to illustrate the vital spiritual principles He wanted His disciples to see.

Jesus Christ revealed His awareness of agriculture in His parable of the sower, this could be referred to as the parable of the soils, [**Matthew 13:18-23**].

Jesus Christ also made insightful spiritual points about such intricate details as not uprooting the wheat while pulling out the weeds from a field of wheat, [**Matthew 13:24-30**].

Or the parable of the mustard seed, [**Matthew 13:31-32**].

Jesus Christ’s parables reveal an appreciation of the natural realm.

Jesus Christ was **not** an animist or a pantheist, a worshipper of a so-called spirit force inhabiting all nature, remember He did curse the fruitless fig tree, [**Mark 11:12-14**].

Nature is not always beneficial and certainly **not** to be worshipped, [**Matthew 7:27**].

The Creator God does constantly care for what He has created, [**Psalms 104:10-24**].

Jesus Christ is the Lord of all He created, the incident when He calmed the storm on the Sea of Galilee, [**Luke 8:24-25**].

As the Lord of all created things, only He is to be worshipped, [**Colossians 1:16-17**].

Genesis 2:4-7 [New King James] *“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. And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.”*

We are shown in these verses that humans are not just on the earth, we are of the earth.

The name Adam means in essence “red clay.”

We are all as human beings involved in the environmental issue.

Literally with every breath we take to sustain our lives.

How we react to this fact is very important to our Creator God.

Our individual attitudes and actions are being closely watched by our Creator God who holds our personal future in His hands, [**2 Chronicles 16:9**].

What would Jesus Christ have us do?

In the end, it is a matter each of us must decide for ourselves.

Jesus realised that all He preached to, explaining God’s principles, did not understand, for He knew that Satan was still being allowed to deceive the vast majority of people, [**2 Corinthians 4:4; 1 John 5:9**].

On several occasions after preaching some great spiritual principle, Jesus Christ said *“he who has ears to hear, let him hear.”*

John 13:12-17 [New King James] *“So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, ‘Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.’”*

Jesus Christ set us an example that we should follow.

To live as a servant to God and other human beings.

By what we have just studied I feel we should also add the environment to what we serve to follow Jesus Christ’s example, as He treated the physical realm with respect.

There are many small things we can do to build up the environment instead of tearing it apart.

Ways in which each of us can make a difference

Recycle –

Check for areas to recycle, glass, cans, plastic and paper products.

Compost –

Grass clippings, leaves and vegetable waste to use as a mulch and fertiliser for our gardens.

Avoid –

Using disposable paper or plastic cups or plates.

Use –

No- or low-phosphate detergent, phosphate, an active ingredient in many detergents, is a major polluter of waterways and drinking water.

Limit use of hazardous substances –

Use natural cleansers such as borax vinegar, baking soda and unscented soap.

Properly dispose of hazardous substances such as motor oil, paint and paint thinners. All of these chemicals can be cleansed for re-use.

Pesticides –

Avoid if at all possible along with synthetic fertilisers. There are many books and websites that can help you do this.

Baby nappies –

Although there is some controversy about cloth vs. disposable, cloth can be used time after time and make good rags after final use.

Disposable take 100s of years to decompose, even so-called biodegradable ones, when buried in a landfill, fail to decompose. They also put human waste in landfills!

Transport –

Walk, cycle, use carpools or public transport when possible and have your car's emissions tested.

Plant trees, bushes and shrubs –

They absorb carbon dioxide and give out oxygen, also they help prevent soil erosion and when positioned near a house can save some heating and cooling costs.

Do not waste energy –

Turn down thermostats in winter and wear warmer clothing, turn off the pilot light to your furnace in summer, install insulation, turn down or turn off air conditioning when possible, close doors of unused rooms, switch off lights in rooms not in use.

A simple way to remember what God's Word the Christian Bible tells us about our environment:

We came from dust [Genesis 2:7].

We are to serve dust [Genesis 2:15].

We will return to dust [Genesis 3:19].

We are all very much a part of our environment!