

# Environment

This Bible Study will not save the planet! In fact you may have many of the same questions after doing this study that you had at the beginning. We are not going to attempt to master meteorology, biology or any other science in an hour or so. We will however attempt to think through the environment (God’s creation) from a Biblical theology point of view.

## Creation.

The creation narrative defines for us the relationship between:

God and his creation

Humanity and God’s creation.

Read the following passages and discuss the assertions in the right hand column,

Add any other assertions you think creation teaches us.

Genesis 1:1 Hebrews 11:3	God is separate from his creation.
Genesis 1:4 Genesis 1:10 Genesis 1:12, 18,21,25,31	God’s creation is good.
Psalms 19:1-12 Acts 14:17	Nature bears testimony to God’s goodness yet we can’t know God through nature.
Genesis 1:24f	Humans are creatures of creation, not separate or above creation
<b>Genesis 1:26-30</b>	Humans unlike animals, are created in the image of God, for the purpose of rule and care of God’s world.

What is wrong or right about the following statements?

‘the killing of a forest [should] be considered more contemptible and more criminal than the sale of 6-year-old children to Asian brothels’<sup>1</sup>

This is an extreme view held by some, however it is not a Christian view, God does give a special place to humans in his creation, we are created in his image.

‘Nature exists for the benefit of humans’

This is trying to represent an opposite extreme view which is also wrong, all of creation exists for the glorification of God. We have been given a privileged role of ruling over and looking after his creation

## The Fall

Read Genesis 3

What do we see in the relationship of God and people?

The relationship of people and nature?

The ground is cursed, it is no longer easy, thorns and thistles!

The consequences for the natural world?

The natural world is not morally culpable like us yet it is entangled in the consequences of our fall.

What are some of the consequences of the failure of humans to be good stewards of God's earth?

E.g. Species extinction...

Polluted rivers, seas, desertification, climate change, over fishing, loss of habitat.

## Israel

The land was an important thing for the nation of Israel, in some ways their relation to the land was a spiritual barometer of their relationship to God and their social health.

What do we learn about the Israelite's obedience to God and their relationship with the land, from these verses?

Deuteronomy 26:5-10	The year of jubilee gave rest for the land but also meant the people could not sell land permanently because it belonged to God.
Leviticus 18:28	
Hosea 4:1-3	The land is an expression of God's blessing and their dependence on him.
Leviticus 25:23	
Leviticus 25:2-7	

The Israelites were to treat the land well and not sell it permanently because it belonged to God. When they were obedient God blessed them with rain and fertile soil, when they disobeyed the land spewed them out.

Christians look forward to a perfect land in heaven rather than the land of Israel.

We know also that failure to live God's way can result in ecological damage to God's world.

## Jesus

Jesus came to earth as part of creation, he demonstrated loving dominion over nature, in fact he was the very pinnacle of creation. It is through his humanity and his redemption that all creation will one day be restored. Read the following passages and note down what we learn about the significance of Jesus life and death to our view of creation.

<p>Colossians 1:15-17</p> <p>He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.</p> <p>Colossians 1:19-20</p> <p>For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.</p> <p>Hebrews 2:6-9</p>	<p>Jesus was involved in creation, sustains it all and became part of creation.</p>
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## Jesus Return

Read the following verses and discuss how the Christian understanding of the future affects the way we think about the environment.

Romans 8:19f

Revelation 21:5

Colossians 1:20

### **So What?**

As redeemed people our purpose in life is to glorify God. We do this for his sake and so those who don't know him may turn and glorify him too.

In living out our Christian faith mission is our priority because once Jesus returns the opportunity for people to be saved will be gone.

The priority of mission does not give us the right to compromise on holiness. We care for the environment as a way of living out being 'in Christ'. We want to look after the world God has given us to take care of and to be a witness to those around us.

### **Some questions to ponder?**

Is environmentalism an end in itself for Christians?

Should we fear the same things that the world fears?

What can we do as a Church and in our homes to better look after the world God has given us responsibility over?

<sup>i</sup> Carl Amery, German politician