

8. Creation Care (1Q 2012—Glimpses of Our God)

Biblical material: Rom. 1:25, 2 Pet. 3:10–14, Gen. 2:15, Neh. 13:16–19, Heb. 1:3, Psalm 100, Gen. 1:26–28.

Quotes

- How would man exist if God did not need him, and how would you exist? You need God in order to be, and God needs you. *Martin Buber*
- All I have seen teaches me to trust the Creator for all I have not seen. *Ralph Waldo Emerson*
- It was Descartes and Bacon, not the author of Genesis, who propagated the view that man can do as he pleases to nature with impunity. *E. Ashby*
- The supreme justification for all creation is that God has willed it to be. *Hans Rookmaaker*
- The argument from design is irresistible. Nature does testify to its Creator. *John Stuart Mill*
- While I know myself as a creation of God, I am also obligated to realize and remember that everyone else and everything else are also God's creation. *Maya Angelou*

Questions

How do our views of creation influence our attitudes towards the environment? How do we see ourselves as part of God's creation? What are our responsibilities to the earth? In what ways do we demean God as Creator? How does this theme fit into the universe-wide controversy over God's nature and government?

Bible summary

God makes us in his image according to Gen. 1:26–28. Paul in Rom. 1:25 reminds us of those who exchange the truth of the Creator for a lie, while Peter speaks of those who disparage the intervention of God (2 Pet. 3:10-14). Adam was given the responsibility to tend the garden of Eden (Gen. 2:15). Nehemiah spoke against those who broke the Sabbath (and so disobeyed the Creator) in Neh. 13:16-19. The Son continues to sustain all things, according to Heb. 1:3. Psalm 100 reminds us that God made us and we are his.

Comment

God sets about making the universe. As part of his vast creation he makes Planet Earth. Makes it the way *he* wants it to be. In perfect harmony, all nature in beautiful balance, a wonderful world that is *very good*.

Only when humanity in its fallen, evil state tries to exploit this God-given world do the problems start. We burn down the rainforest. We dump toxic chemicals in the oceans. We spill oil there, and are surprised at the results—killing birds, marine life, even the plankton that produces much of the oxygen we need to breathe.

Holes in the ozone layer. Pollution from engine exhausts. Global warming from greenhouse gases. Spreading deserts and melting icecaps. On and on in a never-ending catalogue of natural disasters—that are *truly unnatural!*

Where is God in all this? Still there, of course, but how much harder it is to know him when all his wonderful Creation is scarred and marred by our thoughtless hands. God told the newly-created intelligences to subdue the Earth, and to have dominion over every living thing. (Genesis 1:28).

“Great!” some say. “Dominion. That means we can do whatever we like. God gave everything to us, so we can use—and abuse—any plant or animal, any bird or beast for whatever we like.”

No...! God weeps over his raped and ravaged world, exploited and destroyed by the ones he made as the highest earthly intelligences to care for and safeguard his precious planet. God gave us responsibility and asked for commitment. Our promise was to *care* for the Earth God had given to us *on trust*. (Genesis 2:15)

How well have we repaid God’s trust? Once the first humans rejected God by believing the exploiter, then the Earth fell under curse of human evil. “Cursed is the ground because of you,” said God in Genesis 3:17. The very *caretakers* of the world have broken faith with the Maker, so the whole planet suffers—not from God’s vindictiveness, but as a result of evil that breaks the threads at the heart of the web of life.

The result of rejecting God is a rejection of his creation. At the heart of the rebellion is the spirit of *selfishness*—which is what evil is all about. At the heart of pollution, habitat destruction, resource exhaustion, is that same spirit of selfishness which says, “I want this. I don’t care about the results. Me, me, me.”

That’s the way people go when they leave God out of the equation. The result: a planet full of people using and abusing, doing just as they please, thinking only of themselves. A crisis of broken faith. An ecological crisis. A spiritual crisis.

That’s where we are today. We continue on, right up at the end, when, if nothing is done, we will fatally and finally wreck God’s wonderful world. We race from the beginning right to the end, from Genesis to Revelation. See what *that* latter book of God’s revealed plan says to a world about self-destruct:

Right there God is called upon to stop the carnage, to end the exploitation, to halt the rape of the Earth—to “destroy them which destroy the Earth.” (Revelation 11:18). In drastic images, the end of the world is revealed—an ecological catastrophe that shows what evil really does.

The God who made the world is not about to go away and leave it to its fate. Yes, it’s in a mess. Yes, we’re destroying it. Yes, by our sinful selfishness we are proving that we are rebels in God’s universe, and unfit to continue as stewards of his creation. But like a father watching his child about to smash a precious vase, God is not going to let us do it. Not completely. Not fully. Not finally. The promise is God’s: “I will create new heavens and a new earth.” (Isaiah 65:17). God will take this broken old Earth and remake it. We are told to look forward to the day when “the elements will melt with fervent heat” (2 Peter 3:12) because God will be molding and forming this world into his beautiful creation once more. “But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.” (2 Peter 3:13).

Comment 2

“Seventh-day Adventists believe that humankind was created in the image of God, thus representing God as His stewards, to rule the natural environment in a faithful and fruitful way.

“Unfortunately, corruption and exploitation have been brought into the management of the human domain of responsibility. Increasingly men and women have been involved in a megalomaniacal destruction of the earth’s resources, resulting in widespread suffering, environmental disarray, and the threat of climate change. While scientific research needs to continue before definitive answers and decisions can be given, it is becoming clear that the increasing emission of destructive gasses, the depletion of the protective mantle of ozone, and the so-called greenhouse effect are all threatening the earth’s eco-system.

“These problems are largely due to human selfishness and the egocentric pursuit of getting more and more through ever-increasing production, unlimited consumption and depletion of nonrenewable resources. The ecological crisis is rooted in humankind’s greed and refusal to practice good and faithful stewardship within the divine boundaries of creation.

“Seventh-day Adventists advocate a simple, wholesome lifestyle, where people do not step on the treadmill of unbridled consumerism, goods-getting, and production of waste. We call for respect of creation, restraint in the use of the world’s resources, reevaluation of one’s needs, and reaffirmation of the dignity of created life.” *Adventist Church’s statement on the Environment (1995)*

Ellen White Comments

To the dwellers in Eden was committed the care of the garden, “to dress it and to keep it.” Their occupation was not wearisome, but pleasant and invigorating. God appointed labor as a blessing to man, to occupy his mind, to strengthen his body, and to develop his faculties. In mental and physical activity Adam found one of the highest pleasures of his holy existence. . . . The holy pair were not only children under the fatherly care of God but students receiving instruction from the all-wise Creator.... The order and harmony of creation spoke to them of infinite wisdom and power. They were ever discovering some attraction that filled their hearts with deeper love and called forth fresh expressions of gratitude. {RC 166}

God has finished his creative work, but his energy is still exerted in upholding the objects of his creation. It is not because the mechanism that has once been set in motion continues its work by its own inherent energy that the pulse beats and breath follows breath; but every breath, every pulsation of the heart, is an evidence of the all-pervading care of Him in whom we live and have our being. It is not because of inherent power that year by year the earth produces her bounties and continues her motion around the sun. The hand of God guides the planets, and keeps them in position in their orderly march through the heavens. It is through his power that vegetation flourishes, that the leaves appear and the flowers bloom. {ST, March 20, 1884}

He who taught Adam and Eve in Eden how to tend the garden, would instruct men today. There is wisdom for him who holds the plow, and plants and sows the seed. {Advocate, August 1, 1900}

Adam was created in innocence, yet God gave him employment, to tend the garden. This did not degrade him. Here was his book of study -- God in nature. He was to study God and obey Him. {SpM 83}