

Bite Size Bible Study

Environmentalism #106

By Pastor Lee

Most people expect that environmentalism is a political issue. However, the care of creation is actually very much a biblical issue. It is attached to every era of Biblical history. If you love what God loves you're probably going to wind up caring about the His creation as well.

There is a robust biblical theology regarding Creation Care. In Genesis 1, God is enthroned above His creation showing that the creation is perfect; It's ideal, it's ordered and it exists in its perfect state. But on the sixth day is the enthronement of a steward. One made in the image of God who is to reflect the image of God

In Genesis 2 we read that the role of humanity is to serve and to protect this creation. Yahweh took the human and put him into the Garden of Eden to serve it and protect it. The garden belongs to Yahweh, but Adam is tasked as the caretaker. If he lives his life in submission to God, he will also serve and protect this creation.

This concept runs all the way through Biblical history. The law codes of the Torah (when the land is given to Israel) speak again about this message of care for creation. The land actually belongs to Yahweh and Israel is being given use of the land to provide for themselves but only in a limited fashion. They are not allowed to exploit the land. In fact right there in the biblical text are laws regarding sustainable agriculture, the protection of the wild creature, the proper and humane care of the domestic creature. Even the widow and the orphan will ultimately be provided for if Israel, God's people, treat the land with respect, but if they fail to treat the land with respect, they would be ejected from it.

The Sabbath was to give mankind, animals, and land as a rest every seven days. Every seven years the land is to lay fallow to replenish the soil. They are to care for the widow and the orphan who have no support from family. This is the way they are to steward these resources that God has provided them.

Deuteronomy 20:19 refers to environmental terrorism. Israel is commanded that when they besieged a city they're not to cut the trees down because a tree takes years to grow to maturity. Other laws speak specifically about the care of the wild creatures.

If you come across a bird's nest beside the road, either in a tree or on the ground, and the mother is sitting on the young or on the eggs, do not take the mother with the young. You may take the young, but be sure to let the mother go, so that it may go well with you and you may have a long life.

Deuteronomy 22:6,7

The concept is that we are to allow the native species the chance to reproduce protecting their populations. Regarding the domestic creatures we see that Israel is commanded to allow the animal that serves them to enjoy their life and work. *...but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, **nor your ox, your donkey or any of your animals**, nor any foreigner residing in your towns, so that your male and female servants may rest, as you do.*

Deuteronomy 5:14

The Sabbath ordinance is actually proactive for not only sons and daughters and servants and slaves but it actually goes on to state that your ox and your donkey and your domesticated beasts are to rest. This provides a profound critique for issues that involve factory farming and humane treatment of livestock.

We as part of the redeemed community need to recognize and respond to these descriptions of God's character and what he expects of his people. *For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.*

Romans 8:20-22

In other words Paul is associating the resurrection of the cosmos with a resurrection of the redeemed. Paul tells us that this very body will be raised from the dead into a perfect state. This is our hope as a Christian for the future. We often forget that the cosmos will also be raised to at same perfect state. That tells us that this current creation is not simply disposable

The earth is the Lord's and all it contains; we may make use of it in our need but we shall not abuse it in our greed. The message is of restrained consumption and restrained productivity. The entire bible speaks of our care for creation along with other aspects of our lives.

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