

# Environmentalism & Christianity

# Watch

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G880gxjj9dl>

What was your reaction to the  
video?

# Thesis:

- God created the earth and natural resources to reflect His glory by way of providing mankind basic necessities, enjoyment, and the opportunity to reflect the image of the Creator through the creative use of those natural resources.

# E.O. Wilson & Richard Land

- <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/episodes/november-17-2006/eo-wilson/3349/>

- Does the doctrine of Christ's Return support abuse of the environment?

# Why talk about Christianity & Environmentalism?

- Environmentalism makes moral claims.
- Environmentalism makes claims of value.
- Environmentalism makes claims about areas of life that the Bible makes claims about.

# Environmentalism defined

: advocacy of the preservation, restoration, or improvement of the natural environment; *especially* : the movement to control pollution

<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/environmentalism>

# Biblical view on the environment vs. Environmentalism

The earth and all it contains has been given to man for the purpose of:

- a. Reflecting the glory of God.
- b. Reflecting God's goodness - provision for man's necessities.
- c. Reflecting God's greatness - provision for man's enjoyment.
- d. Reflecting God's image - opportunity for mankind to properly govern and creatively put natural resources to use.

# a. Reflecting the glory of God.

Gen. 1:26-28

Psalm 104

1. God created the earth and all things in it, and he continues to sustain the earth and all things in it by the loving exercise of his sovereign power.
2. The earth and all things in it belong to God by virtue of his creative work, and all things find their reason for being fundamentally in relation to him.

## a. Reflecting the glory of God.

3. The earth and all things in it were created perfectly-  
- each creature in itself and the entire creation in its interrelatedness.
4. Even after the entrance of sin into the created order this perfection still shines through so as to be perceivable by man. Thus, creation continually bears witness to the perfections of God and promotes in man praise toward God.

**“THE FOUR MOST IMPORTANT BIBLICAL PASSAGES FOR A  
CHRISTIAN ENVIRONMENTALISM” MICHAEL A. BULLMORE  
TRINJ 19 NS (1998) 143.**

# a. Reflecting the glory of God.

Psalm 115:16

“The heavens are the Lord’s heavens, but the earth he has given to the children of man.”

John Calvin

“God has been pleased to manifest his perfections in the whole structure of the universe. . . . On each of his works his glory is engraven in characters so bright, so distinct, and so illustrious, that none, however dull and illiterate, can plead ignorance as their excuse.”

(John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (2 vols.; ed. J. T. McNeill; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977) 1.4.2.

The earth and all it contains has been given to man for the purpose of:

b. Reflecting God's goodness - provision for man's necessities.

Psalm 8:6-8

You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet,  
<sup>7</sup> all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, <sup>8</sup> the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas.  
<sup>9</sup> O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

The earth and all it contains has been given to man for the purpose of:

c. Reflecting God's greatness - provision for man's enjoyment.

Jeremiah 32:17

““Ah, Lord God! It is you who have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for you.””

The earth and all it contains has been given to man for the purpose of:

c. Reflecting God's greatness - provision for man's enjoyment.

Jeremiah 31:5

“Again you shall plant vineyards on the mountains of Samaria; the planters shall plant and shall enjoy the fruit.”

d. Reflecting God's image - opportunity for mankind to properly govern and creatively put natural resources to use.

Exodus 23:10-11

“For six years you shall sow your land and gather in its yield, <sup>11</sup> but the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow, that the poor of your people may eat; and what they leave the beasts of the field may eat. You shall do likewise with your vineyard, and with your olive orchard.”

Leviticus 25:1-7 Give the land a chance to rejuvenate.

d. Reflecting God's image - opportunity for mankind to properly govern and creatively put natural resources to use.

- Fields are not to be reaped to the border (Leviticus 19:9).
- The grower may harvest only from trees five years old (Leviticus 19:25).
- The land is to be idle regularly (Leviticus 25:1-12).
- Fruit trees may not be used for siege works (Deuteronomy 20:19).
- A mother bird is not to be taken with her young (Deuteronomy 22:6).
- An ox is not to be muzzled when treading corn (Deuteronomy 25:4).

# Progress & the Environment

- Change in mindset: Survival to Leisure
- For most in the West, basic necessities are a given. Hence, time and energy have shifted from survival to speculation about non-necessities.

\*Green technology & developing countries.

# Accusation...

- “Christianity’s “human-centeredness” is destroying the earth!”
- Response: Christianity is not “human-centered,” it is “God-centered.”

Q# “To reject human stewardship is to embrace, by default, no stewardship. The only proper alternative to selfish anthropocentrism is not biocentrism but theocentrism: a vision of earth care with God and his perfect moral law at the center and human beings acting as his accountable stewards.”

E. Calvin Beisner, *Where Garden Meets Wilderness: Evangelical Entry into the Environmental Debate* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1997), 43.

Environmental Stewardship in the Judeo-Christian Tradition: Jewish, Catholic and Protestant Wisdom on the Environment (Grand Rapids: Acton Institute, 2007), 70.

“In many developing countries, the basics of sufficient and pure water and food, along with clothing, shelter, transportation, health care, communication, and so forth, still remain elusive for many people. For them, continued economic advance is crucial for health and even for life itself: It is small wonder that their attention focuses more on immediate consumption needs than on environmental protection.

Tragically, however, people with a strong environmental consciousness who live predominantly in Western countries sometimes seek to impose their own environmental sensibilities on people still struggling to survive. In fact, further advances in human welfare for the poor are now often threatened by a belief in the West that human enterprise and development are fundamentally incompatible with environmental protection,

which is seen by some as the quintessential value in evaluating progress. This false choice not only threatens to prolong widespread poverty, disease, and early death in the developing world, but also undermines the very conditions essential to achieving genuine environmental stewardship.”

# Christians and the Environmental Policy

- 1) Does the policy respect the sanctity of human life?
- 2) Does this policy respect the sanctity of property rights?
- 3) Does this policy respect the separation between human and animal life?

# End Times & Environmentalism

2 Peter 3:10-13 “But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

<sup>11</sup> Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, <sup>12</sup> waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! <sup>13</sup> But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.”

# End Times & Environmentalism

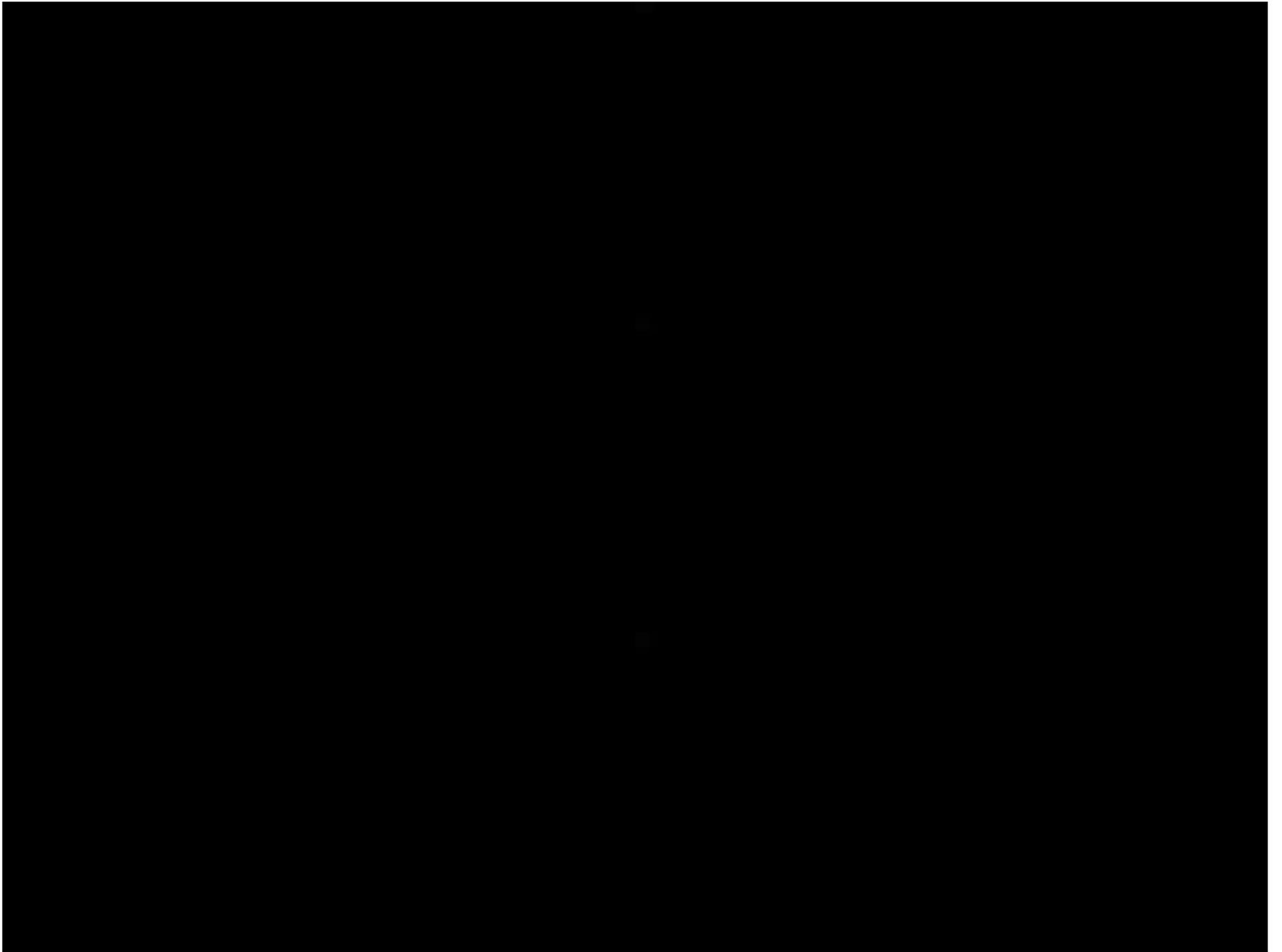
Revelation 21:1

“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.”

# The Gospel Response to Environmentalism

- American Family Association Director  
Bryan Fischer

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=67TT5  
Vgd67A](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=67TT5Vgd67A)



**Questions & Comments?**

# For Additional Study

- “A biblical perspective on Earth Day” by Richard Land:  
<http://rniwjphu.erc.com/article/a-biblical-perspective-on-earth-day/>
- “Environmental Stewardship: A Theological Model for the Environment” by Andy Lewis:  
<http://erc.com/article/environmental-stewardship-a-theological-model-for-the-environment/>
- Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission articles on environmental issues:  
<http://rniwjphu.erc.com/topics/C38/articles/>

# Recommended Resources

- “Facts, not Fear: Teaching Children about the Environment” by Michael Sanera and Jane S. Shaw
- “The Cross and the Rain Forest: A Critique of Radical Green Spirituality” by Robert Whelm, Joseph Kirwan, and Paul Haffner
- “Where Garden Meets Wilderness: An Evangelical Entry into the Environmental Debate” by E. Calvin Beisner
- “Environmental Stewardship in the Judeo-Christian Tradition” by Acton Institute