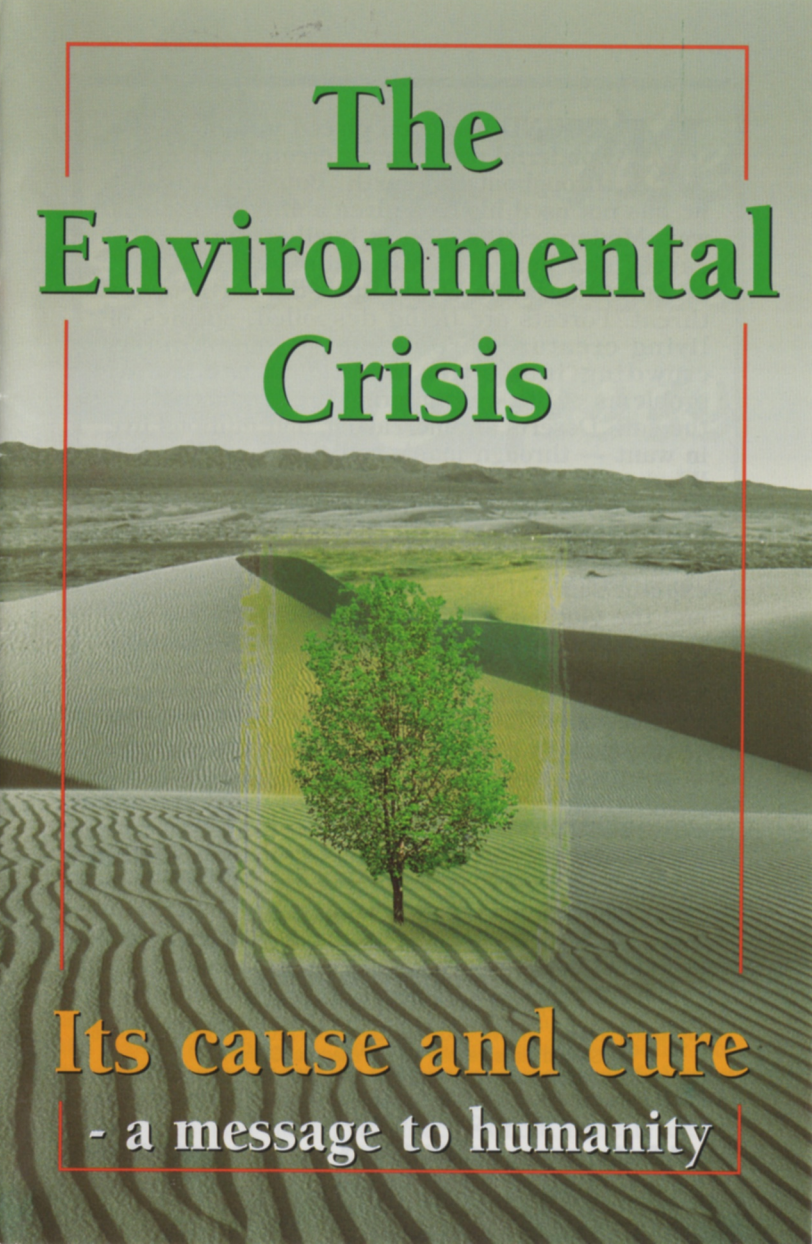


The Environmental Crisis



Its cause and cure
- a message to humanity

MANKIND has been placed in control of a wonderful and diverse creation exhibited throughout the earth. But unfortunately he has not used his God-given ability in the best way. Modern civilization is busily polluting the earth, sea beneath and atmosphere above, bringing the future of life upon the earth under threat. Forests are being despoiled, species of living creatures are dying out, mankind is crowding into cities adding to the moral problems of life, and ignoring the productivity of the soil. Deserts are increasing, and millions live in want — through man's selfishness and greed. What is to be the outcome? Will the doomsday predictions of concerned authorities become fact? Will life cease upon this globe? The Bible alone has the answer, and this booklet will explain some of the wonders of God's creation, and the glorious purpose He has in store for this earth and man upon it. We ask you to carefully read its message.

HERALD OF THE COMING AGE

A Christadelphian Publication

**DECLARING THE TRUTH OF THE SCRIPTURES REVEALED FOR THE SALVATION OF THOSE WHO ARE PREPARED TO EXAMINE THE CLAIMS OF GOD'S WORD;
AND PRESENTING THE GLORIOUS MESSAGE OF THE SECOND COMING OF JESUS CHRIST
AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF GOD'S ETERNAL KINGDOM ON EARTH.**

**Edited by G.E.Mansfield,
Logos Publications, Box 220, Findon, Sth Australia 5023**

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The Environmental Crisis



Bible records that in the beginning of time, *“out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food”* (Genesis 2:9).

Consider the beauty and wonder of a large eucalyptus tree. It appeals to our senses by its noble form and subtle hues; by its vigour and aromatic shade. But it is far more than a hardy giant of the drier regions, or a subject for the artist’s canvas.

A large eucalyptus tree is among earth’s oldest and largest living organisms. One hectare (2.5 acres) of eucalyptus trees produces enough oxygen to support forty people and will collect from the ground and discharge into the air twenty-five tonnes of water a day, all carried through channels the diameter of a human hair.

A eucalyptus tree provides food, fibre, building material, shade, shelter, protection for the soil, and energy. It shelters birds, reptiles, insects and a great range of other living things. When processed, it yields turpentine, plastics, paper, fuelwood and furniture. Distilled, it yields valuable oils and resins. It binds the earth, shielding it from erosion; provides fodder for livestock; draws water to the topsoil; and is a source of pleasure for tourist, hiker, forester and farmer alike.

Any tree is a marvel, a miracle, whose intricate design reveals the hand and mind of the divine Architect. Moreover,

with all his amazing science and space-technology, man has not found any other location in the universe where this marvel of creation, which we call a *tree*, does or can possibly exist. The book of Genesis, in simple language, describes the origin of all trees: "God said, 'Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds.' And it was so" (Genesis 1:11).

Further, God said through Moses: "the tree of the field is man's life" (Deuteronomy 20:19). The statement reveals the medium for human existence provided by an all-wise and caring Creator.

The Deforestation Threat

Trees are being felled (and mostly not replanted) worldwide at the rate of nearly fifteen square kilometres *every hour*.

Sixty-eight *species* (that is, different genetic types, each "after his kind") of plant life are being destroyed every day.

The *Global Environment Crisis* reports that FAO estimates released in 1993 indicated that between 1980 and 1990 tropical forests shrank by an average of 154,000 km² (0.8 per cent) annually, more than twice the area of Tasmania; an even larger area of tropical forest was degraded each year.

Clearing and cutting down mature *tropical* forests has quite different effects from harvesting trees in temperate countries. Covering just one-fifteenth of the earth's land surface, rain forests may harbour nearly half of all living plants and animals. The tropical forest is a wonderfully interdependent complex *system* of plant, animal, bird, insect and microbe. There are hundreds of *species* in every hectare of land. Usually each species of plant is kept alive and is pollinated by just one specialized kind of insect, bird or bat. In turn, many animals and insects depend upon one type of plant alone for food and survival. Thus to log out a particular species of tree from a tropical forest is to destroy other dependent life forms, and permanently disturb the whole system.

Many of the mighty sixty-metre tropical forest giants like the valuable *Diptocarps* and the *Ceiba* of the West Indies and Central America have an illusion of grandiose strength, but as tropical biologist Allen Young points out: "the real power is in

the tiny fungi in the roots. When the forest is cleared away, these fungi disappear too. Food crops do well for only a year or two. Thereafter it becomes cost-prohibitive to buy fertilizers to replace the remarkable fungi of tropical root systems."

That is why the recent massive clearing of tropical rainforests in densely-populated countries such as Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia and Brazil (as well as in less populated countries like Australia) presents a terrible danger to mankind and the earth. The lands thus cleared for farming are *not* fertile. They cannot sustain permanent farms like those in temperate countries. They are not going to support the people now attempting to occupy them, for very long. Many millions of people who have settled land which has been cleared in the tropics shall soon find that "nature" will take its revenge. They will have to move again, and soon there shall be nowhere else to go. Their future is very bleak, indeed!

The Spectre of Desertification

At intergovernmental meetings held in 1993, a draft report emphasised drought and desertification importance: more than 250 million people are claimed to be directly threatened by encroaching deserts; 36% of the world's land area is arid, semi-arid or dry sub-humid; 18% of the world's population live in such regions; and over 100 countries have experienced dry-land degradation.

One of the world's outstanding authorities on desertification, Alan Grainger of Oxford University, lists five critical environmental problems and are ringing alarm bells for all mankind. These are:

1. More than a fifth of the earth, home of over 5 billion people, is directly threatened by desertification. Some one hundred countries are affected.

2. Badly managed irrigation systems in many countries are making salty, waterlogged wastelands.

3. The Sahel drought in Africa is largely a man-made disaster, killing a quarter of a million people and three and a half million animals. Grants to prevent further drought in Africa is being spent on inadequate types of projects, making matters worse.

4. Tree planting for fuel, for timber, and to prevent

desertification, is proceeding fifty times too slowly.

5. Environmental management is low priority for politicians, especially in poor countries, because the people affected have little political power. Governments and Aid donors want aid spent in cities, where the results benefit the nation's elite, and on projects easy to identify and implement.

One of the few exceptions to the desertification of the world is the country of Israel. According to Dr. Amos Richmond of Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, in Bible times "flourishing agriculture and a thriving civilisation" existed in the desert regions of Israel.

With the twentieth century revival of Israel, in fulfilment of Bible prophecies, this "flourishing agriculture" has been partially restored. This is a matter of envy, especially from other Middle East countries. Sadly, at international conferences, Israelis who try to share their success and describe their country's efforts to make the desert bloom, find themselves isolated, are sometimes shouted down and resolutions are made, condemning them.

Man's Original Appointment: Caretaker of God's Creation

Contrast this with the attitude of a divinely inspired poet who was deeply moved by the contemplation of the very abundance of living things around him, as to express:

*"How manifold are Thy works, O Lord!
In wisdom Thou hast made them all;
The earth is full of Thy riches.
There is the sea, vast and spacious,
Teeming with creatures both large and small."*

(Psalm 104:24-25)

Impressed by the ever-recurring cycle of life, by what we call today the equilibrium or balance of nature, he continued:

*"Thou hidest Thy face, they are terrified;
Thou takest away their breath.
They die and return to the dust.
Thou sendest forth Thy Spirit, they are created.
And Thou renewest the face of the earth"* (vv. 29-30).

The angelic spirit-beings (Hebrew: *Elohim*), are entrusted with all God's creative works; hence the use of phrases such as

“let us make,” in Genesis and elsewhere in the Bible. The aim of the Elohim with man is stated in Psalm 8: *“Thou [God] madest him [man] a little lower than the angels [Elohim], And crownedst him with glory and honour. Thou didst make him ruler over the works of Thy hands; Thou puttest everything under his feet: All flocks and herds, and the beasts of the field, The birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, All that swim in the paths of the seas. O Lord our Lord, how majestic is Thy Name in all the earth!”* (vv. 5-9).

Significantly man's first employment was in keeping with this overall aim of stewardship for God's creation: *“The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it”* (Genesis 2:15). From the very beginning man has exercised a passion for naming the forms of life with which our earth, seas and skies are so richly endowed. There was a simple ceremony in the Garden of Eden: *“The Lord God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and beasts of the field”* (vv. 19-20).

The responsibilities given by God to man over His creation at that time were awesome. Over the centuries since, as man has explored the realms of nature, from the barren shores of Antarctica to the green and humid jungles of the tropics, he has continued to name the various species found — a list which now runs into the millions. The invention of the microscope opened a new world and revealed millions more. So complex is the field of *taxonomy* (the naming of life forms) today that biologists or naturalists can only hope to comprehend a tiny fraction of this highly specialised field.

Curiosity about the world of nature, for which God made man responsible, is characteristic of all thinking people. Long ago, Solomon, king of Israel, *“described plant life, from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of walls. He also taught about animals and birds, reptiles and fish. Men of all nations came to listen to Solomon's wisdom”* (1 Kings 4:33-34). Aristotle, the Greek philosopher and teacher, who lived six

hundred years after Solomon, was one of the first to systematically describe and classify various living creatures. Some scientists today spend a lifetime investigating a single species, the range in size, shape and design of living organisms affecting man, and which affect him in turn, is so vast as to boggle the mind!

For example: the mighty whale, *Orca*, a species, man has almost destroyed in his greed, has an enormous heart which is such a pump, that it alone weighs half a ton. In contrast, the *Demodex folliculorum*, a tiny eight-legged mite, is born, mates, reproduces and dies inside the eyelashes of almost every person on earth. Or the *tardigrade*, which, in countless millions, inhabits every drop of water we drink, is a creature so tiny that it looks like some prehistoric monster, under the electron microscope.

As God's first choice for the post of manager and steward of the earth, Adam was a failure. Despite the encouraging beginning referred to earlier (Genesis 2:19-20), he and his wife Eve craved to be "like the Elohim, knowing good and evil" (vv. 3-4). As though the privileges of their God-given responsibilities were not enough, the first couple sought to grasp at equality with the Elohim (angels). God had only forbidden them to eat the fruit of one particular tree in the Garden of Eden. They were warned "if you eat of it you will surely die," a law for the moral discipline God required of man. It set forth literally and symbolically, the divinely-imposed limits of man's freedom ("you are free to eat from any tree," except this one). There was only one thing limiting their wide-ranging freedom — but that was the very thing they chose to have! Such foolish desire, craving and grasping what is forbidden to us by God, became a hereditary pattern set by mankind's first parents to all generations following — it is what the Bible calls *sin*.

Sin: The Basic Cause Of The Present Crisis

Wildlife management is an important aspect of this stewardship of the earth. Man is not accustomed to seeing the destruction of wildlife as *sin*. In fact, hunting and shooting of various wild creatures, many of them useful to man, and quite defenceless, is still looked upon as something heroic.

But we should take careful note of what God says: "Every

animal of the forest is Mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills. I know every bird in the mountains, and the creatures of the field are Mine. For the world is Mine, and all that is in it" (Psalm 50:10-12).

One consequence of sin is stated in Genesis 3:17-18: "*Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.*"

Man's God-given responsibility for the earth and its living creatures was not diminished by the entry of sin and death into the world, nor by the ejection of Adam and Eve from the Edenic paradise. Having to fend for themselves in the harsh world outside, their task was now much harder. Nature took on a rougher, tougher aspect. Instead of being a "curator" of a combined botanic garden and zoo in a delightful environment of nature — for that is implied in Genesis ch. 2 — *Homo sapiens* had to fight for survival. The apostle Paul explained: "*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 glorious freedom of the children of God*" (Romans 8:20-21).

Moreover, the New Testament informs us in several places that when God spoke of "man" having rule or dominion over creation after the fall of Adam, it was not *any* man or woman He had in mind. Psalm 8 is a prophecy of one truly representative Man, *Jesus the Son of God*, who will faithfully fulfil all that God intended for this earth at his return, now imminent. Paul further points out what every environmentalist knows to be true: that at present we do not see everything "subject to him [*Christ, the Son of Man; the Second Adam*]" (Hebrews 2:8). Far from being a paradise, wisely managed on God's behalf by responsible human stewardship, this beautiful earth and its multitude of life-forms is battered, exploited by greedy men, despoiled, and polluted.

But the apostle Paul does offer hope: "we see Jesus," he says.

Elsewhere he identifies Jesus, the Son of God, as the focus of all God's works, *the firstborn over all creation*. "All things were created through and for *him*" (Colossians 1:16).

Wise Laws Given Through Moses

The national laws given by God to Israel through Moses contained many provisions which were environmentally sound. Indeed, in this respect as in all others, the Mosaic law was superior to any other ancient law, and in advance of its time (delivered about the year 1440BC). There were laws for the protection of birds (Deuteronomy 22:6-7), for the conservation of forests (20:19), and the care of animals (22:4, 10; 25:4). The land was to rest periodically in a cycle of 'sabbaths' (seventh) years, which guaranteed continuance of its fertility (Leviticus 24:34). God said specifically: "*Do not pollute the land where you are*" (Numbers 35:33). The Hebrew word for "pollute" is derived from *chaneph*, which means *filth*. The land was to be kept clean, holy, fit as man's home, and as a sanctuary for the Almighty.

The most significant of the principles enshrined in God's Law is the concept that man is a *trustee* or manager for the land, responsible for its care to the Owner, God Himself: "*The Lord your God is bringing you into a good land — a land with streams and pools of water, with springs flowing in the valleys and hills... a land where you will lack nothing; a land where the rocks are iron and you can dig copper out of the hills. When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the Lord your God for the good land He has given you. Be careful that you do not forget the Lord your God, failing to observe His commands*" (Deuteronomy 8:7-10).

This principle has been progressively ignored, the chief cause of the present-day abuse of the earth. People — whether individuals, or private companies or government agencies — treat with land, sea, air, and the whole of nature, in a selfish way, assuming they can do what they like with any resource they find.

As Moses warned, they forgot the Lord, the Creator of all.

This selfish attitude to the earth is deliberate when people refuse to acknowledge God as the supreme Creator and Owner of the universe. In other cases it may be due to ignorance, or a

carefree approach, which fails to implement that “the earth is the Lord’s and the fulness thereof.”

Such carelessness is often responsible for devastations by fires which yearly continue to destroy thousands of hectares of forests and bushland.

The Environmental Crisis Today

A team of scientists under the direction of the Worldwatch Institute, produces an annual report entitled *State of the World*. This publication is eagerly sought by governments and decision-makers worldwide. It is a sober, careful, abundantly-documented study — not propaganda by idealistic “greenies.” For those with no solid faith in the purpose of God revealed in the Bible, who do not believe God’s promise to send His Son Jesus Christ to “regenerate” the earth and its peoples when he reigns supreme from Jerusalem (Matthew 19:28), each year’s issue of this book is bound to create feelings of increasing depression, helplessness and despair.

A sad theme recurs through all the *Worldwatch* reports: Man’s obvious incapacity to correct the world’s ills, so as to avert onrushing environmental and social disasters. He has technological expertise, but does not possess the courage, moral will, or political co-operation, to use this expertise.

Various world reports indicate:

- **Climate:** That man is slowly changing the world’s climate for the worse, and towards greater threat of extremes. The World Meteorological Organisation confirmed in 1993 that “the lowest ever recorded amounts of ozone between 45°N and 65°N (a region covering parts of North America, Europe and Siberia) had been measured. In fact, since 1969 there has been a 14% decline in ozone levels overall.”

- **Water:** The world’s water supplies are getting scarcer and increasingly poisoned and polluted. A “new water economy” for the world is desperately needed. The *Sydney (Australia) Water Board* commissioned a research in 1992, which reported: “It is estimated that overall about 60,000 tonnes of fifty different chemicals are deliberately added to Australian water supplies, including substances like sulphuric acid, hydrogen peroxide and hydrofluorosilic acid. In recent years new studies have revealed

even more disturbing information about the threat to health posed by three of the most controversial additives, aluminium, fluoride and chlorine." There are additional effects of reduced water quality, for despite considerable efforts to improve the supply of clean water, it is generally established that water quality is deteriorating in the low-income countries, especially in cities. More than 95% of urban sewage in low-income nations is discharged into surface waters without treatment: many cities lack a network of sewer pipes let alone treatment facilities.

It is estimated that 50% of the irrigated land in Iraq and Syria, 30% in Egypt, 25% in India, 23% in Pakistan and 15% in Iran is saline or waterlogged.

The ten years from 1981 to 1990 were designated by the UN as the *International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade*... US\$80 million a day was spent to achieve the aims of the program.

• **Soil:** No country in the world is so seriously affected by soil destruction as is Australia. The *Australian Conservation Foundation* describes it this way: "For over a hundred years the European settlers of Australia used the land without thought of the future. Vast clearing and overstocking took its toll on the land. Today, as a result of past abuse, fifty-two percent of the land in use in Australia needs some form of treatment for land degradation. A third of the continent is affected by soil erosion. The cost of repairing this damage is over one billion dollars. As if that were not enough, it is also a fact that as a result of inappropriate land use and inadequate effort to prevent or repair soil damage, *the problem is getting worse.*"

A Horrifying Prospect

Earth scientists all over the world speak with one voice that there is a global environmental crisis of horrifying dimensions; all experts today are unanimous in concurring that humanity's very existence on earth is threatened! Bible believers recognise that without divine intervention to restore paradise on earth, mankind is doomed.

Every year over 40 million people die from hunger, and about 500 million people are seriously undernourished. These figures have increased steadily since 1950, and 600 million people (10%

of the global population) are expected to be malnourished in the year 2000... despite the fact that, during the 1980s, we produced sufficient basic foods to feed the entire human population, plus 1,500 million more people!

The effects of overpopulation are disastrous: more deforestation for farmland, fuelwood, and other products; more **air pollution** from automobiles and factory emissions; more water pollution from untreated sewage and poisonous industrial effluents; more garbage and toxic waste; more pesticides; more overgrazing, etc. Then there is air pollution from the burning of fossil fuels for transportation, home heating and industry. Other factors are fires, the spraying of crops with insecticides, radiation from mobile phone towers, computers, microwaves, nuclear power and weapons plants. Perhaps the most serious long term air pollution problem is the gradual depletion of the earth's protective ozone layer, caused by chlorofluorocarbons. When they escape into the atmosphere, reach the stratosphere, they are broken down by the sun's ultraviolet radiation, and the chlorine in them destroys ozone. This produces the increasingly larger holes in the ozone layer, detected mostly over the Antarctica. CFCs also trap heat, contributing to global warming.

Global ozone depletion over the decade 1983-93 has led to a 10% increase in the UV radiation reaching the earth's surface. It has been estimated that every 1% decrease in ozone concentration will produce a 2% increase in the UV radiation reaching the earth's surface and an 8% increase in the frequency of skin cancer in Caucasians.

The greenhouse effect is a real, natural, physical phenomenon. It warms the earth by 33°C and enables life to exist on the planet. However, the *enhanced* greenhouse effect, brought about by the release of additional greenhouse gases, is dangerously increasing that natural warming. The consensus in the early 1990s was that this enhanced effect had already warmed the earth by about 0.5°C, and would warm the earth by a further 2°C by 2030.

More than 65,000 synthetic chemicals are in common use in the USA with another 1,000 introduced each year. Government studies and the *National Toxics Campaign* revealed that an

average American's body tissue contains traces of more than 200 industrial chemicals and pesticides capable of causing cancer or birth defects. More than 700 contaminants have been found in the nation's water supply that can damage the reproductive system, the nervous system, the cardiovascular system, the brain, liver and kidneys.

Pesticides, though banned in many Western countries, continue to be exported to the underdeveloped countries. The US Department of Defense produces more toxic waste than the top five chemical companies combined. Up to 30,000 toxic waste sites directly threaten public health and the environment. Spending on military-related toxic and radioactive waste cleanup has been estimated at 400 billion dollars, and remains ineffective.

How did the environmental situation become as life-threatening as today? Man's greed has outstripped any existing sense of responsibility for the earth and its wellbeing!

The sources for *acid rain* are found in the heavy industrial regions of the USA and Europe, while the greatest impacts of acid rain have been experienced in the lakes, forests and tundra of Scandinavia, Western Europe and Northern Canada... The loss of forest products in Europe resulting directly from air pollution was estimated at 82.3 million m³ per year in 1990. These losses represent around US\$23 million in lost earnings.

The Great Forests of the Past

We have already referred to Psalm 104, one of many marvellous poems in the Bible extolling creation and the Creator. The psalmist was evidently greatly impressed by his visit to Lebanon:

*The trees of the Lord are well watered,
The cedars of Lebanon that He planted.
There the birds make their nests;
The stork has its home in the pine trees.
The high mountains belong to the wild goats;
The crags are a refuge for the coney's"* (vv. 16-18).

Lebanon seemed a veritable paradise on earth to the psalmist. The gushing streams reminded him of the delightful rivers of Eden; its majestic trees were like those in the well-watered

garden of Adam's time.

Today Lebanon is a virtual desert. The Assyrians, then the Babylonians, carried off immense quantities of lumber for huge building projects. The Greeks followed suit. In the Roman period, there was a brief respite, but at the fall of that empire, the situation was critical. The "desolating" Turks actually taxed trees, and thereby caused their destruction by the poor inhabitants of the land.

The Crisis Will Get Worse

The environmental crisis, already severe and taxing the ingenuity of international organizations such as FAO and UNEP, *will get worse!* The prophets of God make this abundantly plain in the Bible. Zechariah refers to the deforestation of the Middle East which we mentioned earlier: *"Open your doors, O Lebanon, so that fire may devour your cedars! Wail, O pine tree, for the cedar has fallen; the stately trees are ruined! Wail oaks of Bashan; the dense forest has been cut down"* (11:1-2).

With clear insight, the prophet Isaiah has described our present plight, and its real *cause*: *"The earth is defiled by its people; they have disobeyed the laws, violated the statutes; and broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore a curse consumes the earth; its people must bear their guilt"* (24:5-6).

He indicated that drought will remain a problem: *"The earth dries up and withers, the world languishes and withers, the exalted of the earth languish"* (v. 4).

In this same chapter 24, however, the prophet also indicates the *cure*: divine intervention when God's Son assumes the reins of government: *"From the west they acclaim the Lord's majesty, therefore in the east give glory to the Lord; exalt the name of the Lord, the God of Israel, In the islands of the sea, from the ends of the earth, we hear singing: 'Glory to the Righteous One.' For the Lord Almighty will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem; and before its elders, gloriously"* (vv. 14-16, 23). In that day the polluters will be removed from the earth they have defiled; in fact, they will be destroyed (Revelation 11:18).

A Regenerated Earth Filled With God's Glory

When Jesus Christ returns to set up God's kingdom on earth, the earth shall be in a sorry state. But thousands of years of gross

and selfish misuse of the planet will then be reversed, and its scars healed. So drastic will be the measures needed, that the Bible describes the kingdom of God as "*a new earth*" (Isaiah 65:17; 2Peter 3:13). This does not mean that this present globe will be literally replaced by a different one, as some churches mistakenly teach. It means that so drastic will be the work of repair required, that the earth will be totally renewed and restored to its former beauty.

There are many detailed realistic and glowing pictures in the Bible, of this restored environment under the wise rule of Jesus Christ and his immortalised saints. The prophet Amos describes a situation where the agricultural seasons run together: "*The days are coming, declares the Lord, when the reaper will be overtaken by the plowman and the planter by the one treading the grapes*" (9:13).

Psalms 72 emphasizes that in the reign of God's royal Son: "*The mountains will bring prosperity to the people, The hills the fruit of righteousness. He will be like rain falling on a mown field, Like showers watering the earth*" (vv. 3, 6).

Then the bountiful world described in Psalm 65 will really flourish everywhere: "*Thou visitest the earth and waterest it. Thou enrichest it abundantly. The streams of God are filled with water... The grasslands of the desert overflow; the hills are clothed with gladness. The meadows are covered with flocks, and the valleys are mantled with grain; They shout for joy and sing*" (vv. 9, 12-13).

However, although Christ shall be responsible for the regeneration of our devastated planet, this transformation will not be effected merely by waving a magic wand. The whole work of restoration, moral and physical, will take a thousand years (Revelation 20:4) before the royal Son can present this earth, cured and redeemed of all its ills, and filled with the glory of God, to his heavenly Father (1Corinthians 15:24, 28).

There is another important reason why the restoration of the world shall take a considerable period of time: God's true people of all ages, raised from the dead, and made immortal (along with those who will be alive when Christ returns — 1Corinthians 15:23, 51-52) shall assist Jesus Christ in his work of renewal.

But there shall be also many mortal survivors of the terrible war of Armageddon in the midst of which the Lord shall intervene, appearing on the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14:4; Acts 1:11-120. Zechariah refers to those who will be *left* from all the nations involved in the Armageddon holocaust: "*Then the survivors from all the nations that have attacked Jerusalem will go year after year to worship the King, the Lord Almighty, and to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles*" (14:16).

The task of these mortals in the kingdom is to as last manage the planet for God properly. Their first task shall be to dispose of the vast quantities of armaments and the casualties of that conflagration: "*Then those who live in the towns of Israel will go out and use the weapons for fuel... for seven years they will use them for fuel. Men will be regularly employed to cleanse the land. Some will go throughout the land, and in addition to them, others will bury those that remain on the ground... and so they will cleanse the land*' (Ezekiel 39:9, 14-16). "*They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war any more*" (Isaiah 2:4).

So the enormous sums now devoted to the arms race will then be diverted to a productive use: making the earth more fruitful.

Because this great task shall be entrusted to these mortal survivors, supervised by immortal rulers, it must obviously take some time to complete. But eventually the environmental crisis will be cured. This earth shall be in the state designed for it by God — a planet filled with His glory. The Bible positively declares that soon: "*the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea*" (Habakkuk 2:14).

Our Present Responsibility

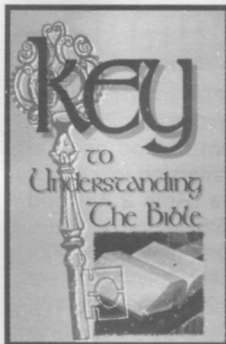
Men and women who "long for the appearing" of Jesus Christ (2Timothy 4:8) will prepare themselves for the task of supervising the restoration of the earth, so that it can become the paradise of God. The first paradise experienced by Man was a "garden" (that is what the word 'paradise' originally means) in Eden. The future paradise, which was promised by the Lord

Jesus to the repentant thief on the cross (Luke 23:43), will be restored upon earth (Isaiah 51:3; Ezekiel 36:35). The dying man himself recognised this, and pleaded of the Lord Jesus: "Lord, remember me *when you come into your kingdom.*" He certainly did not expect to go to heaven at death: he was looking for the return of the Lord Jesus to the earth, when it shall be a paradise, and he might find a place in God's new kingdom therein. According to the response of the Master, he will be there!

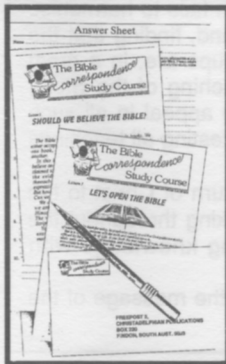
If we would be there also, to see this earth regenerated, we need to make the appropriate preparations now. The Lord Jesus told his disciples: "*I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life*" (Matthew 19:28-29).

To "follow" the Lord means to obey the divine truths which he taught, to put on his Name in baptism, and thereafter live a life of faithful and willing service to him as Master and Lord, and patiently await his return in glory.

That is our primary responsibility. We know that God, through His beloved Son, *will cure the environmental crisis*, and we have faith that in His time He will do so — very effectively. However, this fact does not exonerate us from a present responsibility to care for the earth He has entrusted to us. Although the specific national laws given through Moses have been done away in Christ, their spiritual principles remain. We *are* answerable to our Maker for how we use His earth. This does not mean that we join protest marches and lie down in front of logging trucks, as some earnest lovers of the earth have been known to do. But it does mean that we take a lively interest in today's environmental crisis and play our part by becoming ourselves responsible to God, accepting His way of salvation, the first step to our own moral and future physical regeneration as part of God's glorious plan for a renewed earth.



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