

Good Stewards Over God's Creation

Our calling to protect His Creation and Environment

October 2010

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Summary: We see environmental extremes: corporations exploiting God’s creation—and then others practically worshiping the earth and its creatures. As a child of the Eternal God, what are our responsibilities to God’s earth, the environment and to His creation? What does Yahweh have to say about animals, land, seas and rivers, and His earth? We pray this message will make the rounds among children of God and help us all be better stewards over His Creation without going to the extremes of some environmental activists. We end with tips on what we can do now.

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Greetings, brothers and sisters in our Messiah. This is your brother Philip Shields, with a question for you that has to do with God’s creation. We’re back from the Feast of Tabernacles, or Sukkot – a time picturing the restoration of the earth spiritually and physically until it is restored as the Garden of Eden (which means “Delights”) all around the world.

That's the end game of my message today: that during the wonderful world tomorrow, this once pristine planet after the 7 days of creation in Genesis 1-2, will once again be a Garden of Eden. The Living God gave us an environment that He created originally by His Word (John 1:1-3). What on earth has been happening to this planet earth? And what has yet to happen before the return of Messiah? What roles and responsibilities do you and I have with God's creation?

It's time for me to address this. I haven't personally ever given a whole sermon on this topic before. I hope it will help God's children be more cognizant of the earthly home we've been gifted to watch over until the King returns.

WHY This is an Important Topic for God's children

Why do we bother with this topic?

Because what is most important in our lives is our relationship with our Savior and our Father in Heaven. The Apostle Paul liked to say that everything else was dung or garbage compared to this one thing: “that I may know Him... (Phil. 3:5-10). Our Savior Yeshua defines eternal life in John 17:3 as knowing our heavenly Father -- the one true God, and the One the Father sent – Yeshua the Messiah. It may take an eternity to even begin to fully know God. So everything we do, or read, or study, or discuss spiritually should help us grow that relationship with Yeshua and our Father in Heaven. Everything. If it doesn’t, then it may fall into the category of “knowledge puffs up”.

Have you thought of it that way? I hope every sermon I preach on this website will help someone out there have a closer walk with our Creator and Savior. That's the intent, at least.

Please understand that. Please turn to Romans 1. We can actually “see” Yahweh more clearly as we come to know more and appreciate more about His creation.

Romans 1:20 (Apologetics Bible translation)

“From the creation of the world His invisible attributes, that is, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what He has made. As a result, people are without excuse”

We can “see God” in the creation. That’s one reason I love nature shows so much. ***But – very importantly: creation is not God!*** I say that because some eastern religions teach every tree, every animal is, in some mysterious way, a part of God and is God. These religions even can consider the earth itself as a god. I’m not there, and that is definitely NOT what Scripture teaches.

But we can learn more about the Creator of anything, when we examine what has been created. When I carefully look at my grandchildren’s drawings, I learn more about them. When I learn more about anything in creation, I learn more about its Creator. I prefer to call it “creation” rather than “nature”, because I know what we see didn’t just *naturally* happen – but had to be brilliantly crated by an Almighty Creator who oversees His vast universe.

Even as a child growing up in the Philippines, I remember hearing my Mom and Dad say things like, “isn’t God great? Watch those monkeys over there. You can tell God has humor just by watching those monkeys He made over there...” Or they’d talk about how God feeds the birds and takes care of the wild flowers – and “if He does that for them, He’ll surely always watch over you.”

We’ll see how Elohim—the one true God – made everything in this planet and He claims everything in it and on it as His own. He’s given us this earth as our home, and He made it pristine and beautiful in the beginning. This was and is His. How have we treated the home (earth) that He’s let us use?

If I gave you a gift of Steuben crystal that was special to me and expensive, and it came from my heart to you – and later on I see you using this piece of Steuben crystal as a urinal – how do you think that would affect our relationship? Or if you had a priceless beautiful home, and you let renters use it for many years, how would you feel if it had been ruined, marked up, destroyed and defaced when you came back to inspect your home? The earth is like that home we’ve been allowed to use.

So I hope by the time we’re done today, you will look at everything in creation differently.

GETTING THE BALANCE on Environment and Using the Earth properly

Let me say right from the get-go: ***I’m not an environmentalist wacko – but I absolutely believe in protecting and keeping the environment.*** Neither am I one espousing the largely discredited politics of so-called “Global warming” and massive climate changes. There may well be climate changes – but the Ice Age wasn’t caused by SUV’s. Creator God made our planet more resilient

than Global Warming people would have you believe. They like to teach the earth is so fragile. My God made this planet pretty tough actually.

There are dangerous extremists out there who worship what they refer to as “mother Earth” and they’ll go to any length to stop any trees from being cut down or to stop any animal from being slaughtered for dinner. Some have put long spikes into trees marked for cutting – so when the logs go through the saw mills, the lives of those sawing the logs are put at risk. I am not a “tree hugger” – but yes, I love big trees and enjoy communing with my heavenly Father in His woods behind my home.

There are many extreme environmentalist groups – but does that mean we can’t be balanced environmentalists? Do we throw the baby out with the bath water? Or perhaps many wouldn’t even want to be called even a “Godly environmentalist” because of its leftist connotations?

There’s a group called the Voluntary Human Extinction Movement: they have voluntarily quit having babies to give the earth a chance to recover, as the earth would be better off without humans, they say. There’s another movement called “*Earth First*”. They teach every species is equally valuable and important. We’ve all heard of *Greenpeace* – another fringe group, started in 1970. Members chain themselves to coal power plants or block and harass Japanese whaling ships. Then there’s the *Earth Liberation Front*, *Animal Liberation Front*, the Animal Rights Militia, and on and on. Some of these last fringe groups I just mentioned have even been listed as dangerous terrorist movements by the FBI, as some of these groups even carry out acts of arson and bombings. You’ve heard of “eco-terrorism”? That’s not what this sermon is about today.

On the other hand, neither do I support the wanton destruction of our planet by so many **corporations** often driven by corporate greed – than they are protecting our planet and its atmosphere. The vast jungles of the Amazon as well as parts of south Asia are the lungs of the planet, and yet they are being bulldozed, cut down or burned at an alarming rate. I have no desire to associate with that other side either. My heart sighs and cries when I see mountain side after mountain side here in the beautiful northwest USA being clear cut. Not a single tree left on some slopes. And most of those trees and logs will end up just being shipped to Japan and Asia.

Our oceans are being polluted by garbage, pesticides, oil spills--you name it. The BP oil spill is just the latest of many around the world. On top of that, the vast seas are being fished out by super-efficient fishing vessels accompanied by refrigerated mother ships. In many developing countries, there are few environmental laws protecting rivers, streams, oceans and forests. I believe the destruction of God’s creation is even greater in rapidly developing countries – like China and India –than it ever was in the USA.

Again, what are we doing to this “home” the Eternal has given us to use?

On top of everything else, we now produce **genetically modified** or genetically engineered meat, corn, wheat – and someday even genetically modified salmon. There are dangerous consequences to these hybrid corn – rendered sterile so one company protects their claim to the corn. So one company could conceivably control much of the world production of corn someday.

Perhaps someday everything we'll eat will have been genetically modified. It's already happening. I don't think enough testing has been done to guarantee there won't be some horrific consequences from all of this down the road. What impacts will all this have on our bodies, our lives, and our planet -- eventually?

Nor do I subscribe to the thinking that mankind is an equal to turtles, monkeys or whales or that they are *our* equal and that we must share the resources of this planet equally with baboons, bison and bears. That plays straight into the "Mother Earth" gang who practically worship "Gaia". Some say they are mankind's equal and it is arrogant of humans to assume a superior role to any animal. I'm not there, OK?

Yes, I do eat meat – which means killing an animal. God's word – my authority – says I can eat certain animals (Lev. 11; Deut 14). In the past I have hunted deer and game birds and wish I could do more of that again. I love God's creation, but I know it is OK with God for me to hunt and eat meat and harvest trees from a forest. I live in a house that has considerable wood in it, which means trees were felled for my house – and probably yours. I drive a car – although less and less as I've learned to do my job largely by phone since 2006. I work out of my home in my own business.

Now, because I eat meat – does that mean I support the way chickens and turkeys, for example, are treated in the mega hatcheries and farms just so I can have eggs and poultry? I think the way some mega-chicken farms treat their chickens is abominable. I buy eggs from someone not far away who has some free-range chickens and ducks.

Watch the curriculum being handed out by far left environmentalists. There's a pamphlet put out by Tides Foundation, being circulated in some churches, called "**Let there Be....Stuff**". It has some good ideas in it, but it also promotes concepts of "mother earth", and eastern religion concepts. Beware of that book. It's being disseminated by the same leftists putting out "The Story of Stuff" in our schools all over the country, with your tax dollars! On the surface it sounds OK, but when you really watch that video, it promotes a far left agenda. Beware of it.

So I'm not there, with either extreme, OK? I will preach today, however – from God's own sacred word -- that we have a solemn responsibility to do our part to protect and preserve the environment Yahweh created. There is a balance. *I suspect by the time you hear all of this message, you'll be amazed at how much is said about this in the Scriptures.* So although I'm not an environmental wacko, I fear that because the extremists have turned off a lot of people, there are many in God's church who dismiss every concept associated with caring for God's environment.

By the time Messiah lands on the Mount of Olives, the beautiful earth God renewed in Genesis 1 will look very different. The soil and air will be largely toxic from the multiple nuclear wars and volcanic eruptions. There will be so many earthquakes the likes of which the world has never seen that whole mountains will be leveled. Could the worldwide earthquakes cause tsunamis the height of skyscrapers? If so, no wonder "every island will disappear". This planet will be very, very different, even toxic, compared to what it is now, by the time our King returns.

So here's my question: brothers and sisters, what is our responsibility to the home the Almighty created as our dwelling place, for beings He made in His image and in His likeness?

WHAT WILL this earth be like at the return of King Yeshua, Jesus the Christ?

Let's start with the beginning for some quick review first – and set the foundation.

Interestingly enough, in the Jewish community they have just begun reading the Torah (first 5 books) from the very beginning. On Sabbath of Oct 9, they are reading all about the Flood. That's where they are now in their Bible reading. They start new right after the Feast of Tabernacles. In fact, that fits, because what does the 8th day feast, after the Feast of Tabernacles, picture? It's called *Shemeni Atzeret* – which just means “the assembly of the 8th Day”. On this day, Jews finish reading the last chapters of Torah and immediately launch into Genesis 1-6.

The 8th day after the Feast of Tabernacles pictures New Beginnings. It depicts God's new heavens and new earth of Rev. 21-11.

So now that we're back from the Feast, and the 8th day is over, all of which pictures the restored earth to Garden of Eden-like beauty and peace – and the new Torah readings in synagogues are “coincidentally” back to Genesis – it is appropriate to look at the earth that we have in front of us. How did it get this way, where is it headed, and what is *our* responsibility to what Yahweh the Eternal God has given to us?

This planet is going to get into much, much worse shape before it gets better.

The book of Revelation shows us what's about to happen. I can't take the time in this message to go into it in depth, but typically the Feast of Trumpets messages will go into that. If not, read Revelation chapters 5-15.

- In Rev. 6 and 8 in particular, we read of 1/3 of the trees and grass being burned up, 1/3 of human population destroyed by the huge armies, and we're also told of great tribulation on God's children (Rev. 6:9-11).
- We read of the planet being hit by meteorites or even asteroids. What else could be the “great mountain”, burning, falling into the sea?
- Great earthquakes plus the meteorite hits make giant tsunamis the scale of which have never before been seen – resulting in “every mountain and island moved out of its place” (Rev. 6:14).
- In Revelation 8-9 – read it for yourself--there are horrific hits on the ecology and environment. One third of fish and trees and grass die off.
- One third of mankind is killed in one particular war (Rev. 9:13-21). This planet ends up very toxic. Is “nuclear winter” perhaps even being described? This is the condition of the planet when it is taken over by its Creator. A far cry from the way He made it in Gen.1-2.

Then in Rev. 11, the 2 witnesses are killed, resurrected 3 days later – and we read this:

Revelation 11:15-19

The seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven saying:

The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom
of our Lord and of His Messiah,
and He will reign forever and ever!

16 The 24 elders, who were seated before God on their thrones, fell on their faces and worshiped God, 17 saying:

We thank You, Lord God, the Almighty, who is and who was,
because You have taken Your great power and have begun to reign.

18 The nations were angry, but Your wrath has come.

The time has come for the dead [nations] to be judged,
and to give the reward to Your servants the prophets, (See Dan 7:21-22)
to the saints, and to those who fear Your name, both small and great,
and the time has come to destroy those who destroy the earth.

19 God's sanctuary in heaven was opened, and the ark of His covenant appeared in His sanctuary. There were lightnings, rumblings, thunders, an earthquake, and severe hail.

*It says the "time has come to destroy those who destroy the earth!" Wow!
Why the heat here?*

Because God says HE made and owns this earth and everything in it and He's really angry at what we've done to His creation, to His people, to His animals and to the home He gave us to use! This is God's earth – He made it, He owns it, and He takes seriously when anyone disrespects Him by mistreating what He made. He is "ticked off" royally at this point. Plus I suspect there is something of Him, at least his Spirit, in all things created. "The things that are seen were created by the things unseen" – Heb. 11:2. *I am NOT saying creation is God.* No. I am saying God made creation and His signature in it is clearly seen. We thank Yahweh for His creation. We don't pray *to* the creation. Not at all.

To WHOM does the Earth Belong?

All creation is groaning, Rom 8:22-23 says. You can see why! But back to the point that Elohim, the Living God, created all things and they belong to Him. So He is royally ticked off how we've destroyed His pristine creation here on earth.

Colossians 1:15-18

15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 For **by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth**, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. **All things were created through Him and for Him.** 17 And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.

Psalms 24:1-2

The earth and everything in it, the world and its inhabitants, **belong to Yahweh;**
2 for He laid its foundation on the seas and established it on the rivers.

All things weren't just made by Him, but for Him. If you had made something beautiful and perfect and gifted it to someone else temporarily, how would you and I feel if they treated our perfect work with contempt and destroyed it? I'm speaking not just of society – but things you and I can be doing that are destructive and not creative as well. ***I'll end up today with suggestions of things we can be doing to become better stewards.***

In speaking about the land rests and selling land – and the Jubilee, the return of land that was sold... notice what Almighty says in Lev. 25.

Leviticus 25:23

23 “The land is not to be permanently sold because it is Mine, and you are only foreigners and temporary residents on My land.”

When was the last time you heard that read in church: God saying “you are on My land”? We've been given this planet, this earth, this country. Don't forget your 1/3 or 1/2 acre is not yours but God's. How are you taking care of *His* land? Remember we are held accountable for anything we've been given (Luke 12:48b).

So I asked earlier, why the heat? Here's what the Creator said, through the prophet Jeremiah:

Jeremiah 2:7

**“I brought you to a fertile land to eat its fruit and bounty,
but after you entered, you defiled My land; you made My inheritance detestable.”**

So, do you remember? Elohim says He will destroy those who destroy the earth. He says humankind has destroyed His creation. He says “you made my inheritance detestable”.

Now one of my over-arching principles will be this: Don't mess with anything that isn't yours, or which belongs to Someone else, or that was made by Someone else, for Someone else.

Wouldn't that tick *you* off, if you had made something perfectly and carefully —and it was also for your use and pleasure – and then had to watch people ruin it completely? You'd feel personally violated and certainly disrespected.

Another over-arching principle will be this: God's children seek to do the will of our Father, just like Yeshua did. We learn to do things not according to our will, but HIS will. Our thoughts are not His thoughts and so we ask for Him to show us His thoughts and ways – and the strength to follow His ways.

I'm saying, if we're His children, we'll talk and act like our Father – including in this matter of the environment and ecology which He created. We'll respect His creation and treat it like He would Himself.

THE RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS IS REQUIRED

Peter is speaking in Acts 3, and here's what He says about Yeshua (the Hebrew name translated Jesus):

Acts 3:20-22

"... He may send Jesus, who has been appointed Messiah for you. 21 Heaven must welcome Him **until the times of the restoration of ALL things**, which God spoke about by the mouth of His holy prophets from the beginning."

ALL things. What will have to be restored? All things – God's way, God's spirit leading mankind. He'll restore families, marriages, good health, one pure language, and on and on. "Restoration" is worthy of a whole sermon by itself, but for now, let's just focus on the fact the planet will certainly have to be restored. The air will be toxic, the waters will be toxic, the land will be toxic – and there may even have to be huge miracles from the King of Kings and those of us working with him, just to make the planet inhabitable.

God has called you and me to be forerunners of understanding our role on this earth and its ecology.

UNDERSTANDING OUR STEWARDSHIP from the BEGINNING

When Elohim – the Living God – created Adam and Eve, he gave them more than just one command. I've heard it said they had one command – "Don't eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil". That was the main "Do not" kind of command. But at the end of Genesis 1, we see Elohim giving Adam and Eve *several* very definite "do" commands –

Turn please to Genesis 1:26-28. This passage is often used to justify exploiting the planet in every way we can. Let's read it, and make it part of the full discussion today.

Genesis 1:26-28 in CJB version

26 Then God said, "Let us make **humankind in our image**, in the likeness of ourselves; and let **them rule over** the fish in the sea, the birds in the air, the animals, and **over all the earth**, and over every crawling creature that crawls on the earth."

27 So God created humankind in his own image, in the image of God he created him: male and female he created them.

28 **God blessed them: God said to them**, "Be **fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over** the fish in the sea, the birds in the air and every living creature that crawls on the earth."

At the very end of Genesis 1, after creating mankind – male and female -- God saw what He had made, and pronounced it – for the first time – "VERY good." At the end of all the other days, Elohim pronounced his work only as "good". Man and woman, the only beings created in the Creator's likeness and image, were the pinnacle of God's physical creation at this point. He started with Light. He is the light of the earth. Then He separated the land and seas. Then plants and trees were created, followed by making the sun and moon visible from the earth, the 4th day. Then fish and birds on the 5th day, then animals and finally man and then woman on the 6th day. Mankind is at the pinnacle of God's creation, the only ones in His likeness and image. No animal

or fish was made in the Creator's image or likeness. So mankind is not just like the animals and no animal is just like us.

Some religions worship animals as gods, as possible incarnations of a relative. So even among the poor in India, they won't kill any of the cows that roam the streets in some cities lest they end up killing their grandma or some ancestor.

Of course there was one more day, the seventh. God *worked* for six days to create what we see around us – and then He hallowed the Sabbath and in that sense created it, but this time by *resting* on it and putting His presence into it. The Sabbath continues, so we don't see a statement like “the evening and the morning were the 7th day”. Have you thought of that before?

It's pretty clear; Elohim is putting mankind in charge of the earth. It's pretty clear that only mankind was made in God's likeness and image. I say this because there are many who feel every creature on earth is equal to every other creature; that man is not any higher than any other animal. We might all be mammals with other mammals – but only mankind was made in God's image and likeness. And only mankind was put in charge of the earth.

Our rulership of the earth, however, was to be like Christ Himself would have ruled. In charge, yes, but “servant leadership” – a rulership of love and service and kindness—not rampant pillaging of the earth and its animals! Creation was made for our home, our benefit, but we in turn were made to rule it God's way, and to protect and guard His creation, as we shall see.

Mark 10:42-45

42 Jesus called them over and said to them, “You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles dominate them, and their men of high positions exercise power over them. 43 *But it must not be like that among you. On the contrary, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant,* 44 and whoever wants to be first among you must be a slave to all. 45 For even the *Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve,* and to give His life—a ransom for many.”

That was to be our model: Messiah-like domination of the earth – leading by tending to the needs of the planet and its inhabitants, wisely, kindly, restoratively – even as we remember who the real owner is. And remembering we are only stewards of His earth, temporary renters – as it were – of the home He made.

What does it mean to “fill the earth and subdue it, to rule it, to dominate – or have dominion over it” in Gen. 1:28? That phrase has been used both to defend and attack particular views about the environment. Some take it to mean that we're the lords of the earth, and we can do whatever we need to do. Others take the opposite view. Can there be a middle ground supported by scripture?

The actual Hebrew words for “subdue” and “have dominion” are very, very strong words. Taken by themselves, or taking this one scripture alone, has led many to conclude the earth is there for the pillaging. But as we'll see as we go through the whole topic, that is not the intent.

SUBDUE, comes from Hebrew word #OT:3533> **kabash (kaw-bash')** – meaning to conquer, bring into subjection.

“DOMINION” –comes from Hebrew word # 7287, *radah* (raw-daw'); again, to subjugate, to reign over, to have dominion.

Both words – subdue and dominate – are similar in meaning in Hebrew.

But remember in scripture after scripture, we are told things like:

- When the righteous are in authority, the people (and no doubt all creation) rejoice (Proverbs 29:2)

Psalms 37:29-31

The righteous will inherit the land and dwell in it permanently.

30 The mouth of the righteous utters wisdom; his tongue speaks what is just.

31 The instruction of his God is in his heart; his steps do not falter.

Considering we are here to be stewards of what Almighty God created by Him and for Him, we surely would be using – while protecting – what He has created for our use.

What did Elohim, the Living God of Abraham, David and Peter and Paul - do next?

MAN'S FIRST JOB ON EARTH

Elohim gives Adam a job, even before creating Havah (the Hebrew name for Eve). What was the first job, the true oldest profession? By the way, Havah means “life” or “living”. “Adam” means “man”. When Elohim said, “Let us make *man* in our image”, the Hebrew word for “man” is *adam*. It could be related to the verb “*adom*”—meaning “to be red.” The first man may very well have been ruddy, maybe olive skinned, and not as white like we might envision a Scandinavian male to be.

Genesis 2:7-9 Apologetics

Then the Lord God formed the man out of the dust from the ground and breathed the breath of life into his nostrils, and the man became a living being.

8 The Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there He placed the man He had formed. 9 The Lord God caused to grow out of the ground every tree pleasing in appearance and good for food, including the tree of life in the midst of the garden, as well as the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

New King James

“....the Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of *Eden to tend and keep it*.

Genesis 2:15 CJB

15 Adonai, God, took the person and put him in the garden of ‘*Eden to cultivate and care for it*.

Gen 2:15 Apologetics

“.... placed him in the Garden of Eden *to work it and watch over it.*

Are we getting it? Yahweh tells our father Adam – “I’m giving you a gorgeous Garden, which I call the Garden of Delights (that’s what Eden means). Now keep it pretty. Take care of it. Cultivate it. Keep it, and guard it.”

Have we done that very well?

When Elohim gives us anything, He expects us to value it by caring for it. I taught my children to not just throw their bikes down when they were done, but to put the kick-stand down, to watch over them. I taught my children to feed their dog, bathe it, and give it clean water to drink. With the pet came responsibilities. God was no different: “I’ve made a wonderful garden for you to live in and now please keep it pretty and guard it”.

Mankind has systematically been destroying the beautiful earth Elohim created. Libya and the Sudan were once the breadbasket of the Roman Empire. Today it is barren desert. We’ve clear-cut thousands of acres of beautiful woodlands and forests over here. Many streams and rivers are not safe to even swim in – especially in the rapidly developing nations. All of mankind is at fault on this one.

As children of God, do we have a responsibility to the earth Elohim has created? We’re told the whole of creation is groaning, waiting for their Creator to set things right!

Romans 8:20-23

20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; 21 because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. 22 *For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.* 23 Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.

Humankind as a rule has not been good to the ecology and environment. Look what we did to the millions of **bison**. We’ve even wiped out whole populations of birds – for the feathers for women’s hats. Now we’re scrubbing the sea floors for any sellable sea life. International treaties are weak and often not enforced. Look what our Creator says:

The creation sings for joy at His return. Aren’t these verses telling us that the environmentalists aren’t *totally* wacko. Some have become extreme – that’s clear – but not everything they promote is off track!

The Eternal gave us stewardship of a beautiful land He owns – a land full of opportunities. ***What are we doing with it? And scripture is clear, to whom much is given, much will be expected.***

Judged by what we have been given

Luke 16:10-12

Whoever is faithful in very little is also faithful in much, and whoever is unrighteous in very little is also unrighteous in much. 11 So if you have not been faithful with the unrighteous money, who will trust you with what is genuine? **12 *And if you have not been faithful with what belongs to someone else, who will give you what is your own?***

Are we getting it? The land you thought you bought and owned is not yours. It is still Yahweh's. He's letting you use it. How will He grade us in how we have taken care of His land?

1 Corinthians 4:2

"Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful."

"What's in Your Hand?"

You may not think you've been given very much to be a steward over. But whatever we have control over, we need to be exercising the mind of God over those things. We have to be "faithful in little" so He can trust us with much more later.

Yahweh can do wonders with whatever we have in our hands if we dedicate whatever we have to Him. God did wonders through Moses' rod, for example. When Yahweh first talked to Moses (Moshe), all He asked Moshe was "What do you have in your hand?" (**Exodus 4:1-5** – read it yourself!) And Almighty worked the 10 plagues and parted the Red Sea with a stick that Moses happened to have in his hands.

What's in *your* hand? What little bit do you and I have some control over? Surely, more than a stick. Dedicate what you have, and what talents the Eternal has given you, to His use – then stand back and see the wonders God can do through you and me – if we believe.

How are you taking care of your back yard? How do you care for the parks and national parks you hike and camp in? How does it look after you leave? When we have to relieve ourselves — and we're camping in pristine areas, do you just do it anywhere? Here's an example of one of the many teachings (Torah) of God that affects sanitation, water purity, flies in the camp, and all kinds of things. The Torah (meaning "teachings", not just "law") has many. Here's one:

Deuteronomy 23:12-14 Apologetics

12 You must have a place outside the camp and go there to relieve yourself. 13 You must have a digging tool in your equipment; when you relieve yourself, dig a hole with it and cover up your excrement. 14 For Yahweh your God walks throughout your camp to protect you and deliver your enemies to you; so your encampments must be holy. He must not see anything improper among you or He will turn away from you.

Now let's look at some of the other laws and statutes on this subject from Scripture.

OTHER LAWS AND PRINCIPLES FROM SCRIPTURE ABOUT ENVIRONMENT

God protected wildlife from extinction via the vessel, the ark of Noah.

Genesis 6:19-21 and Gen. 7:8-10 also.

God said, "You are to bring into the ark two of every kind of living creature, male and female, to keep them alive with you. Two of every kind of bird, of every kind of animal and of every kind of creature that moves along the ground will come to you to be kept alive. You are to take every kind of food that is to be eaten and store it away as food for you and them." Noah did everything just as God commanded him.

What does that tell us? God, who made every living thing, is interested in keeping the species alive and flourishing. We too, will be careful to help protect species from extinction. We would have been against the slaughter of the millions of bison almost to extinction. But neither are we naïve. There are forces out there that don't want any fish to ever be caught, any deer ever hunted – and I don't put it past them to maneuver data to support laws that would ban fishing and hunting altogether. So hear the balance in this.

Can we Eat Meat and fish?

God did give the clean animals to mankind for food. Jesus ate meat and told the disciples to prepare the Passover. Abraham offered Yahweh veal (Gen. 18:6-8) for dinner, with milk at the same time, by the way. Isaac enjoyed the venison that Esau would hunt. Eating meat from "clean" animals is fine, according to the Eternal One. We don't see God's children ever eating pork (Deut 14:8; Isa. 66:17) or shellfish, like crab, oysters, shrimp and lobsters (Deut. 11:12).

Leviticus 11:1-3

The Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron: 2 "Tell the Israelites: You may eat all these kinds of land animals. 3 You may eat any animal with divided hooves and that chews the cud.

Genesis 18:6-8

So Abraham hurried into the tent and said to Sarah, "Quick! Knead three measures of fine flour and make bread." 7 Meanwhile, Abraham ran to the herd and got a tender, choice **calf**. He gave it to a young man, who hurried to prepare it. 8 Then Abraham took **curds and milk, and the calf** that he had prepared, and set them before the men. He served them as they ate under the tree.

The Eternal made a covenant with Noah AND the animals saved in the Ark

Do we even think of God making covenants with animals? My point is this: all animals are under a covenant blessing from their Creator. They're His. We must watch how we treat His animals. Let's read it.

Genesis 9:8-9.

Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him: "I now ***establish my covenant with you and your descendants after you and with every living creature that was with you*** - the birds, the livestock, and all the wild animals, all those that came out of the ark with you - every living Creature on the earth."

Genesis 9:12-13.

And God said, "This is the sign of the *covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you*, a covenant for all generations to come: I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth.

Yahweh cares about His animals.

Deuteronomy 22:6-7

6 "If you come across a bird's nest with chicks or eggs, either in a tree or on the ground along the road, and the mother is sitting on the chicks or eggs, you must not take the mother along with the young. 7 You may take the young for yourself, but be sure to let the mother go free, *so that you may prosper and live long. [that last phrase makes it clear that Yahweh is concerned for the welfare of his creation.]*

Creatures of creation are often depicted as looking to God to feed them. Yeshua Himself speaks of how the Father feeds the birds of the air and clothes the plants with beautiful flowers (Matthew 6:26). See Ps. 147:9 ASB "He provides animals with their food, and the young ravens what they cry for."

Shouldn't we be like Father? Shouldn't we have bird feeders, and put up bird houses?

7 year SABBATICAL land rest

Do you ever think of Shabbat as an environmental law? In a way even the weekly Sabbath is, for on that day, every week, the land is to rest. Think of it: animals wouldn't be hunted on at least that one day. Farm animals get to rest – just as much as you and your family. The 4th commandment clearly states that neither you, your children, your servants, or your farm animals are to do any work, once a week, on the 7th day of the week, the day Elohim hallowed and sanctified. There is not a single command anywhere from Genesis to Revelation where God reverses or cancels it and tells us clearly to start worshipping Him on the day of the sun. No way.

There was also to be a LAND Sabbath. Every 7th year, we are supposed to let the land rest. Planting endless cycles of corn is hard on the soil. When we disobey these laws, we ruin the land. Libya and the Sudan were once the breadbaskets of the Roman Empire. It was rich land, with water and crocodiles and where the wheat for the whole empire was grown. Today it is desert.

Exodus 23:10-11

10 "Sow your land for six years and gather its produce. 11 But during the seventh year you are to let it rest and leave it uncultivated, so that the poor among your people may eat from it and the wild animals may consume what they leave. Do the same with your vineyard and your olive grove.

Leviticus 25:1-7 (there's more in Lev. 25:8-12, 18-22 read it on your own time).

The Lord spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai: 2 "Speak to the Israelites and tell them: When you enter the land I am giving you, the land will observe a Sabbath to the Lord. 3 You may sow your field for six years, and you may prune your vineyard and gather its

produce for six years. 4 But there will be a Sabbath of complete rest for the land in the seventh year, a Sabbath to the Lord: you are not to sow your field or prune your vineyard. 5 You are not to reap what grows by itself from your crop, or harvest the grapes of your untended vines. It must be a year of complete rest for the land. 6 Whatever the land produces during the Sabbath year can be food for you; for yourself, your male or female slave, and the hired hand or foreigner who stays with you. 7 All of its growth may serve as food for your livestock and the wild animals in your land.

We are not to harvest the edges and corners of your fields

Brethren, we've said for years: the laws of the Old Testament that we no longer have to do, nor can we do, are the laws pertaining to the temple/tabernacle, the priesthood and sacrifices – because the Messiah fulfilled these once and for all, AND we don't have a physical temple or physical priests to do them anyway! But the other laws in Scripture reflect the mind of our God and they are for our good. This law, of keeping the corners of your fields unharvested, should be kept today by our farmers who are believers.

Leviticus 23:22

When you reap the harvest of your land, you are not to reap all the way to the edge of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Leave them for the poor and the foreign resident; I am Yahweh your God."

That not only helps the poor – but also these corners and edges become prime habitat for small animals and birds. My wife and I spotted a rabbit on the edge of unbuilt land, where there were old raspberry and blackberry bushes and other plants. I keep the back edge of my property with hedges and bird baths, plus bird feeders here and there... I think Yahweh is pleased with that.

Leviticus 19:9-10 (also see Deut. 24:19-22)

"When you reap the harvest of your land, you are not to reap to the very edge of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. 10 You must not strip your vineyard bare or gather its fallen grapes. Leave them for the poor and the foreign resident; I am the Lord your God.

I think these verses reveal a clear principle from Elohim, the Almighty God: ***we are not strip bare and fully harvest anything we are harvesting*** – whether it's forests, the fish of the sea, or crops.

CARING about the state of animals

God loves His animals. Matthew 6:26 clearly teaches us that "birds don't sow, reap or gather into barns, but your heavenly father feeds them". Who feeds them? GOD does. Wouldn't His children also put out bird feeders then? I put out suet, bird seed, and bird baths. Children are like their Father. I recommend it. I love watching the dove, hummingbirds, finches, nuthatch, sparrows, grosbeaks and woodpeckers and stellar jays on our property, sometimes just feet away from my window. Father is even aware when a simple sparrow falls to the ground (**Matt. 10:29**),

every single time. You don't think He knows about all living things and how we're treating His creation? Amazing. Just amazing.

Proverbs 27:23

“Know well the condition of your flock, and pay attention to your herds...”

There are laws in God's word that are specific to the way we treat animals: we are not to muzzle an ox while it treads out the corn (Deuteronomy 25:4). We are not to plow with a donkey and an ox – as it would be very hard for them, as they're unmatched in strength, size and height (Deut. 22:10).

David was well known as a carer of his flocks...and it showed later when he became king. This leads us to the why this is so important to Elohim: how we treat the physical is also a picture of how we're going to deal with the spiritual flocks.

Ezekiel 34:11-16, 22-24 – read this some time. We see here that God will provide shepherds who really care. Pastors – that word simply means someone pasturing the flock (1 Pet. 5:1-4; John 21:15-17). They are shepherds. Fathers and mothers – you are shepherds of your family. Children, if you have a pet cat or a puppy, you are its shepherd and caregiver. Do you feed your puppy? Do you change the water dish regularly? Do you clean up after it? Do you train it not to relieve itself indoors? ***Children, there is never a time to be mean and cruel to animals.***

Men, women and children of God – I hope this sermon is speaking to your hearts.

NOW, other side of the coin:

I've been speaking about our responsibility to the land, to the planet and to animals. However, **we are not to go overboard and worship the earth or its creatures.** In fact, we have been *commanded to rule* the earth and the animals – but to rule it God's way: with love and compassion. Romans 1:25 says we are NOT to serve and worship the creature at all but we are to worship the Creator. **So we must get the balance on this.** Our natural tendency is to go to extremes: to either worship the creation and the earth – or to exploit it.

We must see this earth as a gift from our Creator – to help us inhabit the earth. The earth was created to be our home, a home we share with the other created lives, even as we exert control over it, as we “subdue it” and “rule over it” as Gen. 1 says. Failing to be proper stewards, failing to obey the commands to dress and keep the creation we've been given – is surely sin, for it goes against God's commands. One of several definitions of sin is any time we transgress God's law (1 John 3:4).

Having said that, I have to ask:

- Are we really to endanger human lives, livelihoods and food production to protect a small fish, as they are doing in northern/central California? I think not. There must be a God-centered answer to this that addresses all needs.

- Are we to stop cutting trees altogether – or is that not as bad an over-reaction as clear cutting is on the “other side” of the equation?
- Are we to refuse to wear beautiful furs because of “animal lovers”? I'm all for the fact that the harvesting of fur-bearing animals should be done as humanely as possible, and not with painful leg traps and other means. But in scripture, even John the Baptist wore a coat of camel's hair. Even God covered Adam and Eve with skins– see the end of Gen. 3.
- I certainly believe the Global Warming argument is way off base, although we know there is coming a time of TRUE Global warming, when the sun will be markedly hotter and warmer (See Revelation 16:8 – people will be burned by the sun's intense heat)

Having said all that – we **MUST** take care of this earth. We must be gentle and kind with God's creation.

THINGS WE CAN BE DOING, RIGHT NOW

A FEW PROACTIVE STEPS WE CAN EACH TAKE to VALUE GOD'S CREATION AND ENVIRONMENT... JUST TO get you started. What else can you add to these? See how many of these you can start to do immediately.

- **OBEY the scriptures we've been reading**
- Teach these principles to your children – mostly, by living them. Be an example of all these teachings by the way we act and live. Your kids will grow up seeing your example. That's the best way to teach this or anything to our children.
- Remember that the **covenants** of God with Noah included *all* living things. We need to be kind to wildlife as well and promote their welfare and habitat. (It might come as a surprise to many that hunters have done more to promote and reserve millions of acres of habitat and to safeguard ducks and deer, for example, than non-hunters.)
- Beware and replace dangerous **chemical pesticides, fungicides, etc.** --- which can also kill beneficial creatures. Use non-chemical biodegradable tools instead.
- I recommend, if you have land and space to do it, that we **plant fruit trees and a vegetable garden**. Some manage to make a garden at the top of high rises, or in planter boxes, when they don't have a yard. Plant some fruit trees. Grow as much of your own fruits and vegetables as you can in summer. My back yard gets minimal sunshine from the tall woods behind our home, but I'm going to try next summer to get vegetable gardens going again. Fresh tomatoes and veggies, grown without pesticides, simply *have* to be better for us.
- **Recycle and re-use** whenever possible. Recycle your papers, newspapers, plastics, glass. More and more communities do this already. If yours doesn't, ask other communities for help to get it started in your community. Recycle your lawn clippings and leaf rakings.

- Cut way down on plastics: plastic jugs and bottles. Plastic sacks. Use the reusable canvas bags each time instead. Plastics just don't biodegrade well at all.
- Follow at least the principles of the **land rest** every 7 years as much as you can
- **Generate less garbage.** Make a goal: 2 less kitchen garbage sacks a week.
- If you can walk or **bike** to work or the store, do it. It will make us healthier even as we cut down on carbon monoxide. I bought a bike and am starting to use it for nearby jaunts.
- **Start a compost pit.** Put peelings, egg shells, coffee grounds, etc. into the compost. (Don't make it too acidic; not too many citrus peels. Dairy products don't do as well in a compost pit either.)
- Don't waste water, food, electricity and power. I turn the shower off for a couple minutes while shampooing and lathering.
- **Be a great steward of** whatever land you control – even if just a small back yard.
- Respect God's creation. **Can you find ways to be kinder to your animals?** Hopefully God's children will never be accused of animal cruelty or abandonment. In everything we do, let's leave the planet cleaner and better than we found it (like if you go camping, etc).
- **If you are going to kill an animal for food, do it swiftly and cleanly**—and as humanely as possible. Be sure to drain all the blood out of the meat as Yahweh commands (Lev. 17:14; 19:26; Deut 12:23). If you're a hunter, improve your skills and accuracy so we're not maiming animals. Sadly, much of our younger generation has been "Bambified", not realizing that many animals out there are pretty tough on each other! They eat each other. But Yahweh did allow us to have meat to eat.

When it's all said and done, the whole world – all of creation – will rejoice and celebrate in each's own way, when their Creator returns to protect, restore and to love His creation.

I know Psalm 96 is inspired *poetry* and you can't take a lot of poetry literally – but try to understand the pathos behind it. Or maybe, just maybe, there is some literal meaning to Ps. 96. The creation itself seems ready to explode with joy when King Yeshua comes to stop all the madness going on. Let's read and enjoy the *explosion of relief and joy* this planet will experience when Yeshua returns.

Psalm 96:11-12 (Apologetics Bible)

11 Let the heavens be glad and the earth rejoice; let the sea and all that fills it *resound*.

12 Let the fields and everything in them exult. **Then all the trees of the forest will shout for joy**

Psalm 148:7-13

7 Praise the Lord from the earth, all sea monsters and ocean depths,

8 lightning and hail, snow and cloud, powerful wind that executes His command,
9 mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars,
10 wild animals and all cattle, creatures that crawl and flying birds,
11 kings of the earth and all peoples, princes and all judges of the earth,
12 young men as well as young women, old and young together.
13 Let them praise the name of the Lord, for His name alone is exalted.
His majesty covers heaven and earth.

Isaiah 55:12-13 (CJB – changed their Adonai to the original YHWH)

Yes, you will go out with joy, you will be led forth in peace.

**As you come, *the mountains and hills will burst out into song,*
and all the trees in the countryside will clap their hands.**

13 Cypresses will grow in place of thorns, myrtles will grow instead of briars.
This will bring fame to YHWH as an eternal, imperishable sign.

The earth will mourn no longer. The lands will get their missing land Sabbaths – and rests. The world will rejuvenate, be restored, and come to life until the whole planet resembles the ancient Garden of Eden by the time we come to the end of the millennial reign of the King and His Bride. In fact, in the New Jerusalem, we are told ahead of time there will be the Tree of Life there, and its leaves will be used for the healing of the nations (Rev. 22:2).

I know this message is different than what I usually give, but I hope you see its importance. Let's glorify our Savior, who was the Creator, who was the Word who spoke the entire universe into existence. Let's honor Him by keeping and guarding His creation.

I hope this message will get you thinking: let's be a good steward over God's creation! If this message has touched your spirit in any way, it would encourage me greatly to hear from you. But even more so, I'd love to hear how your life will change because of this message. Spread the word. Tell others about this message.

Until next time, my dear brothers and sister in our Master, this is Philip Shields your fellow child of God.