

Christianity and environmental issues 2

Why should we bother?

Last time we asked the question whether Christians should be concerned about environmental issues. This week we shall assume that we should be, and flesh things out a bit in answer to the question, 'Why should we bother?'

First, because we are talking about a *Christian* viewpoint we shall look at some ***Theological reasons***

1. God cares about his creation

When he created the world he called it good, and he continues to care for it.

In the Old Testament he gives laws about the treatment of wild and domesticated animals, and of the land so that it would go on being fruitful (Deut 22:6-7; 25:4; Lev 25:1-7).

He made a beautiful world and like any creator must be grieved when people wilfully or negligently spoil his handiwork.

As we are made in his image we are to share his concerns and to work with him. His first recorded words to human beings were about how they were to live on earth and relate to the rest of creation (Gen 1:28-30).

Throughout the Bible God shows that he is concerned for the whole of life, not just the so-called 'spiritual' aspects.

2. Jesus became human and lived on earth

He came to die for us, but he lived for more than 30 years in the world and cared for people's physical needs. As Christians we are to follow his example.

3. Reconciliation and redemption

In Genesis and in Romans especially we see that when people sinned that put the rest of creation out of kilter. Paul also writes that creation will eventually be 'liberated from its bondage to decay' (Rom 8:21) and in a beautiful picture in Isaiah (11:8-9) we get a glimpse of 'Paradise regained' when God's creation will be back in the harmony for which he originally intended it.

So God has not thrown this world on the scrap heap and we are to work with him to make it good, not to wreck it.

But as we live in the world, there are also

Practical reasons
for caring about it.

1. This world is our home

for now, and even though we wait to go on to a perfect eternal one, 80 years or however long we live is enough for the environment in which we find ourselves to matter to us. Ever since Jesus returned to heaven his people have expected him to return soon. 2000 years have passed, we are still here and we have no idea how many more years we have.

2. Stewardship of finite resources

God is generous and promises to provide for our needs, but there are not unlimited resources for us to waste, so we are to behave responsibly with what he has given us.

3. *Put right the damage we have done*

God is creator and sovereign, but not a magician who will wave a wand to put right everything that we have messed up. He forgives our sin, but part of repentance is seeking to rectify wrong we have done as far as possible. As someone has quipped: in the days of Jonah the whales conducted a campaign to 'save the human'; perhaps now is the time for us to repay our debt!

4. *It will make a difference*

As in many areas of life, no individual can change everything, but that is no reason to sit back and not try to change anything, and many individual efforts do add up. For example, Thames Water has said that measures taken by people last summer to save water did make an appreciable difference and averted the need for extra restrictions.

And lastly there are what I have called

Evangelistic reasons

by which I mean things which will say something to others about our faith.

1. *Love for our neighbour*

We are to act in ways which will make life better for other people, including those in other parts of the world and future generations. That includes sharing limited resources instead of being selfish and greedy.

2. *Social ethics*

Christianity involves personal morality but also social responsibility. If we are to make an impact with the Gospel, people need to see that Christianity is relevant to *all* aspects of life.

3. *We should take a lead*

So often we let the world set the agenda and then we struggle to find a Christian response. Should not we rather be in the forefront, providing a lead for others to follow?

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