

The Serpent and the Rainforest pt 2

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 28 February 2010

Preacher: Dr. Olav Slaymaker

- [0 : 0 0] Before I start, I'll say a few words. There were two questions last time, which would be worth a quick comment. Sheila had the audacity to ask me a question directly as I was sitting quietly in my seat.
- With your hand in the air. She asked me, when was North first depicted accurately on the maps? And I said I didn't know. And quite by chance that was the correct answer, because no one knows.
- But in checking with my learned colleagues, it's fascinating to realise that maps were first made of the heavens and not of the earth. Because of course in order to get a guidance as to where North might be, people were dependent on the stars.
- So if you look in the cave paintings at Lasso or in France or in the caves in Spain, the maps you see on the walls are actually maps of the heavens.
- Thanks so much for sorting out that question. The second question I was asked, I was asked to elaborate on my observation that the serpent is present in Milton's Paradise Lost.
- [1 : 1 8] Again, on the spur of the moment, I could do nothing but say, yes, it is there. But in checking again with my learned colleagues, you'll find that in Book 9, there's a very explicit reference to the way in which Satan enters into the body of the serpent.
- And the discussion of the way in which the serpent operates in the shape of the serpent in that Genesis account. So there's just to sort out a couple of leftover points from last time.
- First of all, I'd like to recap the opening argument. You'll know now why Dr. Packer and others prefer to have two or three sessions one after the other, because if you don't have enough material, you can always spend time on recapping the previous session.
- Sheila reviewed for us the history of the search for utopia. From Genesis, through Greek thinkers, through Tudor England, and on through dialectical materialism and Marxism.
- The human spirit is always searching for a better home, but is unaware of the fact that the serpent lurks around every corner.
- [2 : 5 1] As soon as the serpent says you can't trust God, you can only trust your own intellect, the game is over. Utopia without God is unachievable.
- That, Sheila, I hope, summarizes your comments. So much for the serpent. What about the rainforest? I shall try in these remarks to show that the rainforest, especially the Pacific Northwest version of rainforest, is yet another contemporary form of utopia.
- utopia. And this utopia is often called Cascadia. And for those of you who haven't come across this collection of papers, there's a summary of a variety of perspectives on Cascadia, edited by your favorite Vancouver Sun journalist, Douglas Todd.
- and what the book contains is an extraordinary variety of perspectives on this subtitled The Elusive Utopia.
- It's all part of that continuous stream of searching which Sheila described for us so well last time. Well, let me get to the rainforest and let us try to identify the precise location of that rainforest.

[4 : 31] You'll remember this map appeared last time and Sheila gave it scant attention but it extends from Kodiak Island in Alaska to Mill Valley, California.

And the rainforest is part of this region called Cascadia. Cascadia you can see it goes all the way down here to Mill Valley it stretches over into Oregon, Washington, much of British Columbia, the Yukon and southern Alaska.

It's defined in terms of the drainage of the cascades that cascade into the northern Pacific Ocean.

And so this line that you see delimiting the area of Cascadia is the divide that separates out all the drainage that comes into the northern Pacific Ocean.

That is not coincident with the rainforest. The rainforest is the most dramatic part of this region.

[5 : 56] but of course there are certain areas which you may know of in eastern Oregon and elsewhere which are desert-like. It just happens that the drainage incorporates a number of different bioregions.

The bioregion of the rainforest rainforest. Here I'll show a map which simply takes the British Columbian part of the puzzle.

The bioregion of rainforest is composed of two different regions. There is the very wet rainforest which is the dark green area right up against the coast incorporated between Charlotte Islands and Vancouver Island.

And there is the wet rainforest that is to say less wet which is known as the Columbia Wet Belt and is shown in a kind of olive colour along the valleys into the Columbia mountains in the interior of British Columbia.

So we have two kinds of rainforest in British Columbia. And in order not to stretch our technical terminology too far one is called wet and the other is called wetter.

[7 : 23] The wetter one is the western hemlock zone and it's well some of you may have seen it. Any of you been to Cyprus Bowl?

Any of you been to Lynn Park? you've seen it. It's the very wet rainforest. And if you've been to the Queen Charlotte's on the west coast of Vancouver you'll have seen an even wetter version culminating around Lake Henderson at about 8,000 meters of rain per year.

The interior version is not only in the Columbia Wet Belt but there's also a part of the Skeena and Nass drainage basins which also forms a part of that wet rainforest.

So much for the geography lesson but I'll leave that map. It seems to me essential to have the map in mind. So the largest area of rainforest sorry the largest area of temperate rainforest on the planet is in this Pacific region.

You're all familiar with the tropical rainforest the Amazon which occupies about 35% of the rainforests of the world but we actually have 28% in this Pacific Northwest region.

[9 : 03] It's essentially the west facing coastal mountains along the Pacific coast runs from the coastal redwoods in California and I can vouch for this now that my prosperous daughter and son-in-law have purchased a house in Mill Valley because they have several sequoias in their backyard.

But if you go down to Stanford you run out of rainforest and you're into a different bioregion. We are most familiar with the western hemlock, the western red cedar and the Sitka spruce in our region and it's worth spending a few moments on the wonders of the temperate rainforest.

rainforest. It has recorded the highest rate of biomass production of any ecosystem worldwide. This comes as a shock to some of our preconceptions about the tropical rainforest but in fact the red alder has been shown over a period of a decade to produce more biomass per unit area than any other tree in any other forest region.

Now it's a little bit of a slanted statistic because of course not every tree has been tested under experimental conditions but it gives some idea of how productive the temperate rainforest is.

Sitka spruce have been clocked as high as 85 metres high and 10 metres in circumference.

[10 : 46] The western red cedar often is 70 metres high and even 17 metres in circumference. A modern three-storey Vancouver house can be built from a single tree.

Several western red cedars have been dated at 1,500 years of age but more typically they range from 800 to 1,000 years.

In other words when the Magna Carta was signed in 1215 most of our old growth cedars were older than any of us in this room including Dr.

Packer. In order that the leaves and or needles can survive at the top of a cedar water has to travel vertically up nearly 100 metres and on a hot day as much as 450 litres of water may be conducted upwards through the tissue of the tree through the xylem.

water. But the wonders of the rainforest also extend to the range of purposes to which the trees can be put and perhaps most importantly to us the aesthetic beauty of a forest canopy.

[12 : 08] I want to emphasize that we are living in a unique part of God's creation. It's not just something painted on a large board the north of the city.

It is growing actively, functioning wonderfully, and evidencing the super abundance of the goodness of our creator.

Its wonders do evoke genuine feelings of the presence of the creator. We should not, in the course of the next few critical remarks, belittle the genuine search for utopia which for some people culminates in the West Coast rainforest.

Not only understandable that the First Nations people have developed their sense of the numinous in this environment, but also that people have searched from across the world and located in this region with the search for utopia specifically in mind.

So, first of all, or secondly of all, the biblical context needs to be considered. and I have a few points here that are just taken from Genesis chapter 2 and 3 to emphasize the significance of rainforest.

[13 : 48] first of all, rainforest as God's creation. In Genesis chapter 2 verse 9, out of the ground the Lord God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to sight.

this is the primary verse for the rainforest's superabundance.

And it emphasizes the most basic, I think, of the points of God's great goodness and love to his creation.

fantastic new understandings of God's creation are constantly coming to light and we should revel in the majestic creator's works.

Secondly, the rainforest as garden, Genesis chapter 2 verse 8, the Lord God planted a garden in Eden. It's worth reminding ourselves given that we do not own the podium, neither do we own the earth.

[15 : 08] We have a stewardly responsibility in relation to this garden. And that is something we sometimes forget in our onward rush to control and to exploit God's creation.

But it doesn't say leave it alone. Don't say don't touch it. Rainforest as a place of unique privilege is also emphasized in Genesis chapter 2 verse 15.

The Lord God put the man in the garden to work it and keep it. And it's also as within it the conditions for successful relationship to that rainforest.

Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat in that same verse. Fourthly, rainforest is the place where the serpent sowed seeds of doubt and contradicted God.

Well, I mustn't stray onto Sheila's patch here, but did God actually say you will not surely die? That was the starting point of the problem.

[16 : 30] Fifthly, the rainforest as a place of decision-making. Genesis chapter 3 verse 6.

The woman ate and her husband who was with her ate. Just to give the gender parity, but it's also a correct translation.

And finally, the rainforest as a hiding place. Genesis chapter 3 verse 8. The man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees.

There's something very special about this question of the relationship between the people and the trees. There are all these circumstances which are described in Genesis which relate directly to our rainforest.

Now, here are all these people converging on the rainforest in search of utopia. What do we think are the limitations of this utopia?

[17 : 49] utopia? What are the limitations of a rainforest as utopia? Well, you may know about skunk cabbage, described by Sir Sanford Fleming as acres of stinking perfection.

some of you will have personal experience of Devil's Club, also an integral part of this rainforest.

If you've ever slipped on a slippery coast mountain slope and tried to save yourself by hanging on to the nearest piece of Devil's Club, you will have experienced an unpleasant injury.

So there are aspects of the fallen creation which need to be considered. But I think more than that we need to think some of the fallacies about rainforest as utopia.

first of all, the rainforest is a cultural hearth. The First Nations have lived in this rainforest for many thousands of years.

[19 : 13] And not only have they developed a respect for their forest, but they've also exploited it. It has been the scene of wars and confrontations as well as inspired sense of the value of the rainforest.

It's not a utopia in the sense of being some perfection. It is a cultural hearth which has been modified in various ways.

So it has the imprint of both human virtues and failings. The culture of hunting and gathering has many attractive features which many of us respect.

One can well understand that the earliest migrants would be pantheists. But this is scarcely utopia either to more recent settlers of the land or to the younger generation of First Nations persons.

I don't know how many of you have had an opportunity to speak to the younger generation First Nations persons in the province but there is a considerable crisis of the relationship between the younger generation and the elders which of course is actively being debated and worked on at the present time.

[20 : 41] So as I say the rainforest has already an imprint of culture upon it. Then there is the question of the rainforest as cathedral and the worship of nature.

It hasn't escaped your attention that Cathedral Grove has the name cathedral attached to it and that many people say that we really have no time for architecturally formed cathedrals.

We have our own cathedrals in the rainforest. There are many rainforest parks up and down the west coast which have religious and spiritual names attached to them.

It's a direct rejection of organized religion's architectural structures in many cases. And again one can well understand that the earliest migrants would be faced with the magnificence of the west coast rainforest leading to a belief in this region as being especially special.

Indeed another utopia. But things are moving much more rapidly in relation to seeing the rainforest as utopia amongst liberal theologians.

[22 : 16] There is indeed a move to see the rainforest as a basis for a Canadian civil religion. And this is actively pursued as a new form of liberal theology.

We find God by taking a walk in this forest. is loving nature and taking walks in the woods an adequate basis for a Canadian civil religion?

I suppose the best motivation for such a suggestion is that we as Canadians have become over 80% urban and we desperately need to be reminded of our daily and hourly dependence on nature.

people and preferably on creation. But Douglas Todd has provocatively stated that this may be a way to promote creative social change in a way that protects liberty, respect human dignity, and advances the common wheel.

Well, if all theology is anthropology, as liberal theologians commonly state, then an attitude change of respect for rainforests might well be a theological advance.

[23 : 45] Increased respect for the rainforest can only be seen as a good sustainable strategy. But is it religion? Is it a basis for a civil religion for Canada?

And will it ever produce a kind of consensus that one might hope for, that is being suggested by some theologians, this will produce?

I think it's a matter of great importance that we are aware of this kind of movement, because it has so many attractive features on the one hand, but it's so fundamentally flawed on the other side.

there is so much of wonder in the Pacific rainforest and in Cascadia to admire and to think about and to thank God for, at the same time, what does it offer as an alternative form of religion?

There's a further consideration which, of course, leads to a matter which many of you may have participated in, the debate on the survival of old growth forest.

[25 : 04] Now, old growth forest does not have a scientifically technical definition. Old growth forest has more cultural, economic, and social definitions than scientific.

old growth forest is a forest which contains trees which have attained great age and exhibit unique ecological features.

Well, we know that the temperate rainforest produces trees of great age and exhibit unique ecological features.

that what is referred to, of course, is those areas of the temperate rainforest which have been relatively undisturbed. It's not just referring to individual trees, but it's referring to areas which have a significant aerial extent and which have, in fact, these thousand-year-old trees in abundance.

trees. But not only are the thousand-year-old trees, but it contains large and old dead trees and large logs so that the whole environment of the old growth forest is somewhat different than that of an area that has been logged more than once.

[26 : 32] And these large and old live trees and the large dead trees and the large logs together form a habitat which is diverse and is a rich community of plants and animals because of the long period of forest stability that is represented by the old growth forest.

The old growth forest is a reservoir for species which cannot thrive or easily regenerate in younger forests. there are plant species that are native to old growth forest and are in many cases likely to prove valuable towards curing disease.

As some of you will be aware of the yew tree on the Queen Charlotte Islands which has been used for medical purposes for some time. that there are many sources of medical agents which are still being explored.

And of course in the present climate of climate change debate old growth forests store large amounts of carbon both above and below the ground.

So the old growth forests have extremely emotional connotations in the sense of the concern to hang on to things in the sense of trying to put some sort of limits on the rape of the earth which is so characteristic of our neoliberal society and so the huge conflict and there's a conflict zone of secular values.

[28 : 23] It's not just that there's a conflict between religious and non-religious but there's a conflict between secular values. So that in many of these ways that I've described the rainforest falls short of utopia it falls short of utopia not so much because of its inherent characteristics from a scientific perspective but it largely falls short because of our own human nature and the activities of the serpent that we heard about last time.

There are many ways in which the rainforest falls short of utopia largely because of the nature of mankind and not specifically because of any shortcomings in the rainforest itself.

But our human nature is wildly manipulated by the serpent and refer back to Sheila's comments last time. So these two presentations are intended to remind us of the way in which the search for utopia goes on around us and the way in which our particular region, our particular bioregion, is a representative of that utopia in a very specific form.

The serpent is alive and well in the rainforest. It's important that we worship the God of the rainforest and don't make the mistake of worshipping his handiwork.

We celebrate his creation and his superabundant generosity. His creation is one of the two primary sources of information about God and it leads us to rejoice in the wonder, love and the power of God in his creation.

[30 : 29] But we worship God and him alone. Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of our hosts, the earth, the rainforest, is full of thy glory.

Thieve, not the rainforest, O Lord Most High. Sorry, glory be to thee, not to the rainforest, O Lord Most High. as we say every day, every Sunday, in our communion service.

If you wish to explore some of the beauties of the temperate rainforest, this is a coffee table book called The Forests of British Columbia.

It's one of the nicer examples. novels, and if you promise not to rip out the pages, I will pass it around. And if you haven't read this book, or if you are interested in some of the odd perspectives that people have on Cascadia, this is a very interesting book.

I ask you not to believe it, but to read it, and to become aware of the fascinating range of ideas surrounding the concept of Cascadia, and the role of the rainforest within that framework.

[32 : 03] It's edited by Douglas Todd, it's called Cascadia, the elusive utopia, and I haven't been able to find it in the Regent bookstore.

There may be reasons for that. So that's the second half of the presentation.

The whole advertising of this has been somewhat confused, as you will also see, for those of you who haven't been to church yet, will see that in the bulletin this morning, this presentation is in fact described as serpents.

But, come on, come on. The actual purpose of these two presentations was to remind us of this constant search for home, which has characterized our, the history of mankind, and the way in which utopia has been seen to be an unachievable goal over the whole of recorded history.

And we, in this extraordinarily superabundant temperate rainforest, where God has planted us, have an extraordinary privilege.

[33 : 20] At the same time, that privilege can so easily be distorted into something that is not in itself the real thing. Thank you.

Thank you. Bill. We are told that Britain was forested at one time and lost its trees to the shipping industry in some way.

Long before the shipping industry was taught about. Was it? Yeah. I mean, this is huge. Is there any real danger?

Are we any danger to the forestry, forest that we have here?

without clear cutting? Is there any real danger to it? Because there's masses of it, and awkward spots where you probably couldn't get industry in there to clearly trees.

[34 : 33] So is there really a danger of losing most of this in the next thousand years? In the next 50 years. Really?

The only old growth forest that is left in Oregon and Washington is now protected in parks. There's literally no old growth forest outside the parks. We are holding on to 5% of the original old growth forest in British Columbia.

It's one of the largest areas, and of course, in Alaska also. But the rate of cutting of old growth forest continues to be unacceptably high, I would suggest.

So it's not like a distant thing. It's happening around us. Yes? Yes, I have a question about actually, it's hinging on what Bill was commenting on.

There's this whole theological idea of the rapture is upon us in a minute. And I've talked to some people that are quite convinced of what's happening.

[35 : 40] All the right people are going to be sucked up to heavy wounds, distant, and therefore, we don't have to care about ecology, we don't have to care about beings to root of the earth.

But I think that there's a biblical injunction in Genesis that we aren't supposed to be looking after creation, even post-fall. cozen.

I just wonder what you would say about it. I'm curious. Well, I think that anyone who pretends to know the timing of the rapture is in trouble.

But you think that lets us off the hook? I think it can't possibly let us off the hook, because we don't know how long we're going to be here.

And so it seems to me it's a fundamental problem in some of our conservative circles that the role of stewardship of the environment is seen as being somehow an optional extra.

[36 : 41] I don't understand that perspective. I think that the fact that God reveals himself in the Word and in his creation, these two parallel revelations, and whilst the information content is more explicit in the Word, the worship content, potential worship content in the creation is equivalent.

And this is a perspective that maybe is not shared quite as widely as I would hope, but derives from spending a lot of time in isolated parts of God's creation creation where his presence is very real, not just in the rainforest.

So I think that we have a very clear obligation, and it seems to me that those verses that I read from Genesis couldn't be more explicit about the fact that we're placed in a garden.

God has created this for us, and he expects us to manage it appropriately. Now, I'm going to come back a little bit to Bill's question for one moment, if I may, because it's too simple an answer to quote the numbers.

I mean, Bill's comeback might be, well, of course, we may get rid of the old growth, but the trees are going to grow again anyway. And that's an argument that is a very superficial appeal, because we can just cut those trees and make our houses out of the trees, and the trees will grow again.

[38 : 34] But what you lose is that specific habitat in which the variety of species, the variety of animals, animals, insects, whatever else.

And, of course, the famous example of the spotted owl, which was said to destroy the industry, logging industry in Oregon. Well, if you look at the Oregon logging industry at this point, it's actually a better shape than the British Columbia.

So it doesn't destroy it, it really transforms the way in which logging industry relates to that rainforest. So, you know, there's a quick answer which says, yes, well, it'll all grow again.

But it's not going to produce old growth for another thousand years. So that question of how, is that stewardship? Have you seen the PBS National Parks, the story of the National Parks, Yes, yes.

Do we have anything similar? Do we have any national parks other than bands? Oh, yes, we have many national parks and many provincial parks.

[39 : 50] Have a game? Yeah, yeah. We have many national parks. Yeah, we have in British Columbia, we have five national parks, sorry, seven, seven national parks.

national parks. So you go from Yoho to Mount Revelstoke, Glacier, and then the Tachin-Shini area in the northwestern part of the province, Haida Gwaii, these are all, and then we've got provincial parks by the dozen.

And this government deprives itself on having expanded the amount of land that is under some protection. Now the question of what kind of protection is an interesting one because they don't have absolute protection, but there are expressions of concern for the preservation of examples of every bioregion that exists in the province.

There are 14 different, quite distinct bioregions in the province, and each of these bioregions has got a particular area of protected land.

And I guess the total at this point is 12 versus 15 percent of the province that is under some protection. But of course the debate arises about how much protection.

[41 : 15] So, six to more people like John Jonas. Well, thank you very much all for your presentation that makes us think about how we worship and who we worship.

I'd like to expand it a little bit since I lived in the Arctic, northern 60 for a number of years, and there are very few trees as you get above the tree line, just Arctic willows creeping along the ground.

So the Inuit that live up there tend to worship their food supply, the character, the bear, the ocean.

boilers from the ocean. And so it leads me to go beyond that and say the aboriginals along the coast worship the forest, the old forest particularly, the Inuit picked on their food supply.

We as urbanites tend to worship the accumulation of wealth. people. And so it seems as man's search for utopia takes different forms.

[42 : 30] And so we as urbanites look at these other incidents and say, oh, that's great. They have got the answer. And I begin to think that the search for God is unending among the souls of the humans.

And they miss the point that God's creation has a beauty all of its own. Instead of worshipping the creation, we should worship the creator.

How do you achieve that when people get so caught up in worshipping the creation rather than the creator? Well, it's a huge question.

I don't know if you can hear it in the back. You can repeat it. We know that the dwellers in the rainforest tend to worship the rainforest.

The dwellers in the Arctic tend to worship the source of their food and supplies. And the dwellers of the cities tend to worship accumulation of capital.

[43 : 39] How do we... What was the final one? How do we... We're searching for... utopia and we worship the creation rather than the creator.

How do we achieve that... The point across that the creator is the thing we should be worshipping? When we get pulled into these things by Cascadia and the book that Todd has written, or edited, I should say.

So the very practical question is how do we avoid worshipping these other things as opposed to worshipping the creator?

Well, isn't this the topic of this little book called The Bible? I mean, it seems to me that you've made a very important point that it's a global phenomenon.

It's not just the rainforest. It's not... It just happens in a specific way of rainforest. And so, you know, we've grown up, many of us, through schooling to poo-poo the Genesis account, for example.

[44 : 48] And yet, the more you read the Genesis account, the more fundamental you recognize it to be. It describes the state of fallen persons. And it describes also the fallen creation around it.

So the two are inter-individual. So I haven't answered your question, because I think we're not succeeding in making that point.

Some have said we really ought to go back to being hunters and gatherers. And there are serious-minded people who are, in fact, doing just that. And they're going into communes, and they're going into the Arctic in search of a simpler lifestyle, and that's their answer to this question.

For most people, that's not a very realistic response. How does the Cascadian capital C relate to the earthquake in the shelter?

the water? Yes. Well, that's another aspect of the hazard of living here, isn't it? We are on the same ring of fire as Chile, and this 8.8 strength earthquake in Chile is close to being the largest historically recorded.

[46 : 11] The previous large ones were 9.2, which is also in Chile. the human response to earthquakes is interesting, isn't it?

This chaos for a short period of time, this massive loss of life, as in the case of 18. And then the people say, it will never happen again, because it hadn't happened in my parents' lifetime.

and they continue to stay in those locations. It's a very curious way in which people respond to disasters of all kinds.

But it's most curious to do this in relation to earthquakes. And if we happen to be alive in the next big earthquake here in Vancouver, it's going to be quite a challenge to know how to respond to this.

But the relationship to this whole Cascadian notion is that in fact a lot of people have noted that it's the ruggedness of this landscape which of course derives in the long term from considerable tectonic activity.

[47 : 32] The tectonic activity which occurs much of the time so slowly that we can't see it, but which expresses itself in the form of earthquakes from time to time and sometimes astonishing and large earthquakes.

And although we don't sit directly on the fault on which the main activity is likely to be focused that is located about 100 kilometres west of the west coast of Vancouver Island we are close enough for such large earthquakes to be real in our futures.

the last one was 300 years ago of large magnitude and the historical record shows that the average recursive is about 500 years.

So if anyone's trying to lift the age of 200 plus whatever you are at the moment chances become stronger. yes sorry sorry there was one thank you for highlighting this it's quite interesting I think I fully agree with you saying that we should worship the creator not the creation it's unfortunate like somebody has said before that the creation is it could lead a fine wedge into saying therefore the creation is not important and you have emphasized that it is important it's unfortunate that some people and Christians in particular say it is for our use so we can continue exploiting it to the maximum and coming from the Calvinistic background where work is put on a high level

I would say that that has been a motive for quite a lot unfortunately North American view that we can just go ahead and exploit oil and wood and I must say coming here it is quite alarming to see the widespread and as you said there's only 5% left destruction of wholesale large scale destruction of the habitat and it's unfortunate that again the North American says there is no global warming and Christians in particular and we can go ahead so it tends to say we're worshipping the creator and hence the creation is of lesser value and therefore it pushes other people to go towards that and become very fierce anti-Christian and anti-exploitation of trying to preserve what we have for it and not saying go to live as a hunter-gatherer although that is an extreme form so I think it's important that we continue to say we should and we have a very clear mandate to preserve the garden as you have stated thank you for the comments

[50 : 46] I think the issue is totally independent of the climate change issue frankly it's a reality without whether or not there's climate change so yes yes and then Betty was first and then it's just an observation that the local is planted taking over stewardship of trees for certain girths we have many in our garden and the wildlife there is incredible it's ongoing the squirrels every day searching for their fruits they're in and up and down the trees and it's quite an incredible scenery you know with those raccoons and everything also skunks so it is quite incredible but it also endangers properties as it does with this huge tree that we're not committed to take down that's very close to the house without a special icing so I wonder about that but it is a good thing that there is protection of course for God's scenery and I relate back to my moment that I gave my life to the Lord when I was looking out out of my bedroom window praying that God would forgive me and receive me into his kingdom and that part of my testimony was so evident as I looked at this magnificent scenery before my eyes that I hadn't really noticed until I had that reunion with the Lord so that became part of my testimony to see the trees cut down

I would not really like to see so it was very special for me thank you for that well I'd like to pick up on what Betty has said and ask you if you would like to comment on the fact that the mantle of looking after of being stewards of the earth appears to have passed to very secular individuals and groups and we as Christians don't noticeably seem to be espousing those things or saying that's our job too I mean we don't even hear about that in the various groups that we attend in church and so on and yet Sierra Greenpeace all kinds of organizations are out there doing everything from you know chaining themselves to a tree to protest marches and all the rest of it they appear to be having an impact on this in certain times and places and we do not is this something that we're going to lead to the secular world could that be heard the bank of the price this is one of those 64,000 questions

I think I can take a shot at this much but I have a view that may not be widely shared in reviewing the new English standard revised version of the Bible with its magnificent series of chapters commenting on all the main themes of the Bible there's something of the order of 15 pages directed to a summary of the history of salvation there are two sentences directed to the history of creation now to me there's something wrong with that emphasis it seems to me that as Christians we have let this whole thing go to the secular world and we have not taken our responsibility seriously now I stand to be challenged as one of the one of the translators of this version is present in the room and I may be overstating it but it seems to me there's an imbalance a very strong imbalance between the history of salvation and the history of creation the two are really two sides of the same part so that's my sense of it's a demonstration in a way of our return to the medieval idea of otherworldliness that it is not important what happens here because we're going to glory and we're going to a better place and that really is a little short sighted in my view and it certainly is not in keeping with looking after this universe hallelujah here's what a you know are you aware of ARUSHA but a group that seems to have huge relief thanks

They're a terrific group and they have a very well developed series of seminars and activities associated with the stewardship of the environment. So I'm overstating this position in order to make a point.

I apologize if I'm giving the impression that the history of civilization is somehow not important. It's clearly critical and absolutely essential. But it does seem to me that therefore it would be helpful for Christian commentary to have an introduction to the realities of the magnificence of God's creation.

[56 : 38] Could I just write a comment to what you said about the ESD study Bible? The philosophy of the study Bible, hear me brothers and sisters because this was new, the philosophy is that the study Bible should be more than a work of reference. It should be a companion to the Christian life viewed from all the angles that the Christian life involves us in. And it was that purpose, the attempt, I mean, to fulfill that agenda, which led to the proportion that's given to this, that and the the other in the many articles that accompany the comments on the texts of the 66 books.

And you would agree, I'm sure, that while you're entitled to say we evangelicals in the Christian world generally are not taking stewardship of the environment as seriously as we should when it comes down to, what shall I say, the nitty-gritty, the business of actually doing something about it as distinct from merely talking about it. Yet there are many other angles of the Christian life that need to be focused in just the same way, and where Christians actually need to be exhorted at practical level to do rather more than they're doing. And that is what we were aiming at in the study Bible so that it really becomes a companion for life. Well, whether we did a good job or not, I am not attempting to affirm just at the moment, I'm simply saying that's what it's all about. And we didn't want any of the aspects of any of the aspects of Christian living that we dealt with to steal the show.

Again, whether we got the proportions right is not for me to say, but we were trying to present an inclusive and balanced understanding of the aspects of the aspects of the Christian life that every ordinary Christian should face and live with and seek to handle well for the glory of the Lord.

So, end of foot, end of foot, that I just would like you to know that that sort of a study Bible is all about. Jim, I'm prepared to affirm that you're not, that this is an excellent, excellent quality commentary, and I use it regularly.

So, the quality is unambiguous. My point has to be a balance. Jim, do you have a few minutes, Tom? I just wanted to make a rather pessimistic observation.

[60 : 00] You know, there are large parts of the world which were historically much more productive. I think it's a great brain producing area at one time.

The forests of Europe, long vanished central Europe. And these have happened at a time when religion perhaps had a bigger hold on people's lives than it has now.

So, I don't think the record of any religion, Christianity or Islam, has been very good as far as conservation of the earth's resources. I think the only thing that's really, well, from my observation is the main thing that's going to affect these things is people's economic well-being.

And when that crunch comes, and I think that's happening now, people are seeing that their economic well-being is going to be affected unless they do something about conservation.

Then they will act. And I think historically that's been true, and I don't see that it's likely to change. That's a secular observation.

[61 : 08] Yeah, I find that discouraging comment. And it's more Marxist than I would have expected from a fine, outstanding citizen like yourself.

But it has an element of truth, of course. So I wouldn't wish to say that it was exclusively dependent on our economic circumstances.

Okay. Okay. Yes. Yes. Thank you. Yes. Yes. And I think that's a bit of balance. I mean, the Bible does have something to do. Like if you look at the Old Testament, it looks at Moses, it has some things to do with ecology, if you like, like not taking the mother bird with, along with the nestlings or eggs, preserving the mother bird.

In other words, it's addressed to the third one. Oh, you don't have to convince me of that. Okay. The Bible itself is well balanced. I'm referring simply to the sections of commentary that are added very helpfully to this particular study Bible.

Oh, I got it. And the balance of those. The Bible is enormously ecologically sensitive. Oh, yeah. I was just saying it's, but there's not, it's not reponderant. In other words, it's balanced with the other things.

[62 : 20] It's, I think one danger that people become alienated from others, and therefore they end up loving their creation, not only more than God, but more than a people.

And this all can be, easily be abusive or unbalanced. Right. The approach is. Okay. So just to take out what you say actually, if you look at the balance between the Old and New Testament, I mean the Old Testament, there's quite a lot about the natural world of God's activities as creator.

I've just been reading through the Psalms, and one finds a lot of mentions there. But you could say there's not very much in the New Testament. That's right. That's right. What would you, how would you respond to that?

You could then say the New Testament is a new... Well, the New Testament assumes that we know the Old Testament. Paul was quite a scholar, and he didn't feel it was necessary to repeat that.

Now that may be a misjudgment on this part, but I think he was on safe ground in assuming that people knew the Old Testament. So that's, it is, I mean, it's a very important question used to imply that ecological sensitivity disappears in the New Testament, relatively speaking.

[63 : 35] But I think that's one direction in which one can explore it. The assumption that we know something about this. If we don't know the Psalms at this point...

We're coming... Even as the clock ticks away to the great climax of the Olympics. the Olympics with the hockey game that's scheduled for a couple of luck.

And it seems to me that the Olympics have been for us a tremendous outburst of secular religion.

I mean, there's been worship, there's been color, there's been ceremony, there's been ritual, there's been fire, there's been the making of saints in terms of heroes, of athletic heroes.

All these things have been going on at a great pace. And tomorrow it will all be over, which will leave us without religion until somebody else comes up with an idea.

[64 : 46] So, I'm wondering how we can get away from the temporalities of secular religion to the eternal realities of our faith, of biblical faith, really.

That that's where the eternal reality on which our religious life is to be built, not on the temporal realities, which are so much more exciting, at least for these two weeks.

There's nothing... The consequence of who wins off game today is virtually of no significance whatever by next Sunday.

It doesn't matter in the least. No, Andy, and... You don't agree with the global male today? What?

Global dominance is an issue. Are we finished? Sorry, that's an important point.

[66 : 08] What's the question? Well, my question is, is the gospel being built on the eternal reality of God's purpose in creation and redemption, how that becomes...

How we introduce that into our tremendous capacity for religion, which is demonstrated in our...

in the whole of... in the amazing event of the Olympics that's come to us and sort of brought us life for the whole of ten days and by tomorrow we'll be gone.

I'm reminded of the response of the children of Israel when Moses came down to the mountain. and they were building a golden calf.

Seems like a lot more... concrete. Ah, yes. So this has been a couple of weeks where we could worship something concrete.

[67 : 22] Yeah. We had to get our golden calf. Yeah. I think there's some connection there. The interesting thing is we put more golden calves than any other countries.

We've got lots to work on. I think I must appeal to the chip. The game's about to start, so...

Well, it sounded a bit prophetic at the end of it. It's something. Well, thank you.

I like that. You woke everybody up. Good response. Great. All right. Thank you. Appreciate it. Thank you.