

## Environmental justice

**Revelation 11:18 HCSB** The nations were angry, but Your wrath has come. The time has come for the dead to be judged, and to give the reward to Your servants the prophets, 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.

### Image of logged forest



#### Loss of habitat

According to the Smithsonian Institute, half of Earth's life forms live in rain forests yet we are losing a net total of one acre of tropical forest every second. In the time it took to say that sentence, 12-15 acres of rain forest disappeared. One hundred years ago there were approximately 4 billion acres of tropical rain forest. There are now less than 2.5 billion acres of tropical forest left.

### Image of the Great Barrier Reef

Coral reefs are home to 25% of all marine species. The Great Barrier Reef is the world's largest reef, stretching more than 2,300km along the northeast coast of Australia. Made up of about 2,900 unconnected coral reefs and roughly 900 islands, the Great Barrier Reef is home to over 1,500 species of fish and 400 species of coral making it one of the most important marine ecosystems on Earth. Scientists consider it Earth's largest living organism which makes it the only individual living thing visible from space.



### Image of dead coral



Australia is estimating that 95% of the Great Barrier Reef will be dead by 2050. The scientists of the U.S. Geological survey estimate that if something drastic is not done, the rising temperatures of the ocean will kill most of the world's coral reefs within twenty years.

The loss of habitat is not simply a problem for someone else somewhere else. Hawaii's reefs are just as threatened and their loss would cost the United States billions in fishing and tourism alone.

### Image of wetlands

Also, here in the continental United States More than 90% of our wetlands have disappeared.



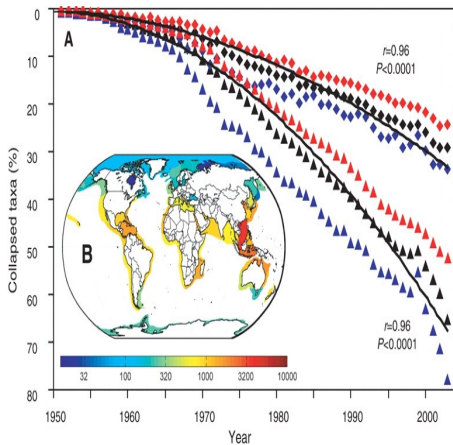
#### Loss of species

Many studies indicate that every day 100 plant and animal species are lost simply to deforestation. The National Wildlife Association conservatively estimates that over 27,000 species a year are being lost.

Most scientists believe that the rate of loss of species has reached catastrophic proportions. Within the next 30 years as many as half of all species could “go down into that dark night” in an intertwined nightmare of death by greed.

The problem is not simply the sheer number of species that are dying but the genetic diversity that allows a species to flourish. Entire ecosystems can stumble and fall when a single important link is removed from the chain of interrelated life. Rates of resource collapse increase and recovery potential, stability, and water quality decrease exponentially with declining diversity.

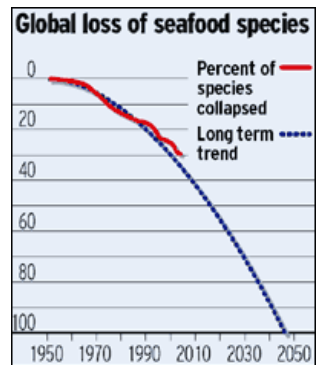
### Image of Chart tracking loss of marine life



This chart illustrates the loss of species from large marine ecosystems. The curves show the percentage of fish and invertebrates that have collapsed over the past 50 years. By "collapse" I mean that catches have dropped below 10% of the maximum recorded catch. The diamonds show the percentage of collapses by year; the triangles show cumulative collapses. Data are shown for all (black), species-poor (<500 species, blue), and species-rich (>500 species, red) large marine ecosystems.

### Image of simplified chart demonstrating marine species loss

A four-year study of 7,800 marine species around the world's ecosystems has concluded that the long-term trend is clear and predictable. By 2048, to be exact, catches of all the presently fished seafoods will have declined on average by more than 90 per cent since 1950.



### Image of polluted water



### Loss of clean water

The average American uses 140 to 160 gallons of water each day. Although 3/4 of the planet is covered in water, only 2.8 % of this water is available for human consumption. The rest is either ocean salt water, the desalinization of which is too expensive for practical use, or frozen in the polar ice caps and too expensive to ship.

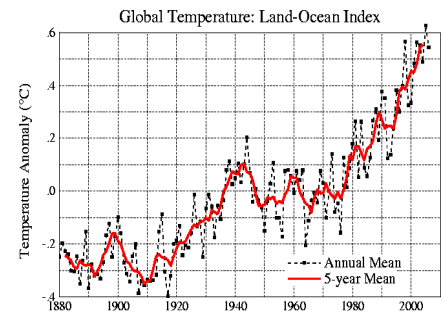
There are twenty thousand funerals every day for people who died with lack of access to clean water as a direct cause. 150

African children die every hour from complications surrounding the lack of clean water and sanitation. When New Orleans was struck by hurricane Katrina we rushed to provide clean water by the truck loads. What does it say when we sit by and listen to the cries of 150 children who die every hour in another country and do nothing?

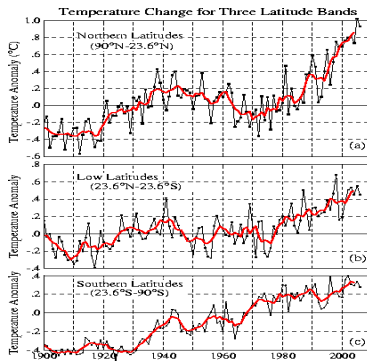
## Image of NASA chart graphing average temperature from 1880 to present

### Global warming

This chart from NASA plots the global mean land-ocean temperature index, from 1880 to the present. The dotted black line is the annual mean and the solid red line is the five-year mean.



## Image of NASA chart plotting temperature means in three latitudes



These three charts plot the annual and five-year running mean temperature changes for three latitude bands that cover 30%, 40% and 30% of the global area. NASA claims to have 95% confidence limits in the data. Enough said.

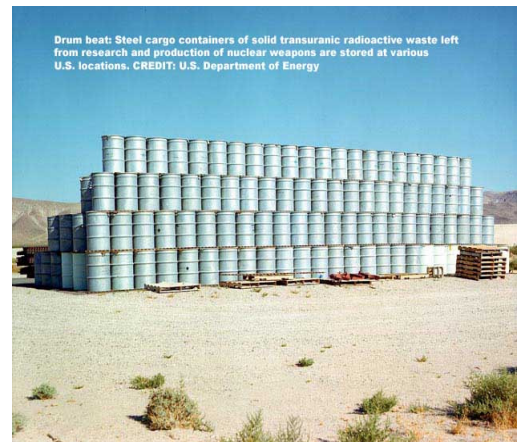
## Image of nuclear waste drums from the Department of Energy

### Nuclear waste

There are roughly 50,000 tons of civilian nuclear waste spread across the United States at this time. Most of the radioactive isotopes in high level waste emit large amounts of radiation and have extremely long half-lives (some longer than 100,000 years) creating long time periods before the waste will settle to safe levels of radioactivity. To get a better grasp of this time span, consider that this is ten times longer than humanity's entire recorded history.

In Illinois one plant alone in Dresden churns out nearly 48 tons more waste each year. The plan to build a waste repository at Yucca Mountain in the Nevada desert has faced so many political, legal and technical problems that it's impossible to project when -- or even if -- it will be built.

As a result, the most lethal waste product of industrial society is being handled outside any federal policy and without any road map for how it will be managed in the future.



## Image of a landfill



### Garbage and landfills

Each year Americans throw away 18 billion disposable diapers, 1.7 billion pens, 2 billion razors and blades, and 220 million tires. Enough aluminum is discarded to rebuild the entire U.S. commercial airline fleet every three months. On average, each American produces 6 pounds of junk a day.

80 percent of America's solid waste is dumped into landfills. However, that option is shrinking fast. In 1985 there were 9,000 available landfills. By 1990 3,000 had to be closed leaving 6,000 landfills. By 1993, 2000 more

were closed due to overflow.

By 1995 all of Los Angeles' landfills were full. Chicago recently closed its last landfill. At present, New York City alone exports some 50,000 tons of garbage each and every day.

However, transporting all of this garbage so far away means that the people that generate it don't have to deal with its consequences. If that's the case, where is their incentive to create less of it?"

I have to ask, what is the role of the Ransomed in this global catastrophe?

**We are to imitate God's care and concern for the environment. (Genesis 2:15; 1:26-27; Job 38:39-39:9; Matthew 5:26-29; 10:30)**

In Genesis we read that the LORD God took the man and placed him in the garden of Eden to work it and watch over it. He created us in His image and according to His likeness. Tell me something, is God characterized by rampant greed and lack of care for creation?

Yahweh watches with interest as the lioness hunts her prey. He provides the raven's food when its young cry out to Him and wander about for food. He knows when the mountain goats give birth and watches over the deer in labor. He set the wild donkey free and is served by the wild ox. (Job 38:39-39:9). Though they don't sow or reap or gather into barns, our Father feeds the birds of the sky. (Matthew 5:26). The wildflowers of the field don't labor or spin thread but God gives them more beauty than Solomon in all his splendor (Matthew 5:28-29). Even a common sparrow cannot fall out of its nest without God's consent (Matthew 10:30).

We are to be like our Father. We must imitate everything about Him including His great passion for creation.

**We are to obey God's command to steward His creation. (Genesis 1:28-30)**

His first order of business was to tell us to enjoy creation, to be fruitful and multiply our families. However, responsibility went along with this great privilege. We were put in charge of the planet. It has been entrusted to our care. We are not its masters. We are its stewards.

**We must remember we were meant to live in a garden environment. (Genesis 2:7-8)**

I believe that it is important to note that when Yahweh created us, He planted a garden and that is where He placed us. A garden is our natural environment. We have forgotten our origins. We have forgotten our purpose.

**Sin cursed the ground but did not change the command to care for the planet. (Genesis 3:17-19)**

When Adam and Eve sinned, the ground was cursed for our sakes, and our job became much more difficult. However God did not abrogate our call to care for the soil and the plants therein. It was to be by the sweat of our brow, but it still needed to be done.

**We are to work with and learn from nature. This is the first step to knowing God. (Job 12:7-10; Psalm 19:2-4; Romans 1:18-20)**

Job tells us that we are to ask the animals for instructions. He says that the birds of the sky, the fish of the sea and the earth itself will speak to us of the great web of life and that that knowledge will lead us to know that God has done this. It will cause us to bow our knees to His mastery and acknowledge that every living thing is in His hand.

When we abuse creation, use it and discard it simply for our pleasure, and with no concern for the long-term consequences, we are in effect rebelling against God's sovereign ownership. We are plugging our ears to the cry of the earth that it belongs to Him.

**We are not only to use nature but assure its continued use for future generations. (Deuteronomy 23:24-25; 20:19-20)**

God instituted specific laws dictating our behavior in harvesting the land. We were allowed to do what needed to be done to provide for our families, but not at the cost of continued harvests. We are allowed to enter our neighbor's vineyard and eat to our fill, but not strip it bare. We are allowed to enter our neighbor's field and pluck the grain to eat, but we are not allowed to use tools that would keep our neighbor from having a harvest. Even in war, though we are allowed to inflict collateral damage on the environment, we must ensure that the fruit bearing trees remain untouched.

If this much care and concern is to be demonstrated for our neighbors and our enemies, surely our children and grandchildren deserve as much care?

**Not only are we to not actively damage the soil, we are to allow it to periodically rest and recover. (Leviticus 25:2-7)**

In our mass market society, where the almighty dollar is the bottom line, we have forgotten to be grateful for the resource of soil. It takes an average of 100 to 500 years to make 1 inch of topsoil. It takes such a phenomenally long time to produce new arable soil that as far as humans are concerned, soil is a non-renewable resource.

God our creator knew this and He instituted laws that would protect soil. Unfortunately we have flaunted His commands and determined yet again that we know better. Our chemicals are as good as God's plan and so we keep tilling in more and more chemicals.

As a result Iowa has lost about half of its 14 inches of top soil to erosion. Fertilizer runoff and farm chemicals have polluted much of the Mississippi River basin, and that runoff flows all the way into the Gulf of Mexico. Over the last 20 years, the runoff from Midwestern corn and wheat fields into the Gulf of Mexico has totaled between 2,000 and 10,000 tons of nitrate per day, creating a bloom of red death that is growing every year.

**Those who abuse their stewardship are not likely to make it to heaven. (Matthew 24:45-51)**

We are Jesus' slaves. The Lord Jesus has put us in charge of the care of his possessions. One of the perks is that we get to eat the Master's food. However, the Lord made it clear that those who abuse these privileges will not fare well when He returns. This particular passage seems to imply that those who abuse the environment and their fellow humans are not truly saved. They will end up in hell.

**We are not allowed to say "It's too big a problem." God does not hold us accountable for what we cannot control. He does hold us accountable for what we can do. (Matthew 25:14-25; Luke 12:48)**

In the parable of the talents each servant was given resources "– to each according to his own ability." When the Master returned He did not require five talents from the one to whom He had given only one.

To whom much is given much is required the Bible says. The opposite is thus equally true. We are not all presidents. We cannot take personal responsibility for signing the Kyoto treaty or for forcing China to quit killing all its rivers. We can however recycle more. We can quit letting the water run while we brush our teeth. We can bicycle rather than drive a car down the block.

**It is not enough to simply not grossly damage God's creation – we must do positive good to it. (Matthew 25:26-30)**

God is a tough task master and he will require an accounting of us. The Master in the parable of the talents never denied the wicked slave's assessment of his toughness. The judgment did

not come because the wicked slave called God difficult, but because he did not adequately believe and act on that fact.

Note that once again, it is a mark of a true disciple to care for God's resources. Only those who did well were accepted into God's heaven. The one who buried his resource and did not improve it was cast into the outer darkness.

## **Conclusion**

I would like to leave you with this challenge. A great day of reckoning is coming; a day when even the Ransomed will have to face the Master and give an answer as to what we have done with the resources He gave us.

On that day, according to Revelation 11:18, God will judge two groups of people. One is described as "fearing God" and the other as "those who destroy the earth." John prophesied that the second group would be destroyed by God's wrath. The question I would like to close with is this: "In which group would you rather be included?"