

Stewardship and Where We Live

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." (Gen 1:1, ESV)

With little fanfare, Earth Day passed us by on 22 April 07. It may seem strange to devote an article to discussing a topic which centers around the planet, but let us consider what the Bible has to say concerning stewardship of the planet.

What is stewardship? Webster says stewardship is "the conducting, supervising, or managing of something; especially: the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care." For example, Stewardship of the family means watching patiently to ensure that those family members, in the charge and protection of the parents, are brought up in a responsible way. As recorded many places in scripture, going above or below the direct orders of God have had certain unfortunate effects for human beings. God approved of Paul's sober attitude toward stewardships. Paul said he was entrusted with a certain responsibility from God, "According to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known." (Col. 1:25; cf. 1 Cor. 9:17; Eph. 3:2; 1 Tim. 1:14) Likewise, members of the church have been entrusted with the stewardship to preach the gospel to all human beings they have the opportunity to reach. (Mat. 28:19-20)

Who has stewardship of the planet? Who conducts, supervises, manages, carefully watches this sphere? To answer this question, let us look in Genesis to the creation of all things by God. As noted above, God created the earth in the beginning alongside the heavens. God did not entrust the heavens to human beings when they were created, but said this to man and woman concerning the planet, "And God blessed them. And God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.'" (Gen. 1:28) The word subdue implies to bring something into subjection. In the Bible, when one is made subject to another, the one having dominion is given a stewardship not to misuse whatever authority has been granted. The subjects included in this stewardship include all creatures and the earth itself.

Let us consider that this stewardship was given to the first human beings. Where did God say that the stewardship has been removed from the latest generation? I am not advocating that Christians should support one type of policy over another concerning the planet. Yet, just as God did not abrogate the responsibility of mothers and fathers to their physical children when they become Christians, I submit to you that he did not remove the necessity of all human beings, especially Christians, to consider the earthly stewardship we each possess, to discern what we can do, and to act accordingly.