

Lecture 23: Living Before God in All of Life

Introduction and Review: Having emphasized the importance of a unified view of knowledge, Professor Barrs now outlines a practical example of a Christian approach to environmental issues.

Living Before God in All of Life

I. Ecology and the Environment

A. *Pollution and the Death of Man* (1970)

1. The blame of Christian “dominion” for environmental destruction
2. The myths of pantheism and animism (Lynn White)

II. Responses to Pantheism

A. Pantheism stagnates culture

1. Example in Kenya

B. Loss of human uniqueness

C. No basis for abnormality in nature

1. No notion of the fall
2. Whatever exists is normal, good, and divine
3. No basis for fear of or opposition to natural disaster

D. Romanticization of the past

1. Myth of Native American “harmony” with nature

III. What the Bible Says

A. God’s relationship to nature

1. Creator (Psalm 19, Romans 1:20)
2. Sustainer - laws of nature
3. Creation declared “good” - before humans were created
4. Creation cursed because of sin
 - a. General (Romans 8:20-22)
 - b. Specific (Genesis 6-8, 19)
5. God’s covenant with all created reality (Genesis 9:12)
6. Promised restoration of nature

B. Man’s relationship to nature

1. Called to have dominion (Genesis 1:27-28, Psalm 8)
2. No absolute ownership of earth (Leviticus 25:23)
3. Creature-hood (Genesis 9:12-17)
4. Servants and caretakers Genesis 2:15)
5. Damage of earth by human sin (Hosea 4:13, Isaiah 24:4-5)
6. Idolatry of nature forbidden - and hopeless (Deuteronomy 4:15-19)
7. God’s provision for humanity and other creatures (Psalm 104:10-15)
8. Encouragement to develop the earth (Deuteronomy 8:7-9)
9. Particular care for nature
 - a. Care for animals (Proverbs 12:10)
 - b. Care for land - Jubilee year (Exodus 23:12)
 - 1) “Forced” (Leviticus 25:4, 26:34-35)
 - c. Abuse of the environment brings God’s wrath (Deut. 22:6-7)
 - d. Stewardship as the biblical model
 - e. The church is behind! (Ron Elstrom’s *Bent World*)
 - 1) Dominion confused with domination