Going Green:
Environmental Awareness

"Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit."
—Jeremiah 17:7,8

IN OUR FEATURED SCRIP- ture, the Prophet Jeremiah speaks of those Christian people who love and put their trust and hope in our Heavenly Father and his righteous character. They are represented by the green leaves of a tree. As trees of righteousness they receive their nourishment because the tree sends out its roots to obtain the necessary life-giving waters that represent the Truth of his Word, and that have been provided by a loving and caring Creator. These firmly rooted trees are able to withstand severe conditions of heat and drought when necessary, and yet produce abundant fruitage.

The Psalmist David also uses the color green as a symbol to emphasize the spiritual life and growth

that followers of our Lord Jesus experience. Concerning this faithful class who desire to know and serve the Father, he writes, "I am like a green olive tree in the house of God: I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever. I will praise thee for ever, because thou hast done it: and I will wait on thy name; for it is good before thy saints." (Ps. 52:8,9) The author of another psalm also says, "The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that be planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing [green, *Marginal Translation*]; To shew that the LORD is upright: he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him."—Ps. 92:12-15

COLOR: A DIMENSION OF NATURE

Green is positioned between the primary colors yellow and blue on the color spectrum, and there are many varieties and hues that surround us in our natural environment. These different shades of green extend their harmony and beauty throughout all the earth, and help provide the human family with a relaxing and pleasant dimension to our everyday lives. This suggests the wisdom of our Creator who has so extensively used it. The dimension of color is a most wonderful gift and is a marvelous indication of our Father's unlimited power and readiness to bless.

A verdant valley thus describes a beautiful green landscape that is lush with thriving vegetation. This color has been used by Jeremiah the prophet, the Psalmist David and others to illustrate the

freshness and vigor of flourishing and abundant spiritual life that may be seen in the consecrated child of God.

The place where various varieties of flowers, plants, and vegetable species are grown, protected, and cultivated is called a 'greenhouse,' and it has been said that when someone has an unusual ability to grow flowers and plants, they are spoken of as having a 'green thumb.' Green is also the color that has been aptly chosen to identify the present day 'going green' movement that brings attention and awareness to earth's physical environment because it is so easily associated and identified with life.

'GOING GREEN'

In recent years, the expression 'going green' has become increasingly familiar and it is gaining momentum. The term is used as a slogan to address a multitude of issues that impact and reflect upon people's everyday lives, and the need to help make environmentally friendly decisions in connection with their modern life style. Going green suggests that by making better choices in these daily habits, everyone may contribute responsibly to preserve the earth and its natural environment.

One of the main features of the green movement focuses attention on the ways in which all may minimize pollution to air, water, and soil resources. Although there are numerous concerns, attention is especially drawn to the importance of addressing the issues of sustainability, promoting intelligent recycling, and instituting meaningful waste management projects as goals to help preserve the natural environment and mankind's well being.

Issues that concern sustainability attempt to address the continuing needs of the present time without compromising the ability of future generations to also meet their needs. These concerns relate to the continuity of economic, social, and environmental aspects that govern society. Sustainability or 'living green' thus suggests making intelligent choices at the present time and for the future. Going green may involve changing some of the ways we all live our lives, and that have become a basic part of our everyday living habits. These issues include how we build our homes, businesses, and schools, how we live together as a community, and how we travel or shop.

Many relatively small actions on the part of all may have a wider impact than first realized. For example, man can minimize waste paper and plastic items around their homes, use fewer harsh chemicals, convert to compact fluorescent light bulbs, and buy energy efficient appliances when they need to be replaced. Perhaps some people might be in a position to grow some of their own food. Householders should also keep their water and its sources clean, and be conscience of developing other environmentally friendly habits around the home.

THE REALITY

For many years, environmentalists have warned of coming climate disruptions, and now men begin to see evidence that the earth's weather patterns are changing. This impact has seen an increase in more violent and unpredictable global climate patterns. Green-minded activists were not at first successful in bringing this awareness to the general

public, or to convince them of the need to return to a simpler way of life. Environmental issues have taken on new dimensions as the polluted earth is reaching a crisis point.

Wealthy and prosperous nations have turned to modern technology for their answers, but man's selfishness and pride has had enormous effects on the earth. The Scriptures reveal that if this situation was not cut short by the overruling and powerful hand of God, it would lead to total devastation of the earth and all of its inhabitants. (Matt. 24:22) Yet, Americans and other rich societies continue to trash the very planet they call home.

The massive industrial complexes have created monsters with huge appetites. Factories spew out their filthy wastes, freeways designed to carry an increasing number of cars and trucks have polluted the atmosphere, high-rise developments and shopping malls have gobbled up valuable farm land. Many of these have been designed by developers who a few decades ago did not realize the ultimate consequences of their careless and greedy actions.

In the meantime, Asian countries are making great strides in their efforts to catch up with western nations progress. Their desire to leap into the twenty-first century is creating still further levels of environmental problems. Forward-thinking people are actively involved to bring the green vision before mankind to save the planet.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

The burning of fossil fuels has had a major negative impact on the earth's environment, and the supply of these sources of energy is limited.

Therefore, a growing number of renewable alternatives are now being considered and studied to address these problems. These include clean, inexhaustible power that can be derived from wind turbines, solar arrays, wave-power flotillas, hydroelectric generators, geothermal systems, and other methods of energy. Researchers are challenged to develop these new environmentally friendly technologies so that they may produce energy in large-scale industrial quantities.

AIR, WATER AND SOIL

Industrial wastes are a major factor in our society, and they must be dealt with effectively. Factories are also faced with the need to consume less water, power and materials. Urban sprawl eats up valuable land and snarls traffic. Land must be intelligently allocated for housing projects and businesses, and a more efficient way to use space and infrastructure. Building more efficient homes and using energy-saving household appliances is a positive step forward. 'Going green' means a redesigned living pattern that aims for a higher quality and more natural lifestyle. It would focus on cleaner air, water, and soil resources, sustainable energy and nontoxic recyclable technology.

FORESTS

Among the many concerns that environmentalists are now addressing includes preserving earth's forests, and seeking to develop sustainable forest management programs. For example, it has been pointed out that if recycled paper was used for the printing of a single issue of the Sunday edition of the *New York Times* it would save the destruction

of thousands of trees that are needed to process the pulpwood. Again, if every American recycled only one-tenth of all their newspapers each year millions of trees could be saved for future generations. In addition to this sobering reality, we must face the fact that millions of acres of tropical rainforests are being destroyed each year through poor logging and burning practices.

HOUSEHOLD IMPACT

Studies show that nearly 85% of all American households discard materials that could easily be recycled with proper waste and recyclable management programs. This figure includes recycling such items as yard waste, paper and cardboard, food scraps and other materials found around the home. There are also numerous varieties of cans, glass bottles, and plastic beverage containers that are used only once and then discarded. It is estimated that Americans throw away approximately 25 billion styrofoam coffee cups every year, and an additional 40 billion soft drink cans and bottles.

GREEN TIPS

'Going green' may include many environmentally friendly tips that can actually save householders money if they were put into practice, and some of these steps could also make a positive contribution toward helping our earth at the same time. Recent studies indicate that American households now consume more than twice the amount of energy used by families living in Western European countries. One of the major sources of this energy comes from burning fossil fuels, which in turn is a leading cause of air pollution. This pollution includes sulfur

dioxide, nitrogen oxide, carbon dioxide, mercury and other pollutants that are seriously affecting the human family, the animal kingdom, plant life and even the earth itself. One of the immediate answers to help address some of these problems is to go green and try to make our homes more energy efficient.

Using more green energy will substantially replace that which the human family have been traditionally using in and around their homes with renewable sources such as wind, solar, low impact hydroelectric power and others. In recent years, home builders have also begun to incorporate many new and innovative ideas that help reduce the amount of energy that is consumed, and this is a welcome green step forward.

Approximately 20% of a typical American household's total amount of consumed energy is derived from electricity. An eco-friendly tip that is free and easy to do is to turn lights off when they are not being used. Another way to conserve energy is to go green and convert to using compact fluorescent light bulbs which require about 75% less energy than incandescent bulbs.

Nearly 90% of the energy needed by our washing machines goes toward heating the water. Another free and easy step is to simply turn down the temperature on the hot water tank a few degrees, which can save a considerable amount in energy costs.

The driers that are used to dry the clothing after it has been washed have filters that simply need cleaning on a regular basis. Performing this simple task alone will keep the machine running more

efficiently. No energy will be required at all if the clothes are hung on outside clotheslines. Using low-flow showerheads can also cut down on the amount of hot water we use by more than half, and still maintain adequate water pressure.

Leaking valves around the house waste water, and should be attended to as soon as possible. When placing the refrigerator in our kitchens care should be taken to prevent it from competing with sources of heat such as furnace vents, or next to the stove or dishwasher. Costly energy may be saved by cleaning the condensing coils on a regular basis.

To eliminate heat loss in the family home during winter time an easy project involves installing a good quality weather proofing product. Leaky windows and drafty doors account for a considerable amount of lost heat. Programmable thermostats may be installed that reduce the temperature setting at night time or during the hours when there will be no one in the home. Upgrading the amount and type of insulation in the home should also be seriously considered. Most homes that were built even a few decades ago are not up to today's higher 'green standards.'

ENERGY STAR

The efficiency of household appliances has been improved in recent years from the inefficient energy wasters that were commonplace only a few decades ago. Modern appliances are only worthy of 'Energy Star' status when they are built to exceed the federally mandated efficiency standards for their particular categories. Manufacturers claim

that an Energy Star refrigerator will use at least 10% less energy than older models, and up to 50% less energy is needed to run a modern washing machine. Homeowners should be alert when making their appliance purchases, and choose only those models that meet their particular household needs. The temptation is often to buy more than their families require.

GREEN TRANSPORTATION

The family car is a major investment, but also one of the biggest polluters. Tuning it up can go a long way toward improving its energy efficiency and reduce some of the pollution. Keeping the tires properly inflated, using the recommended grade of motor oil, and replacing the air filters regularly will also improve the car's performance, thus helping to save money as well as the earth's environment. Sharing rides with others when possible, taking advantage of car-sharing plans or using mass transit cuts down on fuel, pollution, and saves the environment. For both health and profit, human power in the form of walking when and wherever possible, or riding a bike, are sometimes options that should not be ignored.

A GREEN MIRACLE

Years ago composting yard and kitchen wastes was commonplace. Putting back some of the nourishment that has been taken from the earth made good sense, and it still does. As people are once again looking for more positive activities that benefit the earth they are considering nature's own recycling system. With only a little effort the results can be very satisfying.

Composting permits grass clippings, leaves, weeds, vegetable peels and a variety of other organic wastes to be turned into humus, an essential soil conditioner that is richer than anything that we could buy. So, why throw away raw material that generates a product that is so valuable and has such natural benefits? Up to 30% of the garbage homeowners throw away each week can go into a compost bin. As a byproduct this practice also provides for longer landfill life as well as better management of waste materials.

Lawns, gardens, and house plants thrive on compost that gradually releases a variety of valuable nutrients into the soil at the very time they are needed most by the growing plants. Insects and plant diseases are not as prevalent when the soil has been enriched with an abundance of decayed organic matter. Dark compost draws the sun's heat to warm the garden's soil. Compost acts like a sponge, soaking up water when it rains and releasing it during dry spells. It improves the structure of both sand and clay soils, thus protecting them against either drought conditions or erosion.

LOOKING FORWARD

Although awareness and interest in environmental issues is gaining momentum, we may put our total trust in the hands of our loving Heavenly Father who has all matters pertaining to pollution and the protection of earth's natural resources well under control. The earth has been created with balances in nature that will ultimately work together in perfect harmony, and restored mankind will share in its lasting beauty and grace.

The psalmist looked forward to that time when God's ultimate plan and purpose for his human creation will be manifest by his wonderful blessings that will become available to them during that future time. "Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven. Yea, the LORD shall give that which is good; and our land shall yield her increase. Righteousness shall go before him; and shall set us in the way of his steps."—Ps. 85:11-13

Isaiah's wonderful prophetic words describe the majestic scene of God's wonderful world of tomorrow. Christ's thousand-year kingdom will be established to assist and uplift the fallen sin-sick world of mankind back to the knowledge of the Father and his laws of truth and peace. Those who respond favorably to the blessings will receive the perfection to life that was lost by our first parents Adam and Eve so long ago. The prophet proclaims, "With righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins." (Isa. 11:4,5) The faithful class of Jesus' followers who have accepted the calling which has gone out throughout this present Gospel Age to follow our Lord Jesus, will share in this righteous rule over the human family.

Isaiah points to the harmony that will be manifest over the earth and its natural surroundings at that future time. He continues, "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down

with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' [adder's, *Marginal Translation*] den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea."—vss. 6-9

LIKE THE GARDEN OF EDEN

At the present time some forward-thinking people are realizing the need for preserving the earth, not only for themselves, but also for future generations. Although this effort is highly commendable, we rejoice in the wonderful assurance of God's coming rule over the affairs of a sin-sick and dying race. A thousand years has been set aside for the regeneration of the human family and his environment, and the cleaning up and renewal work that is to be accomplished under the administration of Christ's righteous and glorious kingdom. At that time, life and harmony are to be restored to a perfected earth, and the whole human family will be given opportunity to live everlastingly.

When writing under inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God, Ezekiel wrote concerning the land of Israel that had lain desolate. He also speaks of the greater harmony and beauty that is foreshadowed in his prophetic words that will mark the glorious kingdom of God. At that time, the whole restored human family will come to love and appreciate him.

We quote from the prophet's wonderful words where he says, "The desolate land shall be tilled, whereas it lay desolate in the sight of all that passed by. And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are become fenced, and are inhabited. Then the heathen that are left round about you shall know that I the LORD build the ruined places, and plant that that was desolate: I the LORD have spoken it, and I will do it."—Ezek. 36:34-36 ■