

Earth Day 2015

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April 22, 2015



Today's Google doodle drew attention to the fact that today is Earth Day. I must admit I'm not really familiar with the campaign, so was grateful for Google's attempt to raise awareness of the occasion. I also took part in Google's comical quiz which somehow figured out that I'm a woolly mammoth (described as 'So unique, you're technically extinct. But on the bright side, scientists hope to be able to clone you some day!'). I do feel strongly about the environment and the relationship between human beings and the world around us. Somewhat appropriately, I had a disturbing dream last night about planet earth being destroyed:

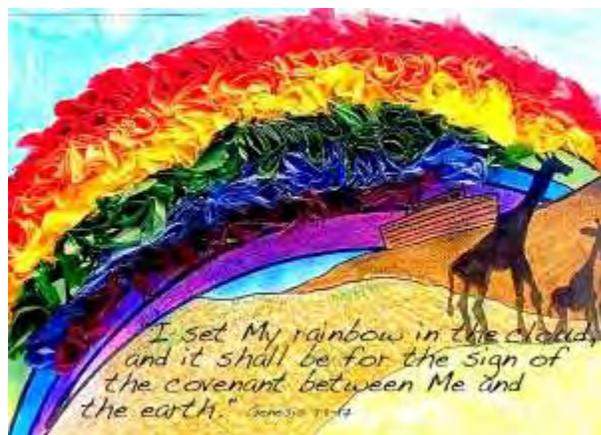
The details of the dream weren't clear. There was a scientific experiment taking place, something involving what seemed to be a particle accelerator, and the result of the high energy beam of particles resulted in the planet being cut up into pieces which fell apart from one another. Completely implausible, of course, without any grounding in current understanding of natural science. But perhaps prophetic. Or perhaps not. Either way, it was a relevant way to begin the day, with Earth Day in mind.



Tragically extinct

Just a few days ago, while visiting the Natural History Museum, I was saddened by the exhibits that showed recently extinct creatures, wiped out not by some natural event but in all likelihood by human activities. The dodo is a notable example, but imagine if the diprotodon and the moa had not vanished 30,000 years ago, or if the thylacine and the West African black rhinoceros had been rescued in the last few decades. My heart breaks thinking about the loss of a single species due to human negligence. Every creature can teach us so much, and the study of the behaviour and all the life God has handed down to us is both of biological but also spiritual interest.

Just last Sunday, while preaching about parenthood on True Parents' Day, I referred to animals that put their lives on the line to protect their young. I offered the example of salmon who swim upstream to their native origin where they lay and inseminate their eggs and then die, offering their own bodies as food for the tiny baby fish that hatch from the eggs. Such models of selfless sacrifice are curiously fascinating and aspirationally inspiring.



God's blessing to the first man and woman in Gen. 1:28 included the mandate to subdue the earth and rule over the creatures in the sea, in the air and on the land. After the Fall, however, the land is cursed (Gen. 3:17-19). Although this curse is lifted by God after Noah's offering (Gen. 8:21), when God makes his covenant with Noah and his family (Gen: 9:1-17) there is an emphasis on holding people to account for the lives of the animals. Do we hold each other to account for the life of nature around us? Are we bonded in a covenant with the earth just as God is bonded?

Amongst the issues addressed by political manifestos leading up to the UK general election next month, environmental issues vary in their importance. The media and voters may or may not consider government policies on the environment to be as important as other issues related to social welfare, defence or immigration. Considering that dominion (of heart) over the creation is one of the three great blessings given to us by God, our management of resources and our relationship with the environment around us should be of great importance to anyone who wishes to be blessed by God. To be true owners of creation we need to have hearts that are sensitive to and responsible for the nature around us. As owners of *Cheon Il Guk*, God's heavenly nation – a nation that should not only be in spirit but substantially with a physical territory and physical environment – we should be concerned with actually creating the suitable environment in which God would want to dwell. With this in mind, I hope that whomever gets elected will value the importance of protecting and nurturing the world that God has given us. And I also hope that each of us who pledge to be owners of *Cheon Il Guk* make our own efforts to protect biodiversity and the health of the natural world around us.

Image Credits

<http://earthfirstjournal.org/newswire/2013/05/07/western-black-rhino-declared-extinct/>

<https://auntiesbiblelessons.wordpress.com/tag/noah/>