

I NEED TREES: GOD'S AMAZING CREATION

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I Am A Nature Freak, My Boyhood Experiences: Nature Walks And Catching Specimens, Sassafras Leaves And Root Beer, Birds And Beasts In My Area, Our Traditional Pets, Tropical Fish Hobby, My Fascination With Astronomy, King David's Psalms, Astronomy In The Bible, Wonders Of The Microscopic World, My Years Pass, My Longtime Affinity With Nature, My Need To Be Close To Green Vegetation, God's Powerful Presence In A Forest, God Made All Things, Proof Of God's Existence, How Can Anyone Not Believe?, Blinded By Pride And The Devil, Our Common Experiences, Parks In The Cities, Monitor Lizards, Destruction Of Ifil Trees And White Leadtrees, Goodbye To My Beloved Monkeypod Tree, Monitor Lizards In Peril, All Wasn't Lost, Info About White Leadtrees, Favorable Conditions For Recovery, New Signs Of Life, Rapid Growth Of White Leadtrees, Self-Sustaining Self-Perpetuating Nature, God's Amazing Creation, Closing Remarks, Reading List

I confess. I am a nature freak, and I always have been. Ever since I was a young boy so many years ago, I have really been into the Lord's natural creation. As a kid, I used to collect rocks, all kinds of insects, snakes, crayfish, salamanders, turtles, frogs, and whatever else I could manage to catch. On one particular occasion, when I was around sixteen years old, I even captured a hibernating bat in the middle of the cold winter while delivering papers on my newspaper route. I would quite often enjoy taking long nature walks alone in the small sassafras forest which populated the surrounding hills in the region in which I lived, exploring, collecting specimens, and observing all of the wildlife.

In case you weren't aware of the fact, if you bite into a raw sassafras root, it tastes just like root beer. Is it really any wonder then that the extract of this root is in fact the main ingredient in traditional root beer and sassafras root tea? I was always fascinated by sassafras leaves; the reason being that on the same sassafras tree, there can exist three distinct patterns of leaves: unlobed oval, bilobed -- or

mitten-shaped -- and trilobed -- or three-pronged. Isn't God amazing?

As far as larger animals were concerned, our immediate local area was home to eagles, hawks, robins, wrens, hummingbirds, starlings, sparrows, chickadees, red-winged blackbirds, blue jays, catbirds, cardinals, pheasants, several varieties of woodpeckers, raccoons, ground hogs, rabbits, opossums, bats, and I can't remember what else. And, naturally, the nearby rivers were well-stocked with catfish, carp, sunfish, blue gills, perch, minnows and other species.

Of course, in my boyhood homes, over the years we also had a wide variety of traditional pets such as some dogs, a rabbit, parakeets, eastern painted turtles, guinea pigs, a cayman, and a variety of lizards. I eventually took an interest in raising tropical fish while in my teens, which is something I've done on and off to this very day. I have owned or maintained both freshwater and saltwater aquariums ranging from five gallons to three hundred gallons in size. In fact, to the jealousy of my stateside friends, when I was still young and in reasonably good health, I used to go snorkeling and catch my own marine fish for my aquariums. I never paid a penny for any of them.

As a teenager, I would become equally excited gazing up at the stars at night with the help of a friend's telescope. I remember the first time I identified the planet Venus. It was an amazing sight, because it was always low on the horizon, and shone very brightly; so much so that it could easily be mistaken for an incoming airplane. My friend and I studied a number of other planets as well -- such as Mars, Jupiter and Saturn -- and tried to see a few of their moons through my friend's small 4" telescope. Yes, it was a rather wimpy piece of technology. Nevertheless, it opened the door for me to the wonders of the skies.

I also learned a few star names and locations including Vega, Sirius, Arcturus, Betelgeuse, Aldebaran, Polaris and Antares. While it was indeed interesting to read about constellations in my astronomy books, being able to actually recognize their patterns in the night sky took it to a whole new level: Ursa Major and Ursa Minor, Pegasus, Taurus, Orion, etc. Of course, Orion's belt and the Pleiades star cluster -- also known as the "Seven Sisters" -- quickly became some of my favorites.

As some of you may know, King David of old, who had formerly been a shepherd boy who herded his father's flocks, had a lot

of time to likewise marvel and enjoy the Lord's creation. It becomes very evident in reading a number of his Psalms. But regarding God's celestial creations, consider what he wrote in a few of his Psalms. Imagine how grand it must have been for David to sit alone at night on the hills of Israel as he tended to his father's herds. Just imagine how clear the sky must have been, unlike the light and industrial pollution we are accustomed to in our modern day:

"When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained;"

Psalms 8:3, KJV

"[To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.] The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun, which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof."

Psalms 19:1-6, KJV

"To him that by wisdom made the heavens: for his mercy endureth for ever. To him that stretched out the earth above the waters: for his mercy endureth for ever. To him that made great lights: for his mercy endureth for ever: The sun to rule by day: for his mercy endureth for ever: The moon and stars to rule by night: for his mercy endureth for ever."

Psalms 136:5-9, KJV

"He telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by their names."

Psalms 147:4, KJV

"Praise ye the LORD. Praise ye the LORD from the heavens: praise him in the heights. Praise ye him, all his angels: praise ye him, all his hosts. Praise ye him, sun and moon: praise him, all ye stars of light. Praise him, ye heavens of heavens, and ye waters that be above the heavens. Let them praise the name of the LORD: for he commanded, and they were created."

Psalms 148:1-5, KJV

Of course, David was not alone in mentioning the wonders of the nighttime sky. A few of the other authors of the Bible broached on the subject as well. Please note that in these verses, the word "Mazzaroth" is derived from the old Hebrew word "mazzarah", which refers to the constellations of the Zodiac:

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth . . . And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years: And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so. And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth, And to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good."

Genesis 1:1, 14-18, KJV

"They fought from heaven; the stars in their courses fought against Sisera."

Judges 5:20, KJV

"Which commandeth the sun, and it riseth not; and sealeth up the stars. Which alone spreadeth out the heavens, and treadeth upon the waves of the sea. Which maketh Arcturus, Orion, and Pleiades, and the chambers of the south."

Job 9:7-9, KJV

"Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion? Canst thou bring forth Mazzaroth in his season? or canst thou guide Arcturus with his sons? Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven? canst thou set the dominion thereof in the earth?"

Job 38:31-33, KJV

"When he prepared the heavens, I [wisdom] was there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth:"

Proverbs 8:27, KJV

"Have ye not known? have ye not heard? hath it not been told you from the beginning? have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as

grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in:"

Isaiah 40:21-22, KJV

"Thus saith the LORD, thy redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I am the LORD that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself;"

Isaiah 44:24, KJV

"And forgettest the LORD thy maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; and hast feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? . . . And I have put my words in thy mouth, and I have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, Thou art my people."

Isaiah 51:13, 16, KJV

"Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The LORD of hosts is his name:"

Jeremiah 31:35, KJV

"Seek him that maketh the seven stars [Pleiades] and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night: that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth: The LORD is his name:"

Amos 5:8, KJV

Coming back down to the Earth, in addition to my fascination with the local forests and wildlife around me, and the stars in the nighttime sky, I equally enjoyed peering keenly into my little microscope at amazing microscopic life. I remember the first time I saw vorticella, paramecium and even my own blood cells. I was so excited that I called my parents to come and see these minute wonders with me. I used to collect creek water and store it in jars which I would then place on the window sill where they would get some indirect sunlight. After a week or so, the jars would be populated with a cloud of paramecium and other little interesting beasties.

Well, that was many years ago, and I am now an aging old man who resides on a remote tropical island that's situated about

seven thousands miles from my boyhood homes. Over the years I have done quite a bit, worked at a variety of jobs, been in a number of relationships, and traveled to a number of places outside of the continental USA. Of course, in addition to all of this, I have also preached the Gospel of Jesus Christ for almost five decades now, which I view as my primary calling in this present life.

But one common thread which has woven itself throughout my entire life is my affinity with nature. No matter where I've been, I have always felt this need to be close to trees and other plants. Unlike man-made cities which I personally view as being dull, boring and rather depressing -- not to mention being filled with noise, pollution and violence -- being able to see and walk amongst trees and plants lifts my spirit and energizes me. I sense the very presence of God in a beautiful forest filled with towering trees, ferns, babbling brooks and the like. To me, it is a sacred place untouched, or at least not ruined, by human activity. The same thing would happen when I used to go snorkeling. One is absolutely awed by the amazing plethora of life which can be found and seen below the waves.

Of course, the fact that I sense God's presence so strongly in such surroundings really shouldn't surprise anyone. After all, we are clearly told that God made all things through His Son, Jesus Christ; and what can be closer to God's original creation than an undefiled forest? I would dare say that such beautiful places are like a small sample of Eden. Consider the following group of verses:

"The LORD hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil."

Proverbs 16:4, KJV

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."

Genesis 1:1, KJV

"All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made."

John 1:3, KJV

"And saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein:"

Acts 14:15, KJV

"God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands . . . For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring."

Acts 17:24, 28, KJV

"For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen."

Romans 11:36, KJV

"But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him."

1 Corinthians 8:6, KJV

"And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:"

Ephesians 3:9, KJV

"For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist."

Colossians 1:16-17, KJV

"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, BY WHOM ALSO HE MADE THE WORLDS; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and UPHOLDING ALL THINGS BY THE WORD OF HIS POWER, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;"

Hebrews 1:1-3, KJV

"For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."

Hebrews 2:10, KJV

"For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God."

Hebrews 3:4, KJV

"Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear."

Hebrews 11:3, KJV

"Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."

Revelation 4:11, KJV

Furthermore, the Scriptures inform us that it is precisely because of the existence of the natural world that no one has any excuse whatsoever for not believing in God, even if they have never read the Bible. The evidence of the Almighty is all around them, if they will only open their eyes. This is precisely why it perplexes me that some scientists can study the natural world -- both on the Earth and beyond the Earth -- and still remain staunch skeptics and atheists for their entire lives. It just really dumbfounds me. How can they be so spiritually blind and hard of heart? Callous men such as Stephen Hawking, Richard Dawkins and Albert Einstein come to mind.

Now, while I said that I am perplexed by how some scientists can continue to resist believing in God despite the fact that they are surrounded by and confronted with clear evidence of His existence throughout their lives in the normal course of conducting their work, I do understand why it is so. One of the main reasons is their own pride and arrogance. They are just not willing to humble themselves, and admit that they are wrong. They in fact push thoughts of God out of their minds. Equally important is the fact that they have allowed themselves to be blinded by the false god of this present world. That is, Satan himself. Consider the following verses:

"The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts."

Psalms 10:4, KJV

"For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; SO THAT THEY ARE WITHOUT EXCUSE:"

Romans 1:20, KJV

"FOR THIS THEY WILLINGLY ARE IGNORANT of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water:"

2 Peter 3:5, KJV

"But THE NATURAL MAN RECEIVETH NOT THE THINGS OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

1 Corinthians 2:14, KJV

"But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom THE GOD OF THIS WORLD HATH BLINDED THE MINDS OF THEM WHICH BELIEVE NOT, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."

2 Corinthians 4:3-4, KJV

"Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, BECAUSE OF THE BLINDNESS OF THEIR HEART:"

Ephesians 4:18, KJV

"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ."

Colossians 2:8, KJV

"O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of SCIENCE FALSELY SO CALLED:"

1 Timothy 6:20, KJV

So it is indeed sad that such people have constructed such a hard, impenetrable shell of unbelief around themselves. Continuing our discussion regarding my connection with the natural world, and how I sense God's presence there, I am certain that some of you who are reading this article know exactly what I am referring to. No doubt you have probably experienced this yourself as well. It is hard to ignore, is it not? In my case, even if it is simply a little patch of green vegetation, it inspires me, and I am drawn to it. If nothing else, at least with my eyes. I am convinced that we each need some degree of closeness to the natural world in order to maintain our own sanity. At least I do. I think that the rulers of this world realize it as well. That is why all cities have some space devoted to large parks. We need to get away from the unnatural, artificial world we have created where we slave away in concrete jungles all

day long.

That brings us to the little story I wanted to share with you, and which in fact motivated me to write this commentary. You see, where I live now, there is a small wooded area behind my home. Right along the border of the property existed a row of beautiful, towering ifit -- or ifil -- trees; and behind those were what I believe to be white leadtrees -- or tangan-tangan -- and other shrubbery. The white leadtrees remind me of the locust trees from back home, because they both sport thorns and long brown seed pods. If memory serves me correctly, the shape of the leaves is similar as well.

Sometimes I would go out on my porch and just gaze at the green scenery for a moment of inspiration. As I mentioned a moment ago, it was almost like breathing in the spirit of life itself. While the wooded area is not very large, for a number of years now it has been home to a family of monitor lizards. If you are familiar with them, then you will know that they are also very lovely creatures; particularly when they are young and sport their bright yellow or white spots. Both I and a few of my friends have seen juvenile monitor lizards, about a foot or so long, on a few occasions. They are rather secretive creatures.

But then something terrible happened. Well, terrible at least from my perspective. After having enjoyed that wooded area for a few years, the neighbors decided to build a new home on half of the property. The next thing you know, they came in with a huge bulldozer and their chainsaws, and they cut everything down over a period of perhaps a week as I recall, from the big ifil trees, to the white leadtrees, and everything else. They used their bulldozer to knock down and then to uproot those beautiful trees which I so loved looking at. After that, they removed much of the soil and scraped down to the limestone bedrock, so that the new house would have a firm foundation on which to sit.

This reminds me of a somewhat similar story I share in "The Parable of the Tree and the Storm". Very briefly, over five years ago, and before I moved into my new home, one of my neighbors killed and then cut down a very old monkeypod tree, also known as a rain tree. In case you are not familiar with them, monkeypods are very tall -- reaching about eighty feet in height -- majestic trees which spread out their branches like a big umbrella as they age. Thus, one of their alternate names is rain tree. Not only that, but when it rains, they

fold up their leaves similar to *Mimosa pudica*, or sensitive plant. Monkeypod trees are quite ubiquitous on our island, as well as on many other tropical islands in the Pacific, even though they actually originate in Central and South America.

In the case of the aforementioned tree, the reason why it was apparently killed and cut down, was because whenever a typhoon would pass through our region, its huge branches would sway, and sometimes snap the power lines, which obviously was an inconvenience for the neighbors. So that was the end of that beautiful tree, much to my personal disappointment, which is why I chose to write about it in the aforementioned article. I was saddened, because whenever I would stand in the kitchen to wash my dishes, I would gaze out the window at that lovely tree. I held a grudge against those people for the longest time, even though they never knew. They probably don't even know that I was a witness to how they purposely lit a fire under the monkeypod tree in order to slowly kill it first.

But returning to our current story, by the time the neighbors had cleared the lot -- they cleared the entire area and not just the portion where the new home would be built -- it had been reduced to this uninspiring muddy field. As had occurred with the monkeypod tree, the destruction of that mini-forest really broke my heart. For a number of months I had to stare at that empty, muddy field void of any vegetation. It was so ugly to look at. In addition to that, I was very concerned with whether or not the family of monitor lizards had been able to survive the onslaught from the "iron monster" and the neighbors with their chainsaws. While most of the plot had been totally cleared of vegetation, there was a small area further up the hill which remained untouched. So my hope was that the monitor lizards had fled there and survived.

Thankfully, that is not the end of this story. You see, in order to level out the field before they could build the new house, it was necessary to build a retaining wall along our property line, and then push some of the rocks and top soil into the empty space all along the wall to build up that part of the area. Not only did doing that create a very nutrient rich section, but in the process of filling in the space, it also deposited hundreds, and most likely thousands, of white leadtree seeds and other seeds. This occurred in early 2017.

Before continuing, let me tell you a little bit about this white leadtree. First of all, it is actually considered an invasive species here. Exactly how it arrived on our island

is up for debate. But as has occurred in many other parts of the world, once it arrived, it quickly took over. As I have personally witnessed, it is a very fast-growing species, and it can rather quickly crowd out other nearby vegetation. In fact, according to the online information I read, it displays outstanding growth on coral or limestone outcroppings; which is exactly the composition of the bedrock behind my home. As I may have mentioned elsewhere, our island was formed by two extinct volcanoes, which over time have been covered in thick layers of coral and limestone. It is everywhere; which is why our water here is very hard.

In addition to its rapid growth, what also amazes me regarding the white leadtree -- which I have also personally observed -- is the fact that it continually flowers and produces seed pods throughout the year. This is precisely how online literature describes this variety as well. Not only that, but this tree is self-pollinating. So given all of these various points, as it turns out, even though I was not aware of it, the perfect conditions were being created which at the very least, would allow the white leadtrees to recover in the field. The ifil trees were forever lost, but not so with the white leadtrees.

I mean, after they cut everything down, scraped down to the bedrock, and then used one of those heavy machines to compact the earth, I was very doubtful that anything would ever be able to grow in that field again. But I am happy to report that I was wrong. With the first rainy season after the plot had been cleared of vegetation, small plants and patches of grass began to reappear. Then, over the months as the rains continued, I began to notice some young, new white leadtree saplings popping out of the ground by the retaining wall in certain places. The wall is only about ten feet from our building, so the trees are quite close; and I will probably be able to touch their outermost branches in a few months.

We are now in the midst of our second rainy season since the field was cleared. In addition to some papaya trees and other smaller vines and plants, a number of the white leadtrees are close to ten feet tall. I have not measured any of them, but it is hard not to notice that they have grown a lot over the past two years. Aside from all of the favorable conditions I described to you previously, this rapid growth is due to the fact that we get a lot of rain each year here in the tropics.

One of the things which has amazed me about the story I have just shared with you, is how the Lord's natural creation is

both self-sustaining and self-perpetuating. What I mean by that is that not only does the white leadtree self-pollinate, produce its seed pods and drop them to the ground, but just like other plants, it also sustains itself by losing a part of its leaves each season, which are eventually converted into soil. So the tree is basically creating its own source of nutrition through photosynthesis and its own growth. At this very moment, a new layer of soil is being created from its own parts. God's natural system is definitely efficient.

What we have also learned is that against all odds, life will spring up again, and persist, despite what we humans may do. We have all seen where plants will sprout up in the middle of asphalt highways, seeming to defy the impossible. Some of you have no doubt seen photographs of split rocks and boulders where a tree has forcefully grown its way up through the rock. Life just can't be stopped. God purposely made it that way. It can grow and persist under the harshest and most unimaginable of conditions; including on the edge of extremely hot volcanic fissures on the bottom of the oceans. One can only wonder what we may someday discover on other worlds. God's creation is truly amazing.

To conclude this article on one more happy note, allow me to inform you that the monitor lizards did indeed survive. A few months ago I spotted a young one, about a foot long, crawling on top of the retaining wall; and that makes me very happy.

With these thoughts I will bring this article to a close. I hope that you have found it informative, and I pray that it has been a blessing and an inspiration in your life. If you have enjoyed reading this article, please consider sharing its URL with your online friends. If you have an account with Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr or with any other social network, I would also appreciate if you would take the time to click or tap on the corresponding link that is found on this page. Thanks so much, and may God bless you abundantly!

For additional information and further study, you may want to refer to the list of reading resources below which were also mentioned in this article, or which contain topics which are related to this article. All of them are also located on the Bill's Bible Basics web server:

Adaptation, EVILution and the Six Days of Genesis

Albert Einstein and God

Alien Life, Extrasolar Planets and Universal Atonement

Is Science Better Than the Bible?

Keeping Things in Proper Perspective: ET, Where Are You?

Our Expanding Universe: Einstein, Hubble, Dark Energy and God

Parable of the Tree and the Storm

Science and Technology: The Forbidden Knowledge?

The Dinosaur Dilemma and Modern Science

The Earth is Under Seven Thousand Years Old!

The Only Credentials You Need!

The Wisdom of God Versus the Philosophy of Men

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