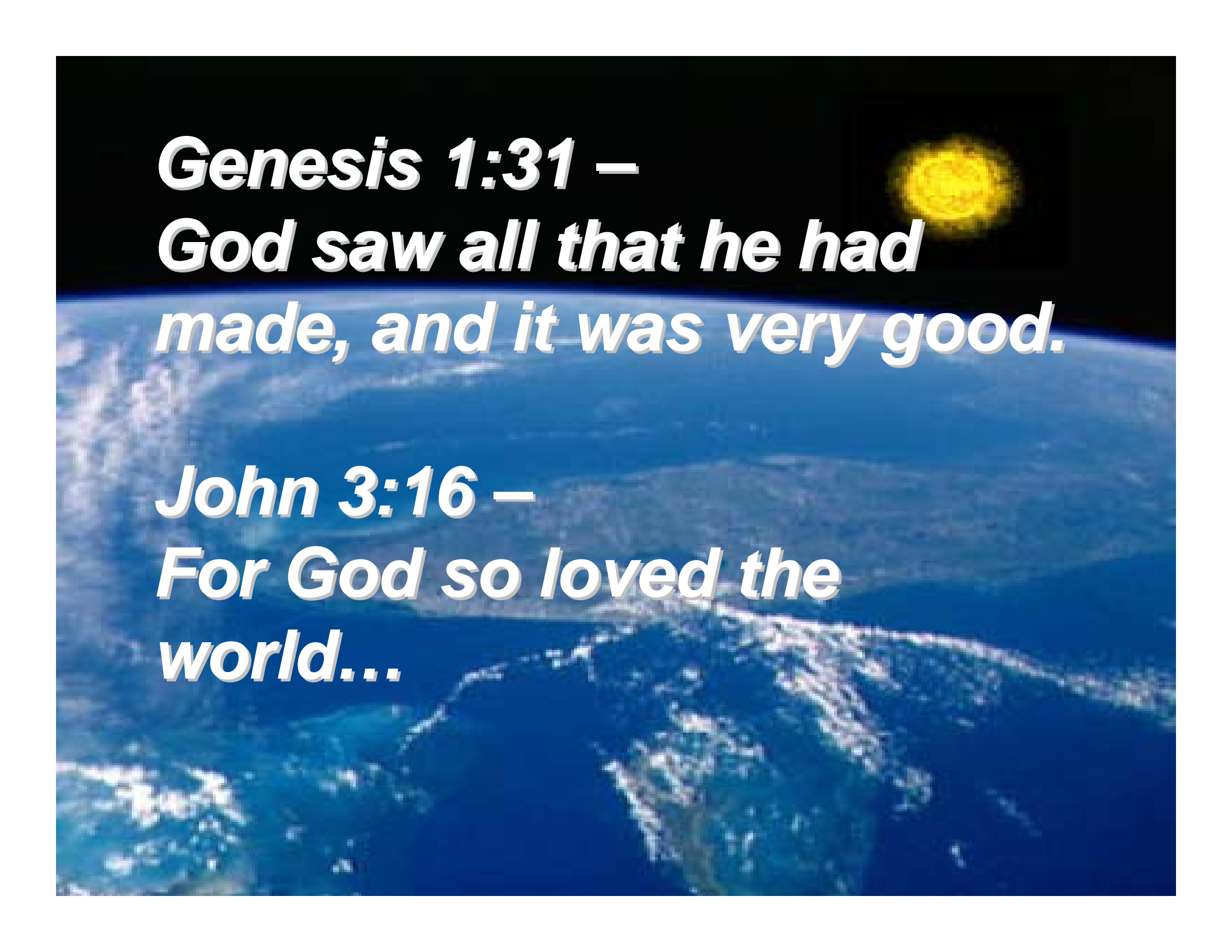


A low-angle photograph of a field of yellow tulips. The tulips are in various stages of bloom, with some fully open and others as buds. Their green stems and leaves are visible at the bottom. The background is a clear blue sky with scattered white clouds. The text is overlaid on the upper half of the image.

# **Cultivating a Personal Environmental Ethic**

***Leslie Wickman, Ph.D.  
Center for Research in Science  
Azusa Pacific University  
[www.apu.edu/cris](http://www.apu.edu/cris)***



***Genesis 1:31 –  
God saw all that he had  
made, and it was very good.***

***John 3:16 –  
For God so loved the  
world...***

# **Environmental Themes in the Bible**

*William Johnson, Arizona State Univ., Electronic Green Journal – Issue 12*

- ***Creation (by God, who called it “good” – Gen 1:31)***
- ***Stewardship (God gives humans responsibility for creation – Gen 1:28)***
- ***Provision (of God for humankind thru creation – Gen 1:29; Mt 5:45)***
- ***Pleasure (of God in his creation – Jn 3:16, Rev 4:11)***
- ***Praise (all of creation praises the Creator – Ps 69:34 Rev 5:13)***
- ***Authority (of God over his creation – Lk 8:25)***
- ***Witness (of nature to God’s authority & provision – Acts 14:17)***
- ***Consequences (to creation – including humans - for mankind’s wickedness – Rev 11:18)***
- ***Perspective (God is above his creation – Ps 113:3-6)***

***“Where your treasure is,  
there will your heart be also.”***  
*Matthew 6:21*





# Rare Earth – Our Biosphere

- *abundant water*
- *insulating atmosphere*
- *protective magnetic field*
- *perfect distance from the sun*

# Ecclesiastes ch. 1, vs. 5-7

Air

Water

Land

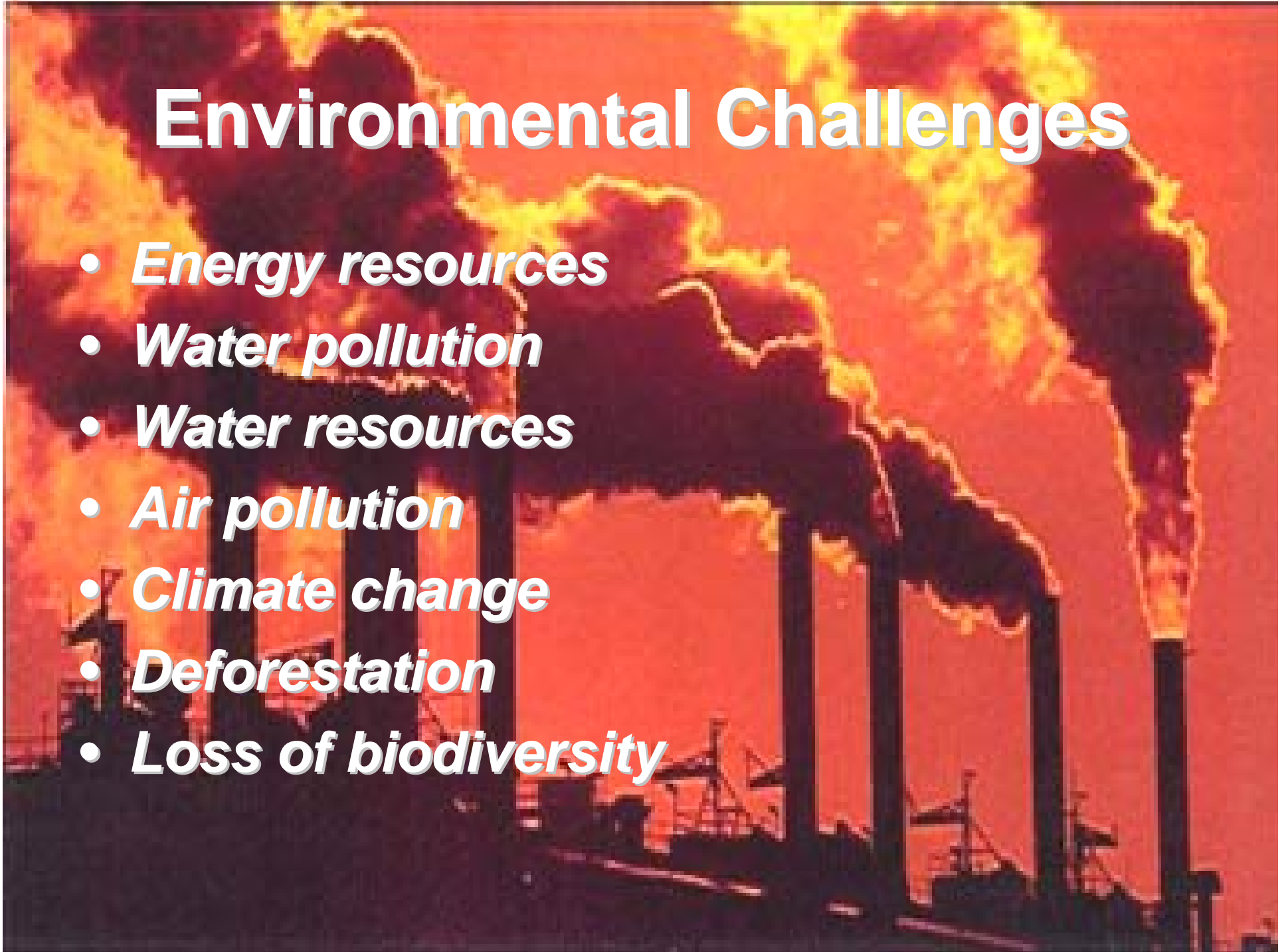
Life

## The Earth System

M. Ruzek, 1999

# Environmental Challenges

- *Energy resources*
- *Water pollution*
- *Water resources*
- *Air pollution*
- *Climate change*
- *Deforestation*
- *Loss of biodiversity*



# Energy Challenges

- **Fossil fuels**

- **Total =  $10^{23}$  Joules**

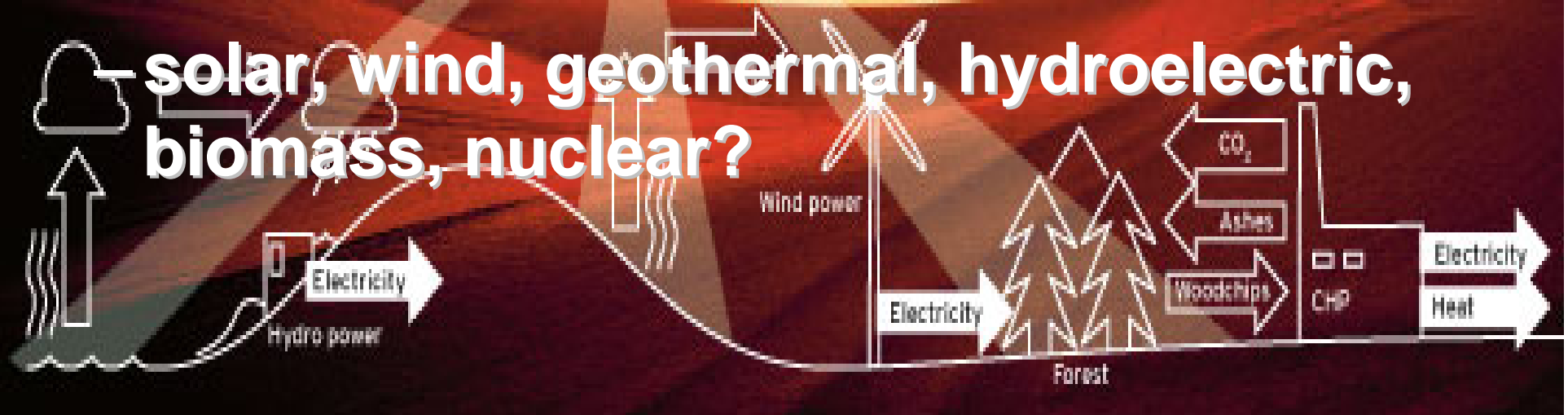
- **Current consumption rate**

- =  $11.7 \times 10^{12}$  Watts (J/s)**

- **Time left = 270 years**

- **Alternatives:**

- **solar, wind, geothermal, hydroelectric, biomass, nuclear?**



# Water Challenges

- Water pollution
- Water resources



# Air Issues

- Air pollution
- Acid rain



# Climate Change

- average temperatures are increasing
- widespread melting of snow and ice
- average annual Arctic sea ice extent has decreased by 2.7% per decade in winter and 7.4% per decade in summer over the last 30 years
- mountain glaciers and snow cover have decreased
- average global sea levels are rising temperature increase is widespread; greatest at higher northern latitudes
- land regions have warmed faster than oceans
- increase in intense tropical cyclone activity in the North Atlantic since 1970

# Deforestation



**TROPICAL RAIN FOREST DESTRUCTION**

**Southern Amazon River Basin, Rondônia, Brazil**





# Why Protect Other Species?

- *Dr. Randy Van Dragt, Calvin College, 2008*

- Anthropocentric ethic:
  - species are of value to humans
- Biocentric ethic:
  - all living things have intrinsic value
- Deep ecology:
  - holistic quality of nature
- Eco-feminism:
  - nurturing quality of nature

# Oelschlaeger's Dominant Western Social Matrix

- Nonhuman creation has instrumental value only
- Short-term economic interests override long-term concerns
- Environmental risks are acceptable if they are monetarily beneficial
- Environmental risks pose no limits to growth
- Science & technology will ultimately allow us to maintain essential processes of the biosphere within acceptable limits
- The politics of interest will be sufficient to assure the best uses of technology

# Why should we care about the Earth?

The background of the slide is a composite image. The top portion shows a bright, glowing yellow sun against a black sky. Below the sun, a thin, curved horizon line separates the dark sky from a vast, deep blue expanse representing Earth's surface. The lower portion of the image shows a detailed view of Earth's surface, with swirling white clouds and dark, textured landmasses.

## Ball's Typology:

- Wise Use
- Anthropocentric Stewardship
- Caring Management
- Servant Stewardship

*(Reverend Jim Ball, Evangelical Environmental Network)*

# Wise Use

## Emphases:

- maximize human benefit
- stewardship language
- humans as rulers over creation
- humans to make efficient use of resources
- condescension of humans toward the rest of creation

*(Rev. Jim Ball & Dr. Randy Van Dragt)*

# Anthropocentric Stewardship

## Emphases:

- human redemption has implications for the rest of creation
- humans have highest value
- the rest of creation also has God-given value
- leaving resources for future generations
- human arrogance toward creation

*(Rev. Jim Ball & Dr. Randy Van Dragt)*

# Caring Management

## Emphases:

- Humans are lords and servants of creation
- Cosmic redemption of ALL creation
- Humans made in the image of God
- Human responsibility for creation
- Sustainable use of creation
- Human paternalism toward the rest of creation

*(Rev. Jim Ball & Dr. Randy Van Dragt)*

# Servant Stewardship

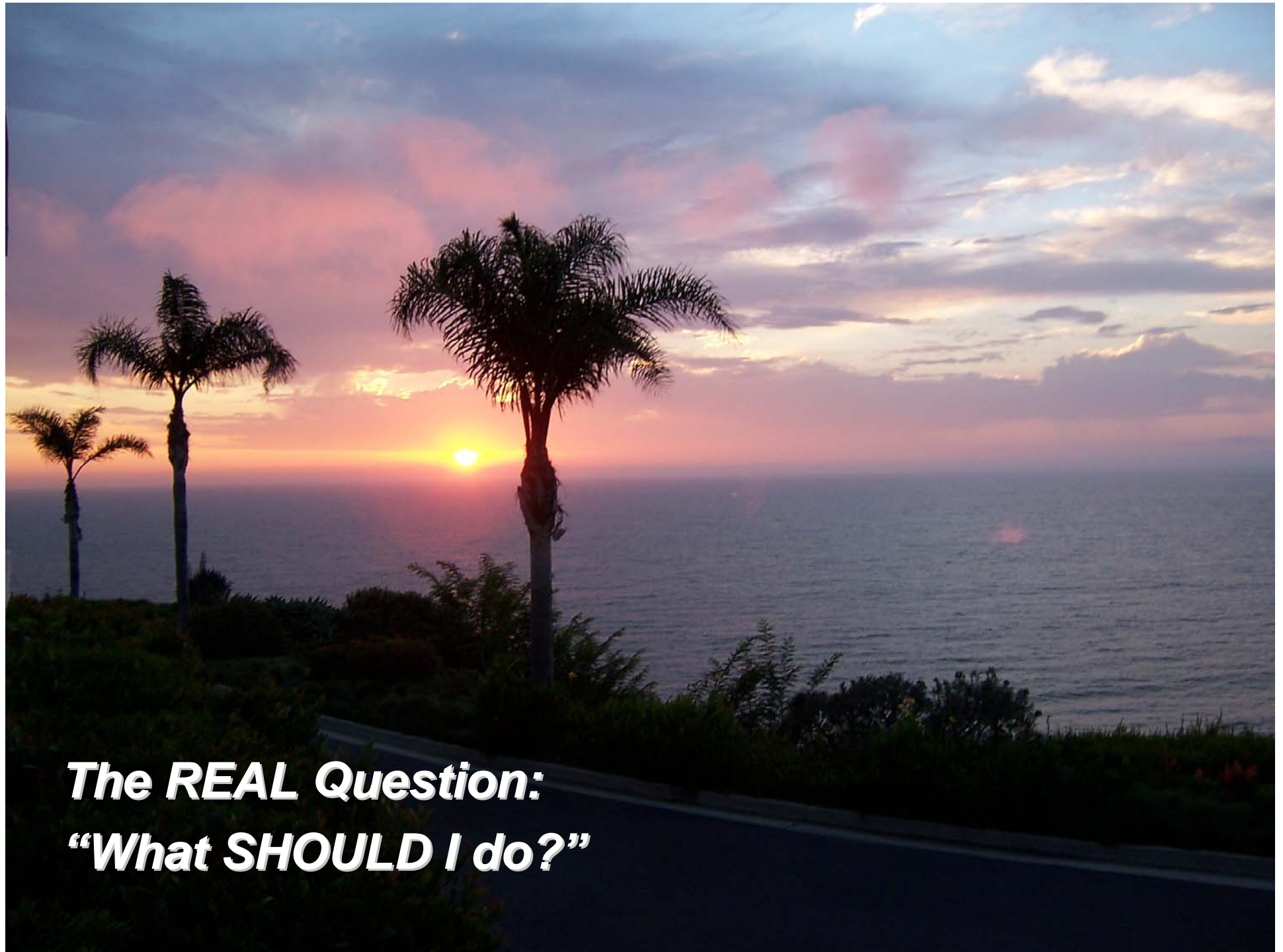
## Emphases:

- God is creator and redeemer of ALL creation
- peace for all creation
- humans are servants, preservers, nurturers of creation
- human uniqueness downplayed
- Christ-like servanthood is stressed
- human responsibility is emphasized over human priority
- human attitude of humility

*(Rev. Jim Ball & Dr. Randy Van Dragt)*

# Oelschlaeger's Challenge

***“I think of religion, or more specifically the church...as being more important in the effort to conserve life on earth than all the politicians and experts put together. The church may be, in fact, our last, best chance. My conjecture is this: There are no solutions for the systemic causes of ecocrisis, at least in democratic societies, apart from religious narrative.”***



***The REAL Question:  
“What SHOULD I do?”***

# **A *Personal* Environmental Ethic**

- **How we view:**
  - **God relative to Creation**
    - **Provider of resources for human use?**
    - **Creator, Lover, & Redeemer of ALL creation?**
  - **The Value, Moral Status of Rest of Creation**
    - **Value as resources for humans only?**
    - **God-given value as fellow-members of Creation, worthy of Christ's redemption?**
  - **Human Role relative to Rest of Creation**
    - **Users, exploiters?**
    - **Servants, preservers, nurturers, pray-ers, teachers?**
  - **Attitude toward Rest of Creation**
    - **Condescension and arrogance?**
    - **Humility, appreciation, contentment, delight & care?**

# References

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- “Caring for Creation: An Ecumenical Approach to the Environmental Crisis,” Max Oelschlaeger, Yale University Press, 1994.



# Further Reading

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- *How to Rescue the Earth without Worshipping Nature: A Christian's Call to Save Creation*, Campolo, Nelson 1992.
- *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context*, Stassen & Gushee, IVP 2003.
- *Readings in Christian Ethics*, Clark/Rakestraw, Baker 1996.
- *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger: Moving from Affluence to Generosity*, Sider, W Publishing Group 1997.