

among them is that cities generally lack the greenery of the country.

Without God's gift of life—especially green plants—the entire surface of earth would be a barren “Martian landscape.” It might seem obvious, but the abundance of living things creates an environment in which life can thrive. (This is a problem for other planets since they apparently lack vegetation.) We can thus conclude that God uses life to sustain life.

Scripture proclaims that all created things are a veiled expression of God's glory (Job 26:14; Psalm 104). The plants and animals of earth form a faint silhouette of Christ's wonder and goodness, for he alone is life (John 1:3-4, 1 Timothy 6:16). As far as we know, no other planet in our galaxy provides us this illustration of Christ's “quicken power.”

In the end—and it may again sound simplistic—the only way for life to exist elsewhere is for God to have put life there in the first place. Life begets life . . . or better still, his life begets all life (Romans 11:36).

*My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.
When can I go and meet with God?*

PSALM 42:2

Earth is the only “green” planet we know of. When compared to the other worlds that science has explored over the past 50 years, earth's verdant beauty quietly points to the matchless splendor our Creator, Jesus Christ. He has lovingly provided us a very special place, which proclaims that He is “the Living God.”

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HIS *Nature*

*“I am still confident of this:
I will see the goodness of the LORD
in the land of the living.”*
PSALM 27:13

OUR VERDANT WORLD

As you read this sentence, a one-of-a-kind spacecraft is hurtling toward Pluto at 52,000 mph. Dubbed *New Horizons*, the probe will journey a total of nine years before it reaches the mysterious world. (Lord willing, *New Horizons* will encounter Pluto in July of 2015.) NASA believes that the mission will better our understanding of this distant dwarf planet. Although we know very little about Pluto, we have deduced that it is smaller than our moon and is composed largely of rock and ice. Estimates of its surface temperature are a mind-numbing 380° below zero. Could life possibly exist here?

Furthermore, can life exist on any planet other than Earth?

This is a question many are posing today and it's a driving force behind present-day space exploration. Each year, NASA spends billions of dollars in the hope of finding life elsewhere.

Mars has long been a world populated by strange creatures . . . at least in the yarns of science fiction writers and movie producers. But can complex organisms be found there? Doubtful. The Martian surface is also bitterly cold,

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Mars



dipping down to minus 225° F, and its thin atmosphere is composed almost entirely of poisonous gas. It makes Antarctica look like a tropical paradise in comparison.

What about the inner planets—can they support life? For eons, Mercury and Venus have baked under the relentless stare of our sun. Both of these worlds are unimaginably hot. At high noon, Mercury hits 800° F, and on Venus the surface tops a bacon-crisping 870° F! (By comparison, a typical oven has a maximum temperature setting of 500° F to 600° F.) Our Lord Jesus has also blanketed Venus with an oppressive shroud of carbon dioxide and sulfuric acid rain. So could life exist here? Not likely. NASA has stated that if you traveled to Venus, “You’d be crushed, smothered, dissolved and melted—not necessarily in that order. Don’t go!”

What about the outer planets—is there any chance we might find living things there? Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, and Neptune are essentially enormous balls of toxic gas (hydrogen and methane) and

helium. These worlds lack water and a solid surface, and are far too cold for complex life. There is some evidence that Jupiter’s moon Europa may harbor sub-surface oceans that could perhaps support simple organisms. But the large inner satellites of Jupiter—Europa, as well as Io, Ganymede, and Callisto—daily endure an onslaught of intense radiation in the form of high-energy electrons produced by Jupiter’s massive magnetic field, which surrounds the planet like a belt. This radiation belt would certainly fry anything living on the surface of these moons.

There is also considerable international effort being applied to the discovery of “extrasolar planets,” that is, planets orbiting other stars. Also known as “exoplanets,” the 700 or so located thus far are approximately the size of the gas giants Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, and Neptune. So it’s extremely unlikely that life could exist in these places, unless their composition is vastly different than the gas giants with which we are familiar.

In sharp contrast to these desolate, alien planets, Jesus has graciously given us Earth, rich with verdant forests and grasslands. Today, the catch word “green” has come to represent “life” in modern thinking. This greenery is also proof that moment by moment our beautiful God faithfully renews the face of our breathtaking world (Romans 11:36). At the heart of most environments are green plants—the foundation for life. Jesus uses plants, for instance, to stabilize the climate of Earth’s jungles, as well as provide food and oxygen for creatures living there.

The lush South American rainforests actually create their own weather. Each year, jungle plants silently release an ocean of water into the atmosphere through tiny pores, called stomata, found on the underside of their leaves. This same water often noisily returns as rainstorms. In the largest jungles, 75% of the rain falling on them is moisture generated by the forest itself. A single large tree can dispense about 200 gallons of water into the air annually. And this evaporation—



Our verdant world

known as transpiration—acts like a “swamp cooler” for many ecosystems around the globe.

As a result, rainforests have a very stable climate with temperatures hovering between 72° F and 93° F year round. On the other hand, green vegetation in deserts is sparse, and temperature extremes are much more likely to occur. If you lived in the Namib Desert of southern Africa, for instance, you’d experience highs in excess of 122° F during the summer and lows dipping below the freezing mark in winter.

This same phenomenon occurs in urban areas. It’s well known that cities lacking vegetation are generally hotter in summer than their rural surroundings. There are several reasons for this, but chief

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