

Congregational Management of Ecological Disaster Relief: A Theological Study of Psalm 24:1

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Abstract:

This study aims to explore a theo-pedagogical model of Christian learning based on the Israeli Shema as a foundational framework for contextual Christian education. The research seeks to identify how the core theological principles embedded in the Shema—particularly its emphasis on covenantal obedience, holistic devotion, and intergenerational transmission of faith—can inform learning practices that are more relevant to contemporary educational settings. Employing a qualitative descriptive method supported by an in-depth literature review, this study analyses biblical-theological interpretations of the Shema alongside recent scholarly discussions in Christian pedagogy. The findings reveal that the Shema provides a comprehensive learning paradigm that integrates cognitive, affective, and practical dimensions of faith formation, emphasising the unity of belief, daily practice, and community life. The novelty of this study lies in its systematic integration of the Shema's theological structure with contextual Christian education, offering a fresh framework that bridges ancient Israelite pedagogy and modern learning needs. The study's implications highlight the urgency for Christian educators to adopt relational, life-oriented, and community-based learning approaches that foster deep spiritual formation and nurture holistic Christian identity within diverse and evolving educational contexts.

Keywords:

stewardship, environmental stewardship, Psalms 24:1, environmental crisis, ecological theology

Article history:

Submitted: 16 June. 2025, Revised: 02 Dec. 2025, Accepted: 12 Dec. 2025

How to cite this article:

Sasongko, Y. A. T., Jonathans, K. R., & Nugroho, A. E. (2025). *Congregational management of ecological disaster relief: A theological study of Psalm 24:1*. TELEIOS: Jurnal Teologi dan Pendidikan Agama Kristen, 5(2), 121-133. <https://doi.org/10.53674/teleios.v5i2.303>

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INTRODUCTION

In essence, humans were created as stewards, that is, managers responsible for all of creation, including the environment. This task is not merely an ecological obligation, but also a spiritual mandate rooted in faith, as written in Psalm 24:1, "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it." Thus, the environment is not something for humans to exploit, but rather a gift from God that must be cared for with full awareness and faithful responsibility. However, the question is, to what extent are humans aware of this role? And further, are churches and believers actively carrying out this calling in real life?

Unfortunately, reality shows that humans are often negligent of this responsibility. The environment is slowly being destroyed by greedy and careless behaviour. Meanwhile, the voice of faith is often silenced in the whirlwind of a consumptive lifestyle. One of the most obvious signs of the increasingly damaged environment can be seen in the floods in Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, and Bekasi (Jabodebek) in early March 2025. Bekasi became the focus of public attention due to the floods on March 4, 2025. At least seven subdistricts in the city of Bekasi were affected by the floods, including East Bekasi, North Bekasi, South Bekasi, Medan Satria, Jatiasih, Pondok Gede, and Rawalumbu. In Bekasi City, the floods inundated 25 villages in 12 subdistricts, affecting 18,738 families (61,233 people). Meanwhile, in Bekasi Regency, rainwater from rivers upstream caused flooding in six subdistricts, namely Cibarusah, Serang Baru, Setu, North Cikarang, Cibitung, and North Tambun. Environmental organisations assess that this disaster is the result of increasing environmental burdens, including reduced absorption areas, poor spatial planning, and the impacts of the climate crisis (Falahi Mubarak and Della Syahni, 2025).



Figure 1. Distribution and Impact of the Bekasi Floods in Early March 2025
Data processed from sources: Mongabay, Bekasi Regency Disaster Management Agency

Not only in the Jabodebek region, but in areas with high landscape changes, disasters are becoming more severe and recurring, such as in mining industrial areas and infrastructure projects that alter the landscape on a large scale. Flooding in Central Halmahera, North Maluku, has become a regular occurrence during the rainy season. Based on data from the Central

Statistics Agency (BPS), North Maluku consistently ranks flooding as the most frequent disaster each year, with 27 incidents (BPS North Maluku Province, 2023). A severe incident occurred in July 2024 when flash floods hit Central Halmahera. Muddy water surged into residents' homes, reaching heights of one to two meters in the villages of Lelilef and Lukolamo, submerging the main road, rice fields, and once-fertile farmlands. Within hours, residents were forced to evacuate, leaving their homes behind.

According to Forest Watch Indonesia (FWI), rainfall is often blamed for hydrometeorological disasters such as floods and landslides (Forest Watch Indonesia (FWI), 2024). However, their analysis shows that the more crucial factor lies in the massive deforestation caused by mining activities. The loss of forest cover not only weakens the water absorption capacity of the soil but also exacerbates local warming and increases the level of water vapour in the atmosphere, a combination that increases the risk of disasters. This analysis raises the question: Isn't deforestation due to mining a reflection of unwise natural resource management? It also calls into question the lack of human understanding of their role as stewards.

Ironically, awareness of the importance of protecting the environment only arises when natural disasters occur, when lives are lost, homes are destroyed, and the ecological balance is disrupted. However, this awareness often comes too late and is short-lived, before humans eventually forget their original role. The church, as part of society, needs to issue a reflective call so that believers do not wait for disasters as a warning, but from the outset place environmental stewardship as an integral part of their faith calling.

Resfina revealed that humans were not created to destroy, but to protect and preserve nature. This is the essence of creation theology, namely, the divine mandate that places humans as guardians, not destroyers. Therefore, humans bear responsibility for environmental sustainability and are called to appreciate and care for creation. From a Christian perspective, it is believed that God is the great creator, and humans, who are created in His image and likeness, are given power over the universe. The Bible, as a source of values and ethics in the Christian faith, is an important foundation in shaping our view of nature. The Holy Scriptures teach that all of God's creation, including the environment, deserves high regard (Resfina, 2020).

Concerned about the increasingly critical state of the environment, accompanied by a series of natural disasters in recent times, there have been a number of scientific studies that have examined this issue from various perspectives. Borrong, for example, was inspired by Stephen Bede Sharper's book entitled "Redeeming The Time: A Political Theology of The Environment." In his writing, he describes the history of the birth and spread of ecological theology studies as an entry point for proper ecological theology (Borrong, 2019). Meanwhile, Ledy Manusama discusses God and nature. He explains that environmental issues can be addressed by understanding the correct concepts of God and nature (Manusama, 2015). With a more focused perspective on the study of Ecological Theology regarding the concept of land in the Old Testament, Roy Charly H P Sipahutar also contributes to Biblical Ecological Theology from the perspective of land management, which must be pursued as a source of God's peace (shalom) for all His creatures (Sipahutar, 2019).

Previous research has provided a perspective on the principle of stewardship of nature from the perspective of Genesis 1:26-29 by Agustin Soewitomo Putri, Joko Sembodo, and Yusak Sigit Prabowo. The study emphasises that the essence of humans as the image and likeness of God should encourage a friendly attitude towards the environment, just as God Himself cares for all His creation. They state that "Genesis 1:26-28 can be the theological basis for human kindness towards nature. In their likeness to God, humans realise their responsibility towards nature as a representation of God's own presence." This text reminds humans of their calling to maintain a balance between human welfare and environmental goodness. In this framework, humans are seen as God's co-workers in caring for other creations (Agustin Soewitomo Putri, Joko Sembodo, 2022). On the other hand, previous research by Tomusu 2020 raises the study of the cultural mandate in environmental stewardship as essential for every believer (Tomusu, 2020). Then, previous research conducted by Sabda and Enggar in 2022 states that every believer must have a sense of responsibility to protect their environment. (

This paper aims to provide a deeper understanding of the principle of human stewardship of the environment based on Psalm 24:1. Referring to Christian faith and the reality of ecological destruction today, this paper emphasizes the importance of collective responsibility, especially from the Christian community, to carry out the divine mandate as stewards of creation in everyday life, before awareness comes too late, that is, after disaster strikes. From the perspective of Psalm 24:1, the world and all its contents do not belong to humans, but to God who created them. This understanding places humans not as absolute owners but as stewards called to care for, preserve, and use nature wisely. (Widiarto & Wilaela, 2021) When humans understand themselves only as stewards, then every action related to the exploitation of nature, the use of resources, and daily living patterns must take into account God's will for the integrity of creation. (This principle affirms that environmental damage is not only a scientific or social issue, but also a moral and spiritual issue that concerns the relationship between humans and the Creator.

Amidst increasing climate change, pollution, deforestation, and loss of biodiversity, Christian communities need to demonstrate a tangible witness of faith through responsible ecological practices. (Pamantung & Susanta, 2022) This includes environmental education in churches, lifestyle changes towards wiser consumption, and active involvement in social movements that support sustainability. The church is called to be an example that brings God's shalom, not only in human relationships, but also in the relationship between humans and nature. Thus, environmental stewardship becomes an expression of love for God and neighbour—because caring for the earth means protecting the lives of present and future generations. Through a shared commitment, Christian communities can participate in restoring the earth as the common home entrusted by God to humanity.

METHOD

This paper was written using qualitative descriptive methods and a literature review to analyse the principles of human stewardship of the environment based on Psalm 24:1. This method was used to analyse Christian faith reflections and the current state of ecological damage. This study seeks to provide a comprehensive description of the collective

responsibility of the Christian community in carrying out the divine mandate as stewards of creation in everyday life. (In addition, this study also seeks to raise readers' awareness of the importance of the role of believers in protecting the environment and avoiding indifference to the signs of nature, including disasters as warnings, by observing natural phenomena. (The data used is sourced from various literature and previous studies to enrich the analysis and understanding of the theme of environmental stewardship. (Putri, 2020)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Nature of Stewardship

The essence of stewardship in the Christian faith is based on the awareness that humans are not the absolute owners of creation, but rather God's representatives who are called to manage, protect, and preserve all that has been entrusted to them. In this regard, Yohanes Hasiholan Tampubolon and his colleagues view and interpret stewardship as a general concept that emphasizes the role of humans as God's co-workers, who are given the authority to carry out His will. Within the framework of the Christian faith, this authority is not absolute, but rather a mandate from God for humans to be responsible in their relationships with one another and with all of creation. From the beginning, humans have been called to carry out God's will for this world, not as arbitrary owners, but as stewards who are subject to the true Owner. As written in Psalm 24:1 and Job 41:2, God is the Creator who owns the whole earth and its contents (Tampubolon et al., 2021).

In this context, the principle of stewardship emphasises that humans do not have absolute rights over the earth. Like the Israelites, who are referred to as strangers in the land belonging to God (Leviticus 25:23), humans are merely stewards, not owners. The responsibility of stewardship also includes the welfare of others, whereby all possessions and positions must not be used to harm others, especially the poor and oppressed (Amos 4:1–3; 5:11). It is humanity's duty to distribute wealth fairly and not to exploit natural resources for personal gain (Tampubolon et al., 2021). Meanwhile, Thomas J Murphy, as quoted by Tampubolon et al., emphasises that Christian stewardship is a person who welcomes God's gifts with gratitude, then manages them responsibly, fairly, and lovingly. He sees stewardship as an integral part of Christian discipleship that can change a person's way of life and perspective. A true steward realises that all creation belongs to God, and thus, humans are only managers of these gifts. They are called to develop their potential for the glory of God and the good of others (Tampubolon et al., 2021).

Murphy also emphasises that God invites humans to be His co-workers in caring for creation. This task is manifested in concrete actions: preserving the beauty of nature, respecting life, and helping to create meaningful life through work, creativity, and dedication to science, art, and profession. Therefore, work is not merely a worldly activity, but an essential aspect of life as stewards. Work is a form of human participation in God's mission and cannot be separated from responsible Christian spirituality. Murphy also emphasises that stewardship involves not only the role of individuals but also the community. In the context of the church, each member has a unique role: parents educate their children in the faith, the congregation builds a living community of faith, and the entire congregation provides support through time,

energy, prayer, and material resources for mutual service. Stewardship in the church and society is the calling of every believer to continue Christ's work of salvation tangibly.

On the other hand, Paulus Kunto Baskoro and Indra Anggiriati argue that all believers are called to serve God, both in the church and in the workplace. There is no dichotomy between spiritual and secular ministry, because every believer must be salt and light in the world. They interpret ministry as the management of the gifts and talents given by God, which must be maximised for ministry (Baskoro & Anggiriati, 2021). Paulus and Indra emphasise the importance of recognising and developing personal talents, because talents are God-given potentials entrusted since birth. Church leaders need to recognise the potential of the congregation, guide and nurture them according to their gifts. Collaboration between ministers with different talents is important to create a synergistic ministry, and for that, humility and a spirit of putting others first are necessary (Baskoro & Anggiriati, 2021). Furthermore, they also highlight the importance of wise time management. Every believer is called to live fully for God, not just serve in their spare time. Managing time effectively means distinguishing between what is important and what is urgent in terms of service. Service is not just a way to fill spare time, but is a major part of the life of a believer. In addition to time, Paulus and Indra also raised the importance of financial management. A spiritually mature steward understands that money belongs to God and must be used responsibly. Putting money above everything else is the same as serving mammon, something that is contrary to the Christian faith. The Word of God affirms that one cannot serve both God and money at the same time.

In their view, living as a steward also means reflecting the character of Christ in every aspect of life, including in ministry and work. A spiritually mature steward will display professionalism, moral integrity, and a commitment to continuous self-improvement, whether in knowledge, attitude, or skills. He or she becomes a role model who is able to radiate the qualities of faith in concrete actions. From all of the above views, it can be concluded that stewardship is a comprehensive response of faith, starting from receiving, managing, developing, to returning every gift from God with full responsibility, love, and dedication. Stewardship includes caring for the environment, respecting others, serving in the church and community, and managing time, talents, and possessions wisely as an expression of the call of faith. In every aspect of their lives, believers are called to be representations of Christ's love through their lives as faithful stewards.

Life as a steward not only reflects personal obedience, but also demands collective awareness of the faith community's spiritual and ecological responsibilities. Within the church framework, stewardship does not only focus on liturgical and internal ministry, but also targets the church's external influence on the wider community, including issues of sustainability, social justice, and ecosystem balance. The local church, as the embodiment of the body of Christ in the world, is called to be a pioneer in faith-based ecological movements, including through concrete practices such as waste reduction, reforestation, environmental education, and resource justice.

Christian stewardship also needs to be read in the context of relational theology, namely, how humans place themselves in relationship with God, others, and nature. These relationships are both vertical (between humans and God) and horizontal (between humans and their neighbours as well as toward creation). In right and healthy relationships, stewardship

recognises that dominion over nature is not a form of exploitative power, but rather a responsibility for fair, sustainable management that brings benefit to all creatures.

In this context, the eco-theological approach is very important to continue to be developed, both in church teaching, theological curriculum, and ministry practices in the community. The understanding of the earth as a common home affirms that the ecological crisis is also spiritual, rooted in humanity's alienation from creation and the loss of awareness as divine stewards. Therefore, true stewardship demands continuous ecological repentance. Ecological repentance does not stop at a change of attitude, but must be manifested in a transformation of lifestyle. In this context, simple living becomes a concrete form of responsible stewardship, in which believers learn to manage consumption, use resources wisely, and avoid greed in any form. This awareness is relevant in the midst of a highly consumptive modern lifestyle that has the potential to exacerbate environmental damage.

Furthermore, the understanding of stewardship is also closely related to Christian eschatology. The life of stewardship cannot be separated from an awareness of the reality of the Kingdom of God that is coming and will be fulfilled. In this eschatological light, believers not only care for the earth as a temporary dwelling place, but also prepare this world as part of creation that will be renewed in God's glory. Thus, caring for the earth is part of active faith, hope—a contribution to the plan of cosmic restoration. Ultimately, all these dimensions affirm that Christian stewardship cannot be separated from the identity and mission of the church itself. Every believer is called to live in the spirit of stewardship as a form of discipleship that is whole, comprehensive, and impactful. By developing potential, practising love, managing resources fairly, and building communities that care for creation, God's people carry out their duty as ambassadors of the Kingdom of God in the midst of the world.

The Role of Humans in Environmental Stewardship

In the creation narrative according to the Book of Genesis, humans—both men and women—are declared to be creatures made in the "image and likeness of God." Theologically, this gives special weight to the position of humans in the whole of creation. In addition, the Bible records that humans were given the mandate to "subdue and rule" over animals (Genesis 1:27–28), and were raised "a little lower than the angels and crowned with glory and honour" (Psalm 8:5). These verses are often understood as legitimising the superiority of humans over other creatures. However, a more holistic and reflective approach highlights that humans are not creatures standing outside of creation, but are an integral part of it.

This view is confirmed through the story of Adam's creation, in which humans were formed on the same day as animals, using dust from the ground—*adamah*—which signifies humanity's fundamental connection to the earth. Adam was not created from divine substance, but from the same soil as other creatures, showing that human existence cannot be separated from its ecological context. Dyke explains that humans are not only physically connected to creation, but also spiritually. God formed humans from the dust of the ground and breathed life into them (Genesis 2:7) (F.H. van Dyke, D.C. Mahan, 1996). This shows that human life comes from a combination of earthly elements and the breath of God, making humans both material

and spiritual beings. Some theologians understand the term "dust" as representing emptiness or nothingness, while others see it as a symbol of humanity's connection to the earth.

Hillary Marlow further emphasises this relationship. She notes that the narrative in Genesis 2 specifically tells of the creation of one human being (ha-adam) from adamah to be assigned to guard and cultivate the garden. Interestingly, the Hebrew roots of the words "adam" (human) and "adamah" (earth) indicate the connection between human identity and the environment. From a contemporary scientific perspective, this reminds us that humans are just one of many carbon-based organisms inhabiting the earth—and not the most important one. Therefore, humans are not absolute rulers, but rather part of an interdependent ecological system (Marlow, 2009).

Within this framework, the mandate given by God to Adam was not intended as a license to exploit, but rather as a responsibility to manage. The power given was not a power to oppress, but to build and nurture. Just as Jesus led His church in love and service, so too are humans called to rule wisely, nurture creation, and ensure the sustainability of nature for future generations. The command to "rule" and "subdue" (Genesis 1:28) must be read alongside the mandate to "work and take care" (Genesis 2:15). This is important to correct two major misconceptions: anthropocentrism, which places humans at the centre of everything, and dominionism, which justifies unlimited domination over nature.

Millard Erickson adds that the term "Adam" not only refers to the first historical individual, but also symbolises all of humanity. In himself, Adam represents all generations of humanity. Thus, all the gifts and resources of creation entrusted to him are also part of the collective heritage of humanity. Therefore, ecological responsibility applies not only to Adam personally but also becomes a cross-generational responsibility (M. Erickson, 1983). Hillary Marlow reiterates that Adam was placed in the midst of an interconnected system. Creation is interdependent, and damage to one part can have major consequences for other parts. Therefore, humans should not treat the environment as an inanimate object, but as a friend of creation that deserves respect and care (M. J. Erickson, 1985). Humans are given the responsibility to care for and protect the fields entrusted to them by God, as well as to enjoy them with gratitude and caution. Wealth, land, and the fruits of the earth are not personal possessions to be squandered, but gifts from God that must be managed for the sake of sustainability and mutual prosperity.

Terminologically, the concept of 'stewardship' in the Bible can be traced through Hebrew and Greek terms. In the Old Testament, the verb used refers to a managerial position in the household (e.g., Genesis 43:19). In the New Testament, the terms *epitropos* and *oikonomos* appear, referring to someone entrusted with the care of their master's assets or house. This concept emphasises that stewards are not owners, but guardians who have a moral responsibility to the true owner—namely, God. Calvin also emphasised that true stewards are those who take the best possible care of their inheritance so that it can be passed on in better condition. This principle is actually relevant to today's ecological challenges, where environmental degradation occurs because of the greed of the current generation, which has forgotten its responsibility to future generations.

Stewardship is also related to an ethic of life that respects creation. Francis Schaeffer reminds us that only the biblical view gives intrinsic value to nature. Nature is not merely a tool to satisfy our needs, but part of God's great work that deserves to be honoured and preserved. In this light, stewardship is not an optional extra, but a calling of faith that is inherent in the identity of believers. Lagat highlights how various references in the Scriptures to key Christian doctrines also guide environmental stewardship. According to him, the doctrine of Creation shows that everything created belongs to God and has first been blessed by Him. Therefore, humans should treat creation with the same respect with which they honour God, and ensure that in their treatment of the environment, that blessing is not compromised. The doctrine of 'Sin' also shows that irresponsible human actions towards the environment are a manifestation of the damage inherited since the Fall of Man—a temptation that every redeemed Christian must strive to overcome (Lagat, n.d.).

Based on the above perspective, churches and Christian communities have a responsibility to live out this spirit of stewardship. Not only in teaching and theology, but also in daily practice. It is not necessary to wait for large resources to get started. Like Moses with his staff, or the widow with her oil, every believer can use what they have to participate in caring for the earth as our common home. Based on the above analysis, environmental stewardship is not merely a theological concept, but a divine mandate rooted in the identity of humans as the image of God. In the context of the current climate crisis and environmental degradation, reflection on the role of humans is becoming increasingly important. Humans are not rulers standing above nature, but stewards who live from, by, and with creation. With this awareness, stewardship is not only a spiritual duty but also a form of moral and social responsibility for a sustainable future.

The Mandate of Environmental Stewardship

Psalms 24:1-2 reads, "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it. For he founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers." This short verse, though consisting of only one declarative sentence, contains a very rich theological depth. Linguistically, this verse uses a parallelism structure typical of Hebrew, which reiterates the main clause in two forms: the earth and its contents, the world and its inhabitants. This construction is not only poetic but also carries theological weight that forms the basis for the Christian understanding of the relationship between God, humans, and creation.

Historically and literarily, Psalm 24 is thought to be part of the pilgrimage liturgy or celebration of the entry of the ark of the covenant into Jerusalem. This psalm as a whole emphasises the holiness of God and the call for the people to approach Him with clean hands and a pure heart. Interestingly, however, the psalmist opens this hymn not with a call to worship, but with a theological affirmation of God's absolute ownership of the entire earth. This signals that before the people approach God in worship, they must acknowledge God's position as the Owner of all things. In a broader context, the broader context of Psalm 24:1 relates to the entire theological tradition of Israel concerning creation and God's sovereignty over the universe. The statement "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it" reflects the fundamental belief of the Israelites that Yahweh is the Creator (Genesis 1; Psalm 19; Psalm 89:11). In the ancient world, neighbouring nations often viewed their gods as having only specific territories or domains.

However, Psalm 24 presents a transcendent theology: the God of Israel is not limited to one location or holy mountain, but reigns over the entire earth and all creatures. This understanding arose from Israel's historical experience of God's work in freeing them from Egypt, sustaining them in the wilderness, and leading them to the promised land. Thus, the broader context of Psalm 24:1 places this verse within the mainstream of Israelite faith, which affirms that the people's relationship with God is always rooted in God's identity as Creator and King of all things. This declaration of ownership is not merely a cosmological statement, but also an ethical foundation for the entire religious life of Israel, including the way they treat the earth and their neighbours. The immediate context of Psalm 24:1 lies in the structure and liturgical purpose of this psalm. Psalm 24 consists of three parts: (1) a universal declaration of God's sovereignty (verses 1–2), (2) the moral requirements for approaching His presence (verses 3–6), and (3) a liturgical call to welcome the King of Glory (verses 7–10). Verse 1 serves as the theological foundation for the other two parts. By affirming that the earth and everything in it belongs to the Lord, the psalmist prepares the people to understand that they cannot approach God merely through ritual, but through a correct understanding of who God is. This immediate context shows that God's sovereignty over creation is the logical basis for the call to holiness: if God is the Owner of everything, then the people who live on His earth must maintain purity of life when entering His presence. Furthermore, this verse connects God's actions in creation ("He established it upon the seas and set it upon the rivers") with His legitimacy as the King of Glory. Thus, the immediate context of Psalm 24:1 shows that God's ownership of the earth is not only a statement of divine identity, but also an invitation to the people to be respectful, responsible, and live according to His standards of holiness.

In Hebrew, the word used for "owner" is *leYHWH ha'arets*, a grammatical form that indicates exclusive ownership. There is no ambiguity in this statement. God is not merely the creator, but also an active owner who continues to sustain His creation. The words "earth" (*ha'arets*) and "everything in it" (*umelo'ah*) encompass all aspects of physical reality, namely land, sea, air, flora, fauna, and humans who are part of this entire ecological system. On the other hand, the prefix *le-* (ל) in this construction indicates a strong sense of ownership, not just a general relationship, but an affirmation that the earth is under Yahweh's total authority and dominion. Meanwhile, the word *ha'arets* (הָאָרֶץ) refers not only to the physical land, but also to the entire inhabited reality of the world—including humans, living creatures, and the cosmic order. The structure of this phrase emphasises that God's ownership is comprehensive and indisputable. In the context of ancient Hebrew, the use of this construction declares that everything that exists does not belong to humans, kings, or any nation, but is entirely under God's sovereignty. The psalmist thus affirms the theological foundation that the life of the people springs from the recognition of the absolute owner, Yahweh, the Creator and King of the universe. (Childs S. Brevard, 1993)

This verse directly challenges the assumption of modern humans who tend to view the earth as their property or merely an object of consumption. In the paradigm of consumerism and global capitalism, the earth is treated as a resource that can be exploited for economic gain. However, Psalm 24:1 rejects this premise. The earth does not belong to humans. It belongs to God. Therefore, the relationship between humans and the earth is not that of an owner to

property, but that of a steward to someone else's property. This is the starting point of eco-theology in the Christian tradition.

Theologically, this understanding is consistent with the grand narrative of Genesis. In Genesis 1, God created the world and declared it "good." Humans were created in the image of God and given authority over creation. However, this authority is not in the sense of absolute domination, but rather in the framework of being a "divine representative" who reflects God's character of love, justice, and stewardship. In Genesis 2:15, Adam was placed in the Garden of Eden to "work it and take care of it" (*abad* and *shamar*), two verbs that imply ethical work and ecological responsibility. By reading Psalm 24:1 in light of this creation narrative, we can understand that this verse is a kind of reaffirmation of God's mandate to humanity: that to live in the world is to live on God's property, and therefore all human actions must reflect respect for the owner.

The moral implications of Psalm 24:1 are enormous. In the context of a modern world facing global environmental crises, such as climate change, sea and air pollution, species extinction, and exploitation of natural resources, this psalm becomes a prophetic voice reminding us that ecological disasters are not only scientific or technical problems, but spiritual and ethical ones. Humans have acted as if the world belongs to them, forgetting that they are only stewards of what has been entrusted to them.

Psalm 24:1 also forms a framework that dismantles excessive anthropocentrism. Often in the history of theology, humans have been placed at the centre, and everything has been measured in terms of its usefulness to humans. However, this text states that the earth belongs to God, and therefore it has value not because of its usefulness, but because of its existence as God's creation. This view is in line with Francis Schaeffer's assertion that nature has value in itself because God created it with purpose and love. (Schaeffer, 1970, pp. 61–65) In addition to being a declaration of ownership, this verse also provides a foundation for community ethics. When we realise that the earth does not belong to us, it will be easier for us to cultivate humility, solidarity across creatures, and a willingness to share. John Calvin, in his commentary, states that everything we have is only a trust, and our duty is to use it wisely and pass it on in better condition to the next generation. (MacDonald, 1976, p. 62) This reflects the principle of sustainability, which is now an important buzzword in the environmental movement.

It is also interesting to note that Psalm 24 mentions not only the earth, but also "everything in it" and "those who dwell in it." This includes humans. Thus, humans themselves are also under God's domain. In other words, humans are part of creation, not entities outside or above it. Hillary Marlow emphasises that humanity's connection to the earth in Genesis 2:7 shows that materially we are the same as other creatures—made from the dust of the earth, and living by the breath of God. This removes the false dichotomy between humanity and nature, and invites us to see ourselves as part of the community of creation (Marlow, 2009).

In spiritual and ecclesiastical practice, Psalm 24:1 should not only be read in liturgy, but also followed up with tangible ecological ethics. The church as the body of Christ must be an example in sustainable lifestyles, waste management, energy conservation, and environmental advocacy. The acknowledgement that "the earth belongs to the Lord" is meaningless if it is not accompanied by concrete actions that reflect respect for the Owner.

Psalm 24:1 is a simple verse, but it has great transformative power. It places God at the centre and as the owner of creation, reminding humans of their limitations, and calling all believers to live in awareness of stewardship. In a world that continues to blur the lines between need and greed, between domination and responsibility, this verse becomes a beacon that guides us back to our true position: not as rulers, but as stewards of God's house. With the images from Psalm 24:1, we can conclude that the main principle in environmental stewardship is the awareness of human responsibility as faithful and responsible stewards of God's creation. Stewardship is not merely physical management, but a spiritual calling that invites believers to live in humility, respect all creation, and maintain environmental balance and sustainability for the glory of God and the common good. With this attitude, Christians are called to take an active role in preserving the earth as a trust that must be guarded with love and awareness, before environmental damage and natural disasters become warnings that are too late to be realised.

CONCLUSION

Psalm 24:1 affirms that the whole earth and its contents belong to God, the true owner. With this understanding, humans are called not as owners, but as stewards who are responsible for God's creation. Awareness of humanity's position as an integral part of creation invites believers to carry out the divine mandate with humility, preserving and caring for the environment in a sustainable manner. Environmental stewardship in the biblical perspective is not only a physical action, but also a spiritual and moral calling that demands a collective commitment from the faith community to maintain harmony and the welfare of nature for the glory of God and the common good. Thus, humans act as God's partners in caring for His creation, maintaining a balance between human needs and environmental sustainability.

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