

# Mankind's Dominion Over the Earth

## How Does Dominion Apply to Our Care for the Creation?

We are told in Genesis 1:26-28 a profound truth: mankind made in Elohim's image is to have dominion over the various creatures He made during the creation week.

“Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in our image, according to our likeness; let them have *dominion* over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all [the wild animals of] the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have *dominion* over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.’” *dominion* = *radah*, “to tread, i.e. subjugate; specifically to crumble off”; translated rule (13 times), dominion (one time), take (one time), prevail (one time), reign (one time), and ruler (one time) in the KJV.

While the text states that this dominion was to be over the fish, birds, cattle, and other living things on the earth, it should not be denied that non-mobile plants should not be included within his dominion of man. After all, they sustain all of these mobile creatures in one way or another through the leaves, fruit, and seeds they consume from the plant world.

What exactly does it mean for man to have dominion over these creations? Does this mean that people should treat these creatures and the environment that sustains them with harshness and severity? After all, *rahah* means to “tread down, i.e. subjugate,” which has overtones of cruelty and heartlessness.

However, we have strong evidence that mankind was not to be harsh and cruel towards these creatures or the plants that sustain them. Adam was placed in the garden of Eden with the commission to *tend* and *keep* it; see Genesis 2:15.

*tend* = *abad*, “to work (in any sense); by implication, to serve, till, enslave, etc.”

*keep* = *shamar*, “to hedge about (as with thorns), i.e. keep, guard; to protect, attend to, watch over, etc.”

Adam was to protect and oversee the garden through service to the plants, animals, birds, and fish that the Eternal placed there. I personally believe this garden was the very site of the city of God, the New Jeru-



***The garden of Eden has been depicted in many ways by artists through the centuries, but needless to say it was the epitome of beauty and productivity, the perfect environment for mankind.***

saalem, and the awesome beauty and character of that place cannot be expressed in words.

Since Adam was made in the very *image* [*tselem*, “to shade, a phantom, i.e. illusion, resemblance” of Elohim, that imaging had to include the very character of the Creator, which we read about in Galatians 5:22-23 as being “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.” Thus, the character of dominion must reflect these very traits, showing that Adam was given the awesome responsibility of watching over and maintaining the beauty and productivity of the garden.

In modern parlance, dominion can be likened to “stewardship,” or acting as the keeper of the affairs of an estate, in this case the earth and all of its flora, fauna, and every part of the complex ecosystems that sustain life on the planet. This reality is emphasized in Psalm 8:6-7:

“You have made him to have *dominion* [*mashal*, ‘to rule’] over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen — even the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea that pass through the paths of the seas.”

The Hebrew word *mashal* is a close synonym of *radah* as used in Genesis 1:26-28, though not quite as “harsh” in its overtones. That the earth and its domain has been placed in mankind’s hands is reiterated in Psalm 115:16:

“The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord’s; but the earth He has given to the children of men.”

The New Testament equivalent of God’s command to have dominion over His creation can be found in Mark 10:42-45 and Luke 22:25-27:



***At the last Passover meal before the crucifixion, Jesus made it clear that the greatest of all is the servant, not the one who is greatest in the world’s view. This parallels the correct view of our dominion over the creation: to serve and uplift. Please pardon the long hair of Jesus depicted here; he had short-cropped hair.***

“And He said to them, ‘The kings of the gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called *benefactors* [*euergetes*, “a worker of good”]. But not so among you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves. For who is greatest, he who sits at the table, or he who serves? Is it not he who sits at the table? Yet I am among you as the One who serves” (Luke 22:25-27).

We see that the concept of gentile rulership was one of dominance over citizens, of forcing obedience of people

to the king. This concept extended to the king’s dominance over the creation, but is directly countered by Jesus when He spoke to his disciples the night of the Passover. He gave two examples to illustrate His point, that of age (an older versus a younger person) and of position (a person of higher position in man’s ranking versus a servant who serves him). Jesus showed that the divine order reverses this arrangement. Rather than lording it over others, God’s governmental structure defines greatness as serving others, considering them better than oneself (Philippians 2:3). Mankind is inherently designed to “partner” with his Creator in love

— as he is to serve the creation in humility and love.

### Then Sin Entered

We know the story very well of how Eve, and then Adam, partook of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 3:1-6) — deciding for themselves what is right or wrong, good or evil — and were relegated to a most stressful direction in life. That new direction included a cursing of the ground, which would then bring forth thorns and thistles, and sweat-provoking hard labor to grow crops to sustain life — the opposite type of life that existed within the garden of Eden, where food and sustenance of every sort were always plentiful and free of any cost. This new life existed outside the garden, from which Adam and Eve were thrust (Genesis 3:22-24).

However being thrust out of the garden of Eden did not erase the mandate the Eternal had given Adam and Eve to exercise dominion over His creation on the earth. That dominion would just be exercised within the context of a culture that would be fraught with the nature of the Adversary, whose wiles encompass the lusts of the flesh: adultery, uncleanness, jealousy, wrath, heresies, envy, revelries, and many other works of the flesh (Galatians 5:18-21; II Timothy 3:1-5).

Therefore, today we see in the way people treat the creation a highly perverted system in virtually all areas of human pursuit. Note some of the following examples we see readily in the world around us.

**Domestic animals.** Rather than treat cattle, sheep, goats, and other animals with kindness we find cattle so often crowded into feedlots to live their lives far removed from the natural grassed pastures they were designed to inhabit. They are fed diets high in grains, and are often given growth stimulants and antibiotics, which lead to meat having reduced nutritional value, such as reduced omega-3-fatty acids and elevated omega-6-fatty acids.

**Wild animals and birds.** Because so much land is converted to cultivation and managed grasslands, the natural environments which support bison, antelope, moose, prairie chickens, geese, ducks, and other species have been largely removed, forcing these creatures to so often subsist in marginal fencerows and tree lines. Some animal and bird species have been eliminated entirely, like the passenger pigeon and dodo bird, creations surely meant to populate our earth's grasslands and forests.

**Fish and sea creatures.** Overfishing has greatly reduced the population of many lake and sea species, in some cases pushing the populations of some species nearly to extinction.

**Woodlands and forests.** Major reductions in areas of tropical forests due to logging and clearing for farming and lumber have contributed to soil erosion and loss of habitat for animals and birds. Clear-cutting of timber has resulted in serious land degradation and ugliness of the landscape, versus selective cutting of old and diseased trees to maintain a continuous and healthy forest environment.

**Grasslands and farmlands.** With the settling of the prairies of America, the sod was plowed and converted to farmlands overspreading much of the Plains, East, and South, including much wood-



**Our stewardship over the creation has been severely corrupted by Satan's deceptions, such as promoting tillage of soils to disrupt established soil communities and encourage erosion.**



land. This unnatural system of tilling soils, described by some as “a hurricane moving through the soil,” greatly disrupts soil biological communities, greatly accelerates the destruction of essential organic matter resources, breaks up critical soil structural elements, and loosens soil particles to exposure to the erosive impact of raindrops. Added to the abuses of tillage are assaults from farm chemicals — herbicides, insecticides, nematicides, fungicides, and other compounds that kill weeds, insects, mites, and microbial pests, but at the same time pollute the soil, groundwater, and runoff water. The food supply is also contaminated with these chemicals, many of which cause diseases such as cancer, and the quality of food crops grown is compromised by hybridized and GMO varieties, which, along with high yields of nutrient-deficient foods, leads to diseases of many types.

**Lakes, rivers, and oceans.** The widespread use of plastics of many sorts has become a growing assault on the health of our oceans and lakes. Pesticides and other chemicals discharged into lakes and streams have led to eutrophication and fish kills, plus the contamination of fish with harmful chemicals.

It should be added that the first sin of Lucifer, which was merchandising (Ezekiel 28:15-18), has been perhaps the greatest contributor to compromising the perfect dominion God granted to mankind over the animals, birds, fish, and plants. The exchange of freedom for his food, clothing, and every other amenity in the garden of Eden for the necessity to buy and sell, to earn a wage for nearly everything required to exist, placed profits, pride, and competition ahead of the love of God and of one’s brother. Corporations have flourished and concentrated wealth in the hands of a few ambitious multi-billion-dollar entrepreneurs and interest-charging banks and finance managers, whose primary care is for their own profit and aggrandizement, rather than the health and welfare of people and the created world that supports them.

### **The Remedy — a New World**

We have seen that God’s instruction for his pivotal creation — of mankind made in His express image — was to express loving dominion over all that he created, not pummel and besmirch it as we so often see in today’s world, but care for it with loving kindness — as God’s beautiful creation — for the sake of man himself, to provide food, clothing, and shelter, even for transportation in a more perfect society. After all, our Savior rode on a donkey during His triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Matthew 21:1-8).

There will be a return to perfect dominion of man over the creation; our Creator has guaranteed it! Noticed the most encouraging words of Romans 8:18-23:

“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. Not only that, but we also who have the first-fruits of the spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly awaiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.”

The animals, birds, fish, trees, plants of all sorts, and we ourselves literally “groan and labor” in this sinful dispensation because of Satan in the world, and his disruption of the perfect order of creation initially established in Eden. That pain and suffering is prophesied to be removed in the coming age, one that Peter emphasized in his speech at Pentecost:

“Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blocked out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has

spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began” (Acts 3:19-21).

Then and only then, at the return of Jesus Christ at the resurrection to set up His and the Father’s government on the earth, will there be true peace, righteousness, justice, and unfeigned beauty on this earth, free from the influence of the Devil for 1,000 years (Revelation 20:1-4). Proper dominion will once more be established on this tired earth; Eden will be renewed!

### Why Dominion in the First Place?

This entire discussion, begs the question of why the Creator gave such dominion to mankind in the first place. The answer is given in several places in Scripture, one of which is Matthew 28:18. After the resurrection Jesus met the 11 disciples in the garden, and told them, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.” This tells us that after Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection, He as the Elder Brother of the ecclesia, the Firstborn of many brethren, and the hope of the world will be King of Kings and Lord of Lords at His return (Revelation 19:15). He will rule the earth along with the resurrected saints and renew it to the sparkling gem that Eden once was, this time on a worldwide scope. The dominion given to mankind at the creation in Genesis 1 about 6,000 years ago will then be shared and illuminated in its meaning with all of the resurrected saints, and to those people who will be populating the millennial earth.

We also know that the character of the Son of God is centered upon love, joy, peace, and every good



***Dominion will be extended into the coming age, wherein mankind will be free to build a world free for the entanglement of Satan and His deceptions.***

thing that the Father is (Galatians 5:22-23; I John 4:8). It is with this love that dominion is centered, to do to others as one would have done to oneself (Matthew 7:12. 22:40), to treat the created beings as one would wish to be treated: with respect, with honor, with stewardship, and taking responsibility to uplift and maintain this precious created world.

But this leads to an even deeper question: why have this dominion? After all, it is the very first command given to God’s created beings made in His own image.

The purpose is to be like He is, to emulate His nature — walk as He walks (1 John 2:6), not only for making right decisions in this present day world, but even more so to prepare for treating the creation throughout the coming eons. Our heavenly Father has

a plan for us so marvelous, so awesome that we cannot conceive of it, but that future will involve us tending and keeping our own kingdoms on into the coming ages. Elohim, when He made man in His own image, wanted His imagers to be surrounded by a properly ordered world in which dominion requires careful, loving guidance and tending, even as the Father right now is experiencing in the heavenly realm. He wants us to exercise dominion in this physical realm just as He exercises dominion in the spirit realm — His abode in the celestial reality. Our father commanded this dominion for the sake of those people made in his image to live within a perfectly ordered world that would grant joy, peace, love, harmony with neighbor, contentment, and prosperity that every person deep within himself craves. Proper dominion of the creation is essential to this end.

Our Father is surrounded by animals, birds, fish, trees, flowers, streams, and every other wonderful thing in the heavenly realm. He wants us to share in that joy today and forever. It is that dominion He wants us to experience so we can live this incredible order on into eternity, having been introduced to it in the physical realm!

### **Do Not Minimize Satan's Deceptions**

In the process of coming to understand proper dominion, we must keep in mind the efforts of the Devil to undermine this dominion. Satan's first sin — merchandising, buying and selling — is a direct affront to God's first command after the creation week: to have loving and kind dominion over the animals, birds, fish, and plant kingdom. The Adversary has substituted service to the creation with exploitation and profit for the self, as we have touched upon earlier.

To counter the exploits of Satan embedded deeply throughout our society — in its corporations, governments, religions, banking system, and virtually every aspect of our lives — we can resist the Devil by correctly applying dominion in our own personal lives:

- Farmers can apply practices that minimize or eliminate tillage and the use of herbicides, pesticides, commercial fertilizers, and hybridized and GMO crop varieties, and instead farm organically and sustainably. They can move towards the family farm concept, emphasizing quality of soil and crop care rather than expanding operations to mega-farm size. Livestock can be treated with respect in natural pasture environments rather than crowded into feedlots.
- Practice community sufficiency by encouraging families to live near one another in a rural setting, sharing one another's talents and resources to benefit others with their needs — and without requiring a money exchange.

“But love your enemies, do good, and lend hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For he is kind to the unthankful and evil” (Luke 6:35).

How much more will the fruit of freely supplying the needs of others be realized amongst friends.

- Do whatever you can to uplift the recovery and maintenance of the natural ecosphere wherever you live. One can encourage natural wildlife and native forests and grasslands on one's own land, or help restore damaged ecospheres through organizations that are active in these areas.
- Teach your children and friends the great importance of proper dominion of the creation so future generations may help build a better world.

Our responsibility to care for the creation is commanded by the Creator. Let us do what we can to serve Him and our family and neighbors with loving dominion on this wonderful earth that sustains us.